



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:
The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on University Research

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Good morning and welcome to our distinguished panelists. I'd like to give a special welcome to Dr. David Stone from Oakland University, the pride of Michigan's 11th district.

We are here to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on innovation as it relates to our academic research system. We all know that federally funded research conducted on university campuses across the nation is a critical driver of U.S. innovation and economic development, pairing with private sector and government partners to jumpstart new technology and scientific breakthroughs.

The COVID-19 crisis sent shock waves through this critical ecosystem. University administrators, research facility managers, faculty, postdocs, and students are all reeling from the profound disruptions to their work and struggling to adapt amid persistent uncertainty about how long this crisis will last.

In the early days of the pandemic, universities stepped up in a big way to help us combat the disease. Many institutions reconfigured their laboratories for COVID-related research and donated masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment to hospitals and first responders.

I am deeply concerned that the federal government has yet to hold up its end of the bargain. In the absence of a national strategy to mitigate the spread of the virus, universities are faced with difficult decisions about the Fall semester.

Many institutions find themselves in real danger of financial ruin.

Universities are being squeezed from both sides, with a significant loss of revenue and unanticipated costs of cleaning their campuses, providing PPE, developing their own testing and contact tracing technologies, and ramping down and restarting their research programs as well as the virtual learning environments.

Many universities have had to implement hiring freezes. The near-term impact on the research workforce is worrying and will be long-lasting if we don't find solutions.

The impacts to our wider STEM pipeline could be devastating. Undergraduate students are missing out on critical hands-on training. Graduate students are worried there won't be funding for them to finish their research projects and graduate. Post-docs and other early-career researchers are desperately searching for jobs in a severely contracted academic job market.

Early data indicate that the impacts of these challenges are more pronounced for women and other groups historically underrepresented in STEM.

Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Lucas, and several Members of this Committee have championed two bipartisan bills which propose a bold approach to meeting the urgent needs to help universities and academic researchers recover from this crisis.

The *RISE Act* authorizes \$26 billion in emergency relief funding for science agencies to support full-cost extensions of research grants so that we don't lose literally years of critical research.

The *Supporting Early-Career Researchers Act* creates a new \$250 million fellowship program at the National Science Foundation to help keep recent Ph.D. recipients in the STEM pipeline.

I look forward to hearing from our panelists about their experiences navigating the unprecedented challenges to innovation presented by this crisis and the needs for getting our research enterprise back on track.