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America Must Maintain Strong Funding of Scientific Research

Washington, DC – The Science Coalition supports President Obama’s commitment to scientific research and innovation as outlined in his FY 2013 budget submitted to Congress today. The President’s budget request, coupled with strong funding of science agencies in the FY 2012 appropriations process, underscores the bipartisan recognition that basic scientific research is an essential part of the nation’s infrastructure and economy.

Federal funding of scientific research is integral to the discoveries that will lead to the new technologies, new companies and new industries of the future. “The role of research universities has grown increasingly important to the nation’s economic health and status as a global leader in innovation and emerging technology,” said Patrick O’Shea, Vice President for Research at the University of Maryland. “Companies like Google and Genentech were born on college campuses. Continued support from the federal government will enable university researchers to solve global challenges, transform cutting edge research into commercialized technologies, educate student entrepreneurs, and start new businesses that create jobs.”

Despite continued bipartisan support of scientific research, a very real threat to the country’s future exists in the form of potential automatic spending cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act enacted last August. The law, which has resulted in savings of \$1 billion in discretionary spending, has already affected the funding available for scientific research. The Science Coalition is fully supportive of policymakers’ efforts to get our nation on sound fiscal footing, but across-the-board cuts will put America at an even greater competitive disadvantage compared to other countries that are heavily investing in scientific research.

Data recently released by the National Science Board show that research and development expenditures in China and nine other Asian countries has risen to match that of the United States and while the U.S. continues to maintain a position of leadership, “it has experienced a gradual erosion of its position in many specific areas.” One outcome of this shift has been the loss of more than one-quarter of the high-tech manufacturing jobs in the U.S. over the last decade as U.S.-based multinationals have opted to place more of their R&D operations overseas. Indeed the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology noted in a 2011 report that America’s ability to innovate and compete in a global economy is greatly enhanced when R&D and manufacturing are co-located in the United States.

“Now more than ever, the United States must focus its spending on the things that fuel our economy and contribute to job creation,” said David Williams, Dean for Research in Arts, Sciences and Engineering at the University of Rochester. “University-based scientific research fuels economic growth:

More than half of U.S. economic growth in since World War II can be traced to science-driven technological innovation.”

Research creates jobs directly – for the principal investigators, research teams, lab technicians, materials and equipment manufacturers and others who help support the work. Research also leads to indirect job creation: Thousands of American companies and products can trace their founding to federally funded research at universities. A Science Coalition report, “Sparking Economic Growth: How federally funded university research creates innovation, new companies and jobs,” lists more than 100 such success stories.

“The Science Coalition appreciates the support for basic scientific research shown by the Administration and Members of Congress,” said Mel Bernstein, Senior Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Education at Northeastern University. “We thank our nation’s leaders for recognizing the critical role research plays in driving competitive innovation and urge them to act to prevent damaging automatic spending cuts as called for in the Budget Control Act.”

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The Science Coalition is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization of the nation's leading public and private research universities, including Northeastern University, the University of Maryland and the University of Rochester. It is dedicated to maintaining strong federal funding of basic scientific research as a means to stimulate the economy, drive innovation and secure America's global competitiveness.
www.sciencecoalition.org