

Research Risked on 'Fiscal Cliff'

Dec. 7 update: President Peterson [co-signed a letter from the American Association for the Advancement of Science \(AAAS\)](#) to President Barack Obama and congressional leadership on the impact of sequestration on federally sponsored research.

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It's no secret that our universities have a century-old rivalry in sports, but what isn't as well known is that Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia are partners, collaborating in areas ranging from energy and health research, to teacher education, to strengthening local economies around the state.

Together, our two public research universities provide educational opportunities for 56,000 students and conduct \$900 million in research each year, spanning everything from national defense to cancer treatments to Internet security. This research is not only critical to preparing students for good jobs and careers, it is essential if Georgia and our nation are to remain globally competitive while improving the lives of all citizens. But now, much of the federal funding for this important research is in jeopardy because of the so-called fiscal cliff, or sequestration, which is scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 1.

If sequestration becomes a reality, it will affect every major public research university in the nation — and this will impact jobs, the economy and, most importantly, our state's future.

Nearly everyone agrees that sequestration would be a disaster. In 2013 alone, it would result in a \$12.5 billion reduction in federally funded research and development across the U.S., causing an estimated 200,000 job losses, disrupting multi-year research projects, and hampering growth-inducing investments.

While we, as a nation, must get our fiscal house in order, we must do so in a way that helps ensure a prosperous future for our children and grandchildren. Our country faces some very difficult decisions over the next few months. The challenges will require us to set aside partisanship to hold a national dialogue around our nation's priorities. We commend the leadership of Sen. Saxby Chambliss, former Sen. Sam Nunn and other national leaders who have been willing to work toward a long-term fiscal plan based on the bipartisan [Simpson-Bowles Commission](#) debt plan.

Last month, the [Task Force on American Innovation](#), which includes private corporations, research universities and professional associations, sent a letter to the president and congressional leadership with a simple yet critical challenge: develop a plan for debt reduction while keeping the nation on the path to innovation and economic growth by prioritizing spending on science and technology. We support this challenge and urge our congressional leaders to act in a bipartisan way to address our nation's fiscal challenges, while preserving the research and innovation that will allow us to stay competitive in the global economy.

Much of America's competitive advantage in innovation can be linked back to university research. Lasers, the Internet, GPS, enhanced agricultural productivity, countless medical devices, life-saving breakthroughs in fighting disease in humans, animals and plants, and more would never have been developed without federally funded long-term research. In our increasingly global

environment, if we reduce our investment in education and research while other countries increase theirs, we could compromise the very advantages that have made America strong.

Recently Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia were named by SmartMoney Magazine as No. 1 and No. 4 in the nation, respectively, for return on investment for graduates. It is a tribute to the University System of Georgia that two of its universities are in the top five in the nation in return on investment. The economic impact of both universities on Georgia's economy is in the billions. And these are just two of America's outstanding research universities. Imagine the regression in our economy — and in U.S.-based innovations — if sequestration were to result in the elimination of almost 9 percent of federally funded research and development in 2013 alone. Ripples would be felt here in Georgia and throughout the nation.

There is no doubt our leaders have tough choices ahead. We must courageously address the nation's debt crisis, but we must also preserve the strength in America's educational system. No other investment holds as much promise for providing the long-term solutions we need for economic growth and prosperity.