
FEDERAL RELATIONS

Potential loss of federal funding for basic scientific research

During a hearing earlier this year, several university officials from around the country testified before Congress out of the fear that a key engine of U.S. innovation and economic power is in danger of stalling: federal investment in basic research. The nation needs to spend more in pursuit of discoveries with unknown and long-term payoffs. Sometimes lawmakers focus too much on research with short-term goals. The time it takes for basic research to yield a payoff can be 10, 15, or 20 years. That translates to five or 10 congressional elections. As a member of The Science Coalition, Wayne State University has joined more than 50 of our nation's top research institutions to fight for increased funding for basic science. The best outlook this fiscal year would be a hope that no further reductions in spending occur; however, fiscal constrictions imposed by the Budget Control Act – capping spending and the mandatory sequester – make the possibility of even holding even extremely unlikely.

Patent legislation

As lawmakers make another effort to pass legislation targeting abusive patent litigation, universities continue to voice their concerns with proposals they believe go too far. Wayne State University joined more than 140 universities in a letter to House and Senate Judiciary Committee leaders regarding our collective deep concerns that much of the patent legislation currently being discussed in Congress, including the Innovation Act, H.R. 9, goes well beyond what is needed to address the bad actions of a small number of patent holders, and would instead make it more difficult and expensive for patent holders to defend their rights in good faith. The Association of American Universities and the Association of Public Land-grant Universities organized the letter, which Wayne State University (along with the University of Michigan and Michigan State University) signed.

Wayne State University opposed the House version of the bill during the previous Congress, as it was seen as too sweeping and would have discouraged legitimate patent rights enforcement. We also were critical of fee shifting and joinder provisions in that measure. Two such proposals – mandatory fee-shifting, where courts award attorney's fees to the party that prevails in a suit, and involuntary joinder – are especially troubling to the university community because they would make the legitimate defense of patent rights excessively risky and thus weaken the university technology transfer process, which is an essential part of our country's innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem. Wayne State University has been awarded more than 40 patents in the last four years.

The academic research community is endorsing new legislation, introduced by Senator Chris Coons (D- DE) and several Democratic colleagues, to clamp down on so-called patent trolling, in direct opposition to the much-maligned Innovation Act. The academic community has warmly received the Coons bill, which they see as more favorable to innovators and patent owners.

For example, the Association of American Universities said the new measure would target the abusive practices of patent trolls – which buy patents in order to claim copyright infringement and win court settlements – through 'judicious, carefully calibrated measures' that would not

make it more difficult or expensive for all patent holders to enforce their patents. In addition, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities agreed that the Coons legislation will help ensure the strength of the university technology transfer process, and the U.S. Biotechnology Industry Organization also endorsed the measure.

The House and Senate Budgets for FY 2016

The House and Senate agreed to budgets that will not eliminate either spending caps or the sequester for the next fiscal year. Furthermore, there was no priority made for higher education or scientific research. This flat level of funding for the budget, required by current law (the Budget Control Act of 2011), ends up being a real cut in purchasing power for research and Pell Grants. The real fear here is that the United States will lose its lead against global competitors, who have increased funding and investment in innovation.

In our meetings with members of the Michigan delegation and key House and Senate Committees, Wayne State University argues that the stagnant investment in higher education undermines the future of the nation. Instead of across-the-board cuts, we suggest tax reform and entitlement reform. Investments in higher education have compounding effects on the economy, providing room for innovation that will benefit the entire country for years to come. The fight for greater investment during this Congress, though, will be a lengthy and laborious one.

Sequestration, which took effect in 2013 thanks to partisan gridlock, required across-the-board cuts totaling an initial \$1 trillion in lieu of an agreement on specific ways to reduce federal spending. The policy will continue with significant cuts through 2021 unless Congress acts to change it.

America COMPETES Act

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has reauthorized the America COMPETES Act, which authorizes research, engineering, and education programs supported by the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy's Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The America COMPETES Acts of 2007 and 2010 established a unifying vision for enhancing America's competitiveness through science and innovation. Unfortunately, the bill that the Committee marked-up falls far short of the vision created by the first two COMPETES Acts.

The overly tight caps on domestic discretionary spending imposed by the Budget Control Act make it very difficult to provide the investments in research that are needed to advance the nation's innovative capacity and global competitiveness. Nevertheless, most universities were disappointed in the overall level of investments in research proposed by this bill. Moreover, there is significant concern about proposed cuts to vital areas of research at NSF and the Department of Energy, including NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences and Geosciences directorates and DOE's ARPA-E, Biological and Environmental Research, and Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy programs.

