



Office of the President
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South Wright Street
Urbana, IL 61801-3689

Timothy L. Killeen
President

March 18, 2025

Dear Senator/Representative,

I write to express my grave concern about the impact that federal funding cuts, delays and general uncertainty are having on students, faculty and staff across the University of Illinois System. These recent and ongoing federal actions are undermining our ability to find cures or develop new technologies, nurture the next generation of researchers and scientists, and fulfill our land-grant mission to the people of Illinois.

Impact on Research and Clinical Work

Across the U of I System, dozens of awarded projects worth tens of millions of dollars have been impacted by funding terminations, stop-work orders, or full or partial suspensions. These include grants where the U of I System is the lead recipient as well as those where we are a sub-awardee.

It is important to note that open-ended suspensions or “pauses” of grants can create significant financial and other risk. Research involving animals, plants or human subjects cannot simply be put on pause, and the university cannot pause its obligations to employees whose salaries are being paid by those grants. To manage this risk, the university may need to wind down worthy projects that have been put on pause.

In other instances, federal agencies have ceased communications, delayed key decisions or stopped paying invoices for work already completed. In such cases, we are presented with difficult decisions about whether to suspend or terminate activities — including potentially letting employees go — or to continue the work without knowing if or when we will be reimbursed by the federal government. Agencies are also issuing fewer new awards or solicitations and are delaying evaluations of proposals. Collectively, these actions create considerable uncertainty about our ability to maintain our research enterprise.

I am particularly concerned about the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) sudden decision to place a 15% cap on reimbursements to universities for the money we invest in research infrastructure and support. Universities like ours invest significant sums in state-of-the-art labs, high-speed data processing, hazardous waste disposal, regulatory compliance staff, patient safety protocols and maintenance, among other expenses. Without these facilities and administrative (F&A) investments, research will not happen. Federal grants are intended to cover both the direct costs of research — such as researcher salaries, graduate students, equipment and supplies — and the indirect or F&A costs.

A federal judge has stopped NIH from implementing its arbitrary cap on F&A. Should that injunction be lifted, the cap would cost the U of I System approximately \$67 million. Within our UI Health System, the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) oversees 773 clinical trials with an enrollment of more than 10,645 patients. Cuts to NIH funding that supports these trials would have a devastating impact on our patients' ability to access cutting-edge medications and procedures, and hinder UI Health's ability to make medical breakthroughs and provide lifesaving treatments to our state's most vulnerable populations.

Impact on Workforce Pipeline

The disruptions and delays discussed above are particularly damaging for junior researchers and graduate students — the country's next generation of scientists and innovators. Federal grants provide key support to researchers as they launch their careers and build their labs. In addition, thousands of our graduate students rely on federally funded fellowships or research assistantships for their sophisticated training. It is difficult for our colleges and departments to make decisions about graduate student admission without knowing whether we will have the funding to support those students. To make matters worse, dozens of our graduate students have been told that State Department funding for their Fulbright fellowships is on hold. The cumulative impact of these disruptions is damaging the workforce pipeline that is critical to the country's future science and research leadership.

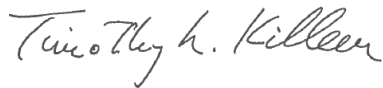
Impact on Land-grant Mission

As a public, land-grant university, we are proud to serve our state by creating knowledge, educating students and providing essential services. Unfortunately, our ability to fulfill that mission is at risk. To give just a few examples:

- The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was required to shut down, and lay off staff associated with, the Soybean Innovation Lab, a U.S. Agency for International Development-funded project that has worked for over a decade to alleviate hunger in Africa while opening new markets for U.S. soy producers.
- More than a dozen federally funded projects in the UIC School of Public Health that would improve the health of Illinois residents and others across the country have been paused and are at risk of closure. These projects address topics from environmental pollutants to the prevention, treatment and control of diabetes.
- A 30-year clinical trial at UIC following patients treated for HIV infection has been terminated, impacting our ability to understand the long-term effects of treatment, find changes in the virus over time and ensure the health and wellness of Illinoisans.

I thank you for your attention to these important issues and for your service to the state and country.

Sincerely,



Timothy L. Killeen