UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

James B. Milliken
President

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California Congressional Delegation

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the University of California (UC) — a system of over 300,000 students, 266,000 faculty and staff, and 2.5 million alumni across ten campuses and six academic health centers — I write to express my deep concern regarding the significant slow spend rate of the federal science agencies.

The federal government's partnership with UC has always been essential to America's unmatched leadership in science and innovation, and today the significance of our work together is more important than ever. Reliable federal investment is essential to sustain American innovation in science and technology, train the students who will become the country's future workforce, retain and attract researchers who are working on our country's complex challenges and support the patients whose lives depend on this partnership. Federal investments in research have helped make UC America's leading public research university while generating discoveries, technologies, medical advances, and economic growth that benefit the entire nation.

Unfortunately, UC's status as the national leader in research, and America's position as a global research powerhouse, are increasingly at risk. Across multiple agencies – and most notably at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) – funding decisions, award processing, competitive renewals, and the release of new funding opportunities appear to be proceeding at a substantially slower pace than historical norms. At NIH, as of July 13, the agency's new award rate is 22% below pace relative to typical rates in past years. At NSF, as of July 13, the agency's new award rate is 39% below pace relative to typical rates in past years. While NIH's rate is improving, the pace continues to have a detrimental impact on UC and the biomedical research community's efforts to develop new cures and vaccines to address diseases.

As a top recipient of both NIH and NSF funding, UC's researchers and graduate students are disproportionately affected by these delays. But the consequences extend well beyond universities. Delays in federal research funding affect the economy, biomedical advances, technology commercialization, national security research, and partnerships between academia and industry. Our campuses are already experiencing the consequences of the slow spend rate. Some examples of impacts reported by some UC campuses include:

- Significant delays in new awards, funding for recompetes and new research opportunities from NSF and NIH. These delays are forcing a systemwide reduction in facilities and administration costs, which support the broader research ecosystem.

- Effectively freezing the hiring of new postdoctoral and graduate students, limiting job and economic growth and reducing our ability to train the next generation of scientists. Federal grant funding supports both advanced education and the development of the skillsets needed as part of the future STEM workforce.

- Delays in onboarding faculty, staff, postdoctoral scholars and graduate students, which are disrupting workforce continuity and making it more difficult to recruit and retain top talent.

- Weakening university and industry research partnerships, which are critical to developing new technologies and supporting the future STEM workforce pipeline.

- Strain on critical scientific infrastructure, which depends on stable and predictable funding to maintain research capacity and operational readiness.

If not addressed in the immediate future, the slow spend rate will detrimentally impact our ability to lead the nation and the world in scientific research. I respectfully ask that you use every mechanism available to ensure that the science agencies are implementing enacted appropriations consistent with congressional intent and processing awards, renewals, and funding opportunities in a timely manner.

Please let me know if you have any questions, or if there is anything the University can do to assist with your efforts. We appreciate your long-standing support.

Sincerely,

James B. Milliken
President