The Vice Presidents of Research at Wayne State, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University sent a letter to the Michigan delegation regarding our collective concerns about

the effect of this legislation on the University Research Corridor. Our general concerns are about provisions that remain in H.R. 1806, as well as new requirements that were not included in previous bills. As this bill advances – it passed on the floor of the House – we look forward to working with the Committee and others to improve H.R. 1806 so that it sustains this nation's economic competitiveness and carries forward the original vision of the COMPETES Act. Stagnant research budgets at the COMPETES agencies and other federal research agencies, combined with the rapid increases in research funding made by our economic competitors, are creating an innovation deficit that threatens this nation's role as global innovation leader. It is vital that any legislation to reauthorize the COMPETES Act provide the investments in research that we need to close the innovation deficit.

STATE RELATIONS

Higher Education Budget

The conference committee charged with working out the differences between the House and Senate Higher Education budgets passed their its version of the budget during the last week of May. As the vote on the conference report was unanimous, both chambers should vote to approve this budget (as a part of the Education Omnibus Budget) during the first week of June.

Under the conference report, overall operations funding for colleges and universities is increased by \$20.5 million, or 1.5 percent. If WSU keeps any tuition increase at or below 3.2 percent for the coming year, the University would receive an increase of 0.4 percent, or \$826,900.

Over the last week of budget negotiations, lobbying was quite intense on the tuition cap. The agreement originally called for a 2.8 percent cap. We had several conversations over the final days with the subcommittee chairs (and other members) in both chambers to increase the cap. That effort was successful as the two chairs advocated raising the cap to 3.2 percent as found in the final budget agreement.

Community Health Budget

The University was successful in obtaining three key wins within the Department of Community Health's budget for the coming fiscal year.

First, we were able to restore the proposed cut in funding for the School of Medicine's Young/Lycaki Psychiatric Fund. The cut was proposed during the early portion of the budget process but working with several lawmakers and staff, we were able to maintain funding at the current year level of \$5.6 million.

We were also successful in inserting language in the budget that would set parameters for the School of Medicine's MIDocs initiative. The language states that the state shall work in collaboration with Michigan-based medical schools that choose to participate in the creation of a graduate medical education consortium known as MIDocs. The purpose of MIDocs is to develop freestanding residency training programs in primary care and other ambulatory care-based specialties. The consortium shall design residency training programs to address

physician shortage needs in this state, including placing physicians post-residency in underserved communities across this state.

Finally, the University now has a better chance in obtaining funding for our autism initiatives through a slight change in how the funding is allocated. In the past, specific universities have been selected through the legislative process for funding. Under the language in the budget agreement, there will be a grant process. This should help keep much of the politics out of the funding process.

Requiring Physical Presence to Vote Legislation

Legislation that would require elected members of Boards to be physically present to vote passed the House by a vote of 91-19 during the last week of May. Rep. Amanda Price's (R-Park Twp.) House Bill 4182 will now go to the Senate for their consideration.

Rep. Price's bill will not allow members to vote via electronic means (Skype, video conference, teleconference, etc.) if passed. The bill originally included appointed Boards as well. However, the bill was amended in committee to change it to elected Boards only.

Community College Baccalaureate Legislation

Legislation that would allow community college to offer baccalaureate degrees in several areas received a hearing in the Senate Commerce Committee in May. Senate Bill 98 would allow a baccalaureate in Nursing, Ski Area Management, Wastewater Treatment Technology, Allied Health, Information Technology or Manufacturing Technology.

Those testifying were the bill's sponsor, Sen. Mike Shirkey (R-Jackson), as well as the Deans of Nursing from Siena Heights University and Michigan State University.

There was no vote taken at that time. No word at this point when another hearing might be scheduled.

Detroit Chamber 2015 Mackinac Policy Conference

President Wilson, Vice President Lindsey and State Affairs Director Greg Bird attended the Detroit Regional Chamber's annual Policy Conference. During the conference, President Wilson participated in a morning-long media blitz with fellow university Presidents Schlissel (UM) and Simon (MSU) to discuss the University Research Corridor's 2015 Talent Report.

WSU representatives also had several one-on-one meetings with lawmakers to discuss issues relevant to Wayne State. Meetings were held with Reps. Brian Banks (D-Detroit), Harvey Santana (D-Detroit) and Al Pscholka (R-Stevensville).

