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December 10, 2020

National Science Foundation Agency Review Team  
Office of Science and Technology Agency Review Team  
Office of the President-Elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Members of the Transition Team:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and several of my University of California (UC) colleagues to discuss how UC can support the incoming Biden-Harris Administration. As you may know, UC is the nation's largest academic recipient of federally-sponsored funding for research and other university-based projects, conducting approximately one-tenth of all academic research and development in the United States. Indeed, UC researchers are awarded more National Science Foundation grants than any other institution in the country, receiving approximately 8 percent of NSF's annual appropriations.

Through a robust partnership with NSF and other federal grant making agencies, UC is advancing scientific and technological breakthroughs, educating the next-generation workforce capable of tackling some of the most pressing issues in our society, providing world-class medical training and generating economic growth through new jobs, startup companies and spinoff industries.

Following up on our conversation, I would like to re-iterate some of UC's goals, in relation to supporting the new administration's priorities in science, engineering and technology.

### **PRIORITIZE RESEARCH**

- **Prioritize science and engineering.** We encourage the new administration to consider the current context and potential scenarios that could come into play for the U.S. without a "moonshot"-type of focus:
  - Quickly appoint a Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).
  - Elevate the OSTP Director to a cabinet level position in company with HHS, DOE, DoED, HLS, and Commerce.
  - Double the NSF budget in less than five years, enabling our higher education institutions to address science, engineering and technology issues.
- **Prioritize research recovery.** Recognizing the compounding effects of the pandemic on the research enterprise, we encourage OSTP to:

- Direct the science and engineering agencies to include research recovery funding in their FY2022 budget requests to Congress.
- Encourage the science and engineering agencies to provide cost extensions while minimizing administrative burden for researchers.
- Direct the NSF to develop new programs for researchers with disrupted careers due to the pandemic. This is particularly critical for our graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, who carry out this work and produce technological innovations in our universities on a consistent basis.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & INDUSTRIES OF THE FUTURE

- **Increase research support for systems-level studies.** As a system, UC pledges to be carbon neutral by 2025, and has deep scientific expertise in climate-change research. We applaud the administration's support for climate change issues and the appointment of a "climate czar." Although the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) is in place at OSTP, its primary focus is on the environment. We believe this coordination office should be strengthened to prioritize interagency support on studying the holistic impacts of climate change from a complex systems perspective.
- **Strengthen basic research and cross-agency collaborations.** Partnerships between public and private entities facilitated through the convening power of the OSTP can help strengthen our nation's research and economy. Therefore, we encourage significant cross-agency collaborations. The recent NSF AI institutes would be an ideal model for such centers of excellence.
- **Focus on industries of the future.** We encourage the new administration to consider recommendations from Industries of the Future, and include other areas such as the bioeconomy, as well as increased research efforts for NSF and other agencies. These efforts can also encourage upskilling and reskilling programs at NSF, and a stronger investment in the future of infrastructure.

## FOREIGN INFLUENCE

- **Develop international collaborations.** While we must maintain America's leadership on these issues, collaborations with countries in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific region would be critical to the advancement of science, technology and engineering on a global scale. Therefore, we encourage the new administration to focus on strengthening the research enterprise within the US, as well as the relationships with our international partners. These strategies will help strengthen our industries of the future, as well as address important issues such as climate change by maximizing research efforts directed towards these initiatives.
- **Interagency working group.** The outgoing administration's Joint Committee on the Research Environment was tasked to develop, in coordination with the academic community, streamlined policies and procedures to address foreign influence in academia. We encourage the Biden-Harris administration to maintain a similar working group under OSTP to ensure coordination and consistency of federal agencies relating to research security policies. Additionally, we recommend this entity continue to focus on 1) safe and inclusive research environments; 2) rigor and integrity of research; and 3) reducing administrative burdens.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our ideas and priorities for California and the nation. If you have any questions about the University's federal recommendations and priorities, please contact me. UC has a tremendous amount of expertise that I believe would be invaluable to the new administration, and I am happy to engage with your team in bringing this expertise to the important work before you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Theresa A Maldonado". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Theresa A. Maldonado, Ph.D., P.E.  
Vice President for Research &  
Innovation

cc: Associate Vice President for Federal Governmental Relations, Chris Harrington