

# University research takes the long view; America must, too

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At this very moment, university researchers whose names you don't know are working to change your life. Maybe they'll improve your health, or make your business more productive, or open your eyes to something you never knew could be possible. University researchers have been doing this for decades. The food you eat, the medicines you take, the smartphone you can't live without — all of them are tied to pioneering work performed at universities. Indeed, it's hard to think of a major innovation over the past century that didn't start this way.

As we look forward to tomorrow, we must take the long view. Our nation's well-being depends on the constant process of discovery and innovation. This idea has propelled the United States to great heights of technological achievement, environmental improvements, cultural understanding, advancements in health, global impact and productivity.

University research — characterized by open inquiry and the free exchange of diverse ideas among multi-disciplinary teams — plays an invaluable role in creating limitless opportunities for our world. Universities are the perfect laboratories where we can embrace the risk of failure and the learning that comes from it. Indeed, academic institutions perform more than half of our nation's basic research, forming the building blocks of knowledge that corporations need to develop new technology, services, manufacturing processes and more. In addition, research in the arts, social sciences, economics, education and human services is making communities and businesses stronger and more resilient. Our students learn to solve complex problems, not only in academia, but in business, industry, and civic life.

There is no shortage of important problems that deserve research attention today. How should we deal with the causes and impact of climate change? How do we effectively and efficiently attack diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's, especially as our elderly population grows? How do we create practical and insightful public policies to make change happen? New answers to all of these questions begin with today's research.

Strong collaborations enable our greater and sustainable future. And the funding and support that universities receive from the federal government and elsewhere are more vital than ever. Consider the new National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals, or NIIMBL. With a \$70 million investment from the U.S. Department of Commerce and \$129 million from academic, corporate and government partners nationwide, NIIMBL will seek new ways to make the next generation of gene therapies, vaccines and other medicines. Forty percent of today's medicines are being developed in the biopharmaceutical field, and NIIMBL, headquartered at the University of Delaware, is expected to spur creation of more than 665,000 jobs nationwide over the next decade. It's exactly this kind of farsighted, cooperative vision that will propel our nation forward.

If we want to be the greatest we can be, the U.S. cannot grow complacent in its quest to be the world's leading innovator. Our nation needs a robust research enterprise that provides scientists and entrepreneurs the resources and opportunities they're going to need to continue to change our lives. What do we lose if we don't provide those resources? We'll never know.

*At the University of Delaware, Dennis Assanis is President, Domenico Grasso is Provost and Charles Riordan is Vice President for Research, Scholarship and Innovation. Read UD's statement of commitment to research and scholarship, signed by faculty members, at [udel.edu/support-research](http://udel.edu/support-research).*