Dear Senator:

As representatives of U.S. science, engineering, and higher education organizations, we write to you in strong support for the federal research and development budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF), and its mission—created over 60 years ago—to advance research across a broad spectrum of disciplines, research that has fueled American economic growth for decades.

NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports all disciplines in a balanced portfolio that uses the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit.

As you prepare to debate the Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) appropriations bill for fiscal year 2013, the undersigned organizations urge you to reject attempts to reduce funding for NSF. We also stand in strong opposition to legislative attempts to micromanage NSF and undermine the merit review process by singling out specific programs for elimination as recently occurred in the House.

In 2006, Alan Leshner, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, testified before the Senate in support of NSF research: “Every major issue facing modern society and every major issue facing our economic competitiveness will ultimately be multidisciplinary in nature...[requiring] the integration of the physical sciences or biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences.”

We recognize the challenge that our nation faces in addressing the deficit and revitalizing our national economy. However, eliminating support for specific disciplines, such as the House did with respect to political science, sets a dangerous precedent that, in the end, will inhibit scientific progress and restrain our international competitiveness economically and with regard to national security. Congress should exercise its oversight responsibilities, but second-guessing the scientific process could have a chilling effect on scientists and young people considering a future in science. The country cannot afford to lose the incredible talent, experience, and energies of its scientists, regardless of their discipline.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations again urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise by ensuring that the NSF and its independent scientific panels determine where the best scientific opportunities are and how to absorb any potential reductions to its budget. Allocating federal investments competitively through scientific merit review is the very process that has led this country to be the world leader in science. We encourage you to provide Congressional oversight by protecting that process rather than allowing others to threaten critical contributions to our innovative spirit and knowledge base.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Economic Association
American Educational Research Association
American Geophysical Union
American Geosciences Institute
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
American Mathematical Society
American Physiological Society
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
APS Physics Association
Association for Psychological Science
Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography
Association for Women in Mathematics
Association for Women in Science
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists
Association of Independent Research Institutes
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
Association of Research Libraries
Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy
Association of University Research Parks
Behavior Genetics Associations
Binghamton University
Biophysical Society
Brown University
California Institute of Technology
Case Western Reserve University
Cognitive Science Society
Columbia University
Computing Research Association
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Energy Research and Education Leaders
Council of Environmental Deans and Directors
Council of Graduate Schools
Crop Science Society of America
CUAHSI
DOSECC, Inc.
Duke University
Earthquake Engineering Research Institute
Ecological Society of America
Emory University
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Genetics Society of America
Geological Society of America
Georgia Institute of Technology
Harvard University
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
IEEE - USA
Indiana University
Kent State University
Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Mathematical Association of America
Michigan State University
Midwest Political Science Association
Museum of Science, Boston
National Academy of Neuropsychology
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Communication Association
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON)
National Postdoctoral Association
New York University
Northwestern University
Optical Society of America
Oregon State University
Penn State University
Population Association of America
Psychonomic Society
Purdue University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Research!America
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Social Psychology Network
Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology
Society for Computers in Psychology
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
Society for Mathematical Psychology
Society for Research in Child Development
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
Society for Mathematical Psychology
Society for Research in Child Development
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
Soil Science Society of America
SPIE, International Society for Optics and Photonics
Stanford University
State University of New York
The Johns Hopkins University
The Ohio State University
University at Albany
University of Arizona
University of California System
University of Chicago
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Delaware
University of Illinois
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland
University of Michigan
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin - Madison
Vanderbilt University
Washington University in St. Louis
West Virginia University
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Any questions about this letter should be directed to Sam Rankin at 202-588-1100 or smr@ams.org