



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Haley Stevens (D-MI)
of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
National Science Foundation: Advancing Research for the Future of U.S.
Innovation Part II

May 6, 2021

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing. Thank you to our distinguished panelists for joining us today.

We are here today to continue our discussion about the National Science Foundation and what is needed to propel the agency, and the U.S. research enterprise, into the future. In carrying out its mission to support research across all science and engineering disciplines and advance innovation in STEM education, NSF has delivered enormous benefits to society over the past 70 years.

Even during long stretches of flat funding, NSF continued to experiment with its processes and diversify its portfolio of investments to maximize its impact. Over the past decade, NSF's budget has hovered around \$8 billion dollars. In that time, NSF launched ambitious new initiatives including I-Corps, NSF INCLUDES, the 10 Big Ideas, and the Convergence Accelerators. All the while remaining focused and committed to its core research mission.

NSF has more than demonstrated its capacity to not only survive, but to continue to strive in an austere budget environment. Just imagine what could be achieved if we let this agency, and the thousands of researchers and students it supports, out of the box that has penned them in for all this time.

As a proud co-sponsor of the *National Science Foundation for the Future Act*, I am excited about the opportunity to think big for a change. This bill is a comprehensive authorization that proposes a doubling of the agency's budget in five years. The bill pushes NSF to address longstanding challenges in scaling up effective K-12 STEM education innovations, educating workforce-ready STEM graduates, and training the next generation of researchers and innovators. A major focus of this bill is accountability to the public. New requirements in the bill would address threats to research security and ensure researchers are thinking through the societal impacts of their work.

Finally, there is the issue of expanding NSF's mission. While NSF has supported use-inspired and translational research for decades, it has not been a strategic priority. The *NSF for the Future Act* establishes a Directorate for Science and Engineering Solutions to empower the agency to take risks, forge new partnerships, and pursue research-driven solutions to a wide range of societal problems. This is a two-way street, with researchers advancing solutions for the benefit of communities and those collaborations inspiring researchers to ask questions and try approaches they may never have otherwise considered.

While I am enthusiastic about the need for NSF to take on these new challenges, we must take our time to make sure we get this right. We're off to a good start, with a bill that has been developed over a year of extensive vetting with a wide range of stakeholders, policy experts, and thought leaders. This is the third in a series of hearings this Committee has held on this topic. Last month, the full Committee met to discuss opportunities for reimagining the U.S. innovation ecosystem as a whole. Last week, this Subcommittee heard from the NSF Director and National Science Board Chair. Today we are going to hear from stakeholders, those on the front lines who know intimately what the challenges are and what is needed to overcome them.

We are experiencing a rare moment of bipartisan enthusiasm for correcting course and significantly increasing federal support for U.S. research and development, particularly at NSF. Many point to the dramatic increase in Chinese R&D investments as a strategic imperative. I, for one, am focused on solving problems here at home. Whatever the motivation, we must seize this opportunity to set NSF on a sustainable path to achieving its full potential to advance research and drive innovation that will spawn new industries, secure our national defense and economic leadership, and improve the lives of the American people.

I look forward to today's discussion.