NEWS SUMMARY

Events in Ukraine, the military’s sexual assault policies and the details of the President’s FY15 Budget Request have dominated debate in Washington this week.

Congressional hearings included a March 4 House Agriculture Subcommittee on Horticulture, Research, Biotechnology and Foreign Agriculture hearing entitled “Review the Smith-Lever Act on its 100th Anniversary.”

President Obama has nominated the following individuals to his Administration:

- Susan Athey, Professor of Economics at Stanford University Graduate School of Business, to be a member of the President’s Committee on the National Medal of Science;
- John Cacioppo, the Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor at The University of Chicago, to be a member of the President’s Committee on the National Medal of Science;
- Thomas Lamont, former Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of Defense, to be a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission;
- Alan Lazowski, Chairman and CEO of LAZ Parking, to be a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council;
- Sharon