



DATE: August 21, 2015

TO: Senator Cory Gardner and Senator Gary Peters, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

FROM: Dr. Marilyn F. Mackes, Executive Director National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

SUBJECT: Response to request for Comments on the Reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is pleased to respond to the request for comments on the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act. We are grateful to Senators Gardner and Peters for providing the opportunity to express our sentiments in support of continuing federal support for scientific research and development and the growth of an educated workforce that will lead America's economy in the 21st Century. Our comments will focus on the following:

- Background information about NACE;
- The need for increased funding of basic research; and
- The need to support STEM education in order to ensure the development of a technically capable workforce; and

NACE Background:

Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is the leading source of information on the employment of the college educated. NACE counts among its membership more than 5,900 college career services professionals at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities nationwide, and more than 3,000 HR/staffing professionals focused on college relations and recruiting at approximately 1,000 employer organizations in a wide variety of industries.

The mission of NACE is to facilitate the employment of the college educated. In fulfillment of its mission, NACE seeks to provide its members; students and their parents; and the public at large with current information about the status of the college labor market including data on recent hiring trends, starting salaries for newly hired graduates, and near-term projections for graduates about to enter the workforce.

For more than 35 years, NACE has surveyed its employer members twice annually to get the pulse of the college hiring market. These Job Outlook surveys detail the direction of employer recruiting (whether employers expect to increase or decrease college recruiting and by how much); identify graduates who

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will be in demand; and highlight the attributes and skills possessed by graduates that employers most value. This job outlook information is complemented by a suite of research products available to both employers and job seekers detailing compensation information for college hires at all levels of education and experience (Salary Survey). Starting salary data are produced by academic degree and major at both a national level and at local metro area levels for many majors, industries, and occupations.

NACE also conducts an annual survey of students asking about their post-degree intentions; their pursuit of employment or an advanced degree; activities undertaken to achieve a full-time position; and their success or lack thereof in achieving a full-time job. The data from this survey gives significant insight into the factors that work on behalf of individual graduates finding success in the job market and the limits to which institutions can assist individuals in finding that success.

The employer and student data reported by NACE has significantly impacted public awareness of the college employment market since the 1950's.

COMPETES Reauthorization

The Need to Fully Fund Basic Research

As a professional association dedicated to facilitating the employment of the college educated, we are keenly aware of the underpinnings necessary for a strong economy and a strong labor market. In the 21st Century nothing will be more important to America's ability to compete economically than a robust technological platform. Investing in basic research will be crucial to ensuring the development of this technological platform. Basic research produces innovation. This innovation is the avenue to the development of new products and services, which spurs the growth of new industries – industries which move the economy forward and will supply the jobs for America's college graduates in the future. NACE university and employer members are vitally concerned with ensuring that innovation remains a hallmark of the American economy – an economy that is supported by a diverse and well-trained workforce.

The federal government must provide the resources necessary for basic research to take place. History tells us that private funding can only be expected to help at the margins. The federal government has been the nation's largest funder of scientific research since World War II and without this support many of the innovations that currently drive our economy would not have taken place. The nation's E-commerce system owes its very existence to federal research dollars. Reducing spending in this area, as we have done in recent years, is simply a "penny-wise, pound-foolish" to supporting the long-term growth of the American economy.

Support for STEM Education

NACE strongly supports increased funding for research opportunities at both the graduate and undergraduate levels that will stimulate students' interests and desire to enter into the STEM workforce. Data gathered through NACE research of the college labor market continues to show that the demand for skilled, knowledgeable employees in the fields of computer science, engineering, the physical sciences, and even segments of the social sciences outweighs the current supply. At the advanced degree level the situation is exacerbated by the large number of graduates who are from outside of the United States. In 2014 just over 45 percent of the masters and doctoral degrees granted in the fields of computer science, engineering, mathematics, and the physical sciences went to nonresident aliens (calculated from preliminary data reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System – IPEDS). Without

increased funding support for graduate education that will enable American students to develop advanced levels of knowledge in STEM fields, American universities will be training the key actors in the workforces of other nations enabling these nations to grow their economies for the 21st Century while our own becomes less capable of competing.

As a final note, NACE would like to stress its support ensuring that the current system of awarding grants remains in-tact and removed from political interference. The established peer review system which flows through the federal science agencies is the best way to ensure that the best and most meaningful research will receive funding. The current policies of the National Science Foundation promote confidence in the quality and importance of the research that is being funded. Any additional legislation which would impose limitations on the individual judgments of the scientists who perform within this peer review system would only lessen the overall quality of the work that is produced and the extended impacts the potential research could have on the strength of the American economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to working with the Senate Commerce Committee in any way we can as it undertakes the reauthorization of COMPETES legislation.