We also hosted luncheon for members of the Detroit Delegation to meet with President Wilson. In attendance were Reps. Banks, Santana, Sherry Gay-Dagnogo (D-Detroit), Leslie Love (D-Detroit), Alberta Tinsley Talabi (D-Detroit) and Sen. David Knezek (D-Dearborn Heights).

WSU was also a co-sponsor of Kelly Cawthorne's Michigan Legislative Black Caucus reception on the Island.

Sue Snyder's Sexual Assault Summit

On Monday, June 8th, at the Lansing Center in downtown Lansing, the First Lady, Sue Snyder, is hosting a statewide summit encouraging an end to campus sexual assault.

The day long "Inform. Empower. Prevent. Let's End Campus Sexual Assault Summit." aims to make Michigan a model state in the fight against sexual assault amongst the college age population. The summit is the first step in an ongoing campaign to inform communities, empower individuals and ultimately bring an end to campus sexual assault.

Co-hosted by Sens. Tonya Schuitmaker and Rebekah Warren and Reps. Laura Cox and Marilyn Lane, the summit is a bipartisan effort bringing together college and university representatives, legislators, law enforcement officials, and students for a series of discussion panels and networking sessions.

WSU and other public universities are providing sponsorship for this event. We have been in touch with various individual across the campus to inform them of this event and encourage participation.

MI Legislative Black Caucus Summit

We participated in, and were co-sponsors of, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus Legislative Summit on May 21st in Lansing. The summit brought lawmakers together with organizations, educators, community leaders and activists to discuss state and federal issues important to urban communities.

Patent Infringement Legislation

Sen. Margret O'Brien has introduced legislation that would provide remedies for claims of patent infringement made in bad faith.

We, along with the University of Michigan, have been working with the sponsor and staff to try and clear up some small issues we might have with Senate Bill 289. As this is mainly a federal matter, we currently are of the belief that federal courts are better equipped to handle such matters than the state courts.

At this point there has only been one hearing on the bill and we are learning that there could be positive changes made to the legislation.

Amendment to Require Open Meetings

Rep. Martin Howrylak (R-Troy) has introduced a constitutional amendment (HJR O) that would require open meetings for university boards and provide for public inspection of those meeting records.

As a constitutional amendment, passage would require a two-thirds vote from both the House and Senate. A hearing on the legislation is scheduled for June 4th.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Wayne State Insiders

The Division of Government and Community Affairs (DGCA) presented at the monthly Wayne State Insiders event. The purpose of Wayne State Insiders is to have different WSU's colleges or departments to present to WSU's, alumni, friends, students, parents, faculty and staff to inform them on different things occurring at the university. Since 2012, Wayne State Insiders has managed 22 Insiders events. The Division of Government and Community Affairs presented on May 11, 2015.

The event started with Jeopardy questions as an "ice breaker." The questions consisted of historical questions about WSU and questions about WSU's involvement with the federal, state and community affairs. Each director (federal, state and community affairs) presented to the audience on the topics of current efforts, past successes and how the audience can get involved. Overall, the event was a success.

WSU's Urban Public Policy Resolution Conference

The Division of Government and Community Affairs assisted with the WSU Urban Public Policy Resolution (UPPRC) Conference titled: "Renewal and Reconciliation in Urban Contexts." This conference was jointly presented by the Wayne State University Dispute Resolution Consortium. The two-day conference presented and discussed latest approaches and concepts regarding conflict resolution and practices dealing with policy disputes related to cities and metropolitan areas. The conference discussed best practices and techniques in promoting effective and appropriate mediation, negotiation, dialogue and restorative practice. Vice President Patrick Lindsey opened the conference with remarks and Director Victor Green participated on the panel titled: "Reducing Inter-Ethnic Tensions."

Presentation to City of Detroit Mayor's Duggan Cabinet

Vice Presidents Lindsey and Staebler presented to Mayor Duggan's cabinet on WSU's involvement in community affairs and economic development specifically the growth in Midtown. Each gave a brief overview of their respective divisions; they then outlined how their departments interact and work closely with various departments of the city. Several opportunities for additional collaborations came about as a result of this presentation.

"W" Week

This is the fifth year Wayne Cares has partnered with WSU Athletics, the Double Tree Hotel, The Westin Hotel and Covenant House for the annual Basic Needs Drive to collect toiletry items for area homeless youth and adults. On April 24th, WSU student athletes, WSU students and volunteers distributed more than 1,300 basic needs kits to the homeless in Cass Park, Neighborhood Services Organization (NSO), Mariners Inn, and Covenant House.