

America's Leading Research Universities: A Mission to Serve the Nation

America's research universities – public and private – are built on a distinct promise: to serve the public interest through discovery, teaching and the preservation of knowledge.

Across the country every day, we are pioneering new innovations and discoveries through world-class research that strengthens our nation by generating new cures and treatments, creating inventions that foster new start-up businesses and boost American manufacturers alike, protecting our military servicemembers in the field, helping our hardworking American farmers do better, and keeping the United States out in front ahead of global competitors in the race for scientific and technological dominance. Our research is in service to the American people and benefits humanity.

We are educating students, training the next generation of the highly skilled workforce – the pipeline of leaders in their fields that our nation will need to keep that innovation going into our shared future, generating the new ideas and opportunities that will continue to improve our society and grow our economy. We recognize, however, that the trust placed in us by the American people must be earned and renewed by every generation.

We acknowledge that, in a time of deep societal division, universities have been the subject of scrutiny regarding our culture, our costs, and our fidelity to our core mission. We welcome this scrutiny. Our mission depends on the belief that ideas must be tested, assumptions challenged, and errors corrected. We apply this same standard of rigor to ourselves. We must be willing to grapple with the principles that undergird our mission, to reflect deeply on what they mean and look with a critical eye on how we implement them on our campuses.

Every American research university has its own unique history, governance, culture, traditions, and community stakeholders. That individuality is a critical part of our collective strength. Each individual institution may have a distinctive approach to these mission-enabling principles:

- **Merit and Excellence.** We seek out the most talented individuals based on demonstrated achievement and promise. We strive to attract exceptional faculty, staff and students from a range of backgrounds and we work to ensure that they flourish on our campuses. We compete for merit-based research funding awarded on the basis of the scientific strength of competitors' proposals so that the best, most promising American science goes forward.
- **Cost Transparency and Affordability.** We are dedicated to overcoming the financial barriers that deter talented students. We invest our resources in financial aid to try to ensure that a student's future is determined by their ability, not their family's ability to pay. We seek to make the actual costs of attending more transparent for students and their families.



- **Free Expression and Civil Discourse.** We protect the right of faculty and students to speak, protest, and dissent, even when those views are not popular. At the same time, we enforce rules that prevent disruption and protect the rights of all to learn and work. We seek to build communities where students and scholars, in their pursuit of truth, can experience and learn from a range of perspectives, engaging with and being thoughtfully challenged by ideas different than their own. We aim to model the civil discourse that a healthy democracy requires.
- **Service and Integrity.** We pursue research that addresses urgent national and societal needs as well as fundamental questions. We are responsible stewards of federal and philanthropic funds, complying with the law and maintaining rigorous standards for research integrity. We investigate misconduct fairly and promptly, ensuring that our partnership with the government remains strong and transparent.
- **Self-evaluation and Correction.** Universities are built on the peer review process and the scientific method—the willingness to revise in light of better evidence and better arguments. We must evaluate our own performance with that same honesty and, where we fall short, correct course.

Our ability to fulfill our mission and serve the nation depends on academic freedom and institutional autonomy:

- **The Freedom to Pursue Truth.** Universities must determine what to teach and study based on evidence, reason, and merit—not ideology or external pressure. If inquiry is restricted by politics or special interests, innovation stagnates, and the nation loses its competitive edge.
- **The Freedom to Debate and Dissent.** Universities are places where students learn to think by confronting competing viewpoints. Faculty and students must be free to explore controversial ideas and challenge conventional wisdom. A culture of open debate is not simply an academic preference: it is the mechanism by which knowledge advances. And with that mechanism comes a corresponding duty to exercise professional responsibility. We are committed to protecting free expression and ensuring that our campuses remain marketplaces of ideas, not arenas of enforced conformity.

The partnership between research universities and the American people is one of the great success stories of the past century. Federal investment in university research helped build the modern economy and established the United States as the global leader in science and innovation.

This partnership succeeded because it was built on a foundation of independence and excellence. The challenges ahead – in health, national security, energy, and economic opportunity – require the unique combination of freedom and rigor that our institutions provide.

In our laboratories, libraries, classrooms, and everywhere we seek new knowledge, we are making the discoveries that will define the future. America's research universities remain committed to the pursuit of knowledge and the education of new generations. We will continue this vital work in service to the nation.

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