Lobos,

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, we are grateful for the support of our entire research community. Below are a few updates on various federal funding agencies, national associations, and legislative actions impacting academic research.

General Updates
Earlier this month, 116 organizations including the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and the Association of American Universities (AAU), sent a letter to congressional leaders urging them to halt piecemeal efforts by executive branch agencies to implement policies that mirror a proposed government-wide grants rule.

AAU published a report on FY26 Federal Research Funding data, summarized below:

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) ended the fiscal year by obligating nearly all its funds despite experiencing a dramatic slowdown in grantmaking earlier in the year.
- The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded 45% fewer awards compared to the FY21-24 average and withheld $1.4 billion – one-fifth of its research budget – in FY26.

Alongside the above AAU report, AAMC has published a complementary retrospective on FY26 NIH research grant activity that includes some additional details about year-over-year extramural funding and emerging trends related to awards.

National Science Foundation

- NSF published its revised Guidance on Financial Assistance (GFA) on Oct. 28. Earlier this year, NSF published its first version of the GFA for public comment, which was designed to align NSF's rules with the proposed changes to the Uniform Guidance (UG), which has since been blocked by Congress until Dec 11. Based on public comments, NSF revised the GFA to remove references to the proposed UG changes and align the guidance document with current UG provisions. The revised GFA and related documents are available here.
- **Legal Action:** Several scientific societies and two researchers have filed a lawsuit against the NSF seeking to halt efforts to dismantle its Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences.

National Institutes of Health
Per NOT-OD-27-006, NIH is proposing to update its **Policy for Data and Safety Monitoring (DSM)**, pertaining to clinical research. The most significant change would expand DSM requirements from only NIH-supported clinical trials to all NIH-supported clinical research, including observational, epidemiologic, behavioral, and health services studies that previously were not covered. Public input is due **Jan. 6, 2027**.

Executive Policies Relevant to Research

- **U.S. Government Policy for Stopping High-Risk Life Sciences Research** – Issued July 20, this policy (pursuant to E.O. 14292) prohibits federally funded dangerous gain-of-function research (DGFR) and bars support for certain international research involving countries or entities of concern. By Jan. 16, 2027, institutions and investigators must implement enhanced oversight, reporting, and compliance procedures. UNM is establishing screening, training, and oversight processes to ensure compliance.
- **National Policy for Nucleic Acid Synthesis Screening** – Issued Nov. 5, this policy (pursuant to E.O. 14292) establishes a government-wide biosecurity framework for purchase and synthesis of synthetic DNA and other nucleic acids, with the intent to reduce the risk of synthetic biology tools being used to create biological threats. It will require procurement workflows and documentation at the institutional level to ensure compliance (see also NIH NOT-OD-27-007).
- APLU, AAU, and the Council on Government Relations (COGR) submitted a joint comment letter in response to the NIH Biosafety Policy for Research Involving Biohazards, asking NIH to reconsider the policy.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Earlier this week, a federal district court in Massachusetts vacated the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) final "Duration of Status" rule, which would have replaced the longstanding DHS framework for F-1 international students and J-1 exchange visitors with fixed admission periods of up to four years and new Extension of Stay requirements. Several national organizations submitted a letter opposing a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposal that would impose unprecedented new fees on F-1 students participating in Optional Practical Training (OPT), as the proposal would place significant financial burden on institutions and potential impacts on international student participation.

Additionally, on Nov. 17, a federal court issued an injunction blocking new DHS restrictions on the types of internships and practical training opportunities currently afforded to international students who are attending colleges and universities while holding a visa.

We hope everyone has an opportunity to relax and rejuvenate over the Thanksgiving holiday.

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