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Another Voice / Higher education

## Next president must invest in scientific research

By Jorge V. Jose

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There are many issues voters will consider in casting their ballots this election season. Jobs, the economy, health care, education and the environment top the lists of voter concerns. These are all very worthy concerns that speak to our sense of security as a nation— financial, health and wellness and, of course, national security.

However, I would like to suggest another issue that is vital to our security as a people and as a nation and that is very much related to the concerns mentioned above. What will the next president do to further invest in science and technology and, more specifically, on funding for basic scientific research now and into the future?

Although I speak as an academic researcher, and a senior university administrator who is keenly interested in this topic for my own profession, I would argue that basic scientific research plays a critical role in addressing each of the issues voters list as most important. Federally funded research at universities, such as the University at Buffalo, fuels innovation, creates jobs and helps keep America competitive globally. Scientific research that often translates into technological progress and innovations has been and is responsible for half of the growth in U. S. gross development product during the past half-century.

Everyday tools and devices we use like the Internet, the iPod, the MRI, GPS and cell phones, to cite only a few examples, were created as a result of basic university research. The \$70 billion biotech industry and the \$300 billion semiconductor industry are prime examples of innovations and industries that were born out of basic research conducted mostly in the United States, and funded predominantly by federally sponsored research.

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research universities, and plays an important role in carrying out the nation's research agenda by training its next generation of scientists, scholars, teachers and leaders in government and industry.

The problem we are facing is that federal funding for basic research has been in serious decline in recent years. In December, Congress delivered the worst blow yet to our scientific enterprise with its omnibus appropriations bill. After accounting for inflation, this legislation essentially flat-funds or cuts key federal funding agencies, which support university-based research.

A presidential candidate's position on funding for basic scientific research may seem like a small matter, but I assure you it is not. The effects are far-reaching. The next president should be a leader, helping to deliver sustained, strong federal funding for basic research and continuing the pattern of discovery, innovation and jobs-creation that has served America so well the last half-century. I think it's an essential question that voters ask the candidates where they stand on this issue of paramount importance.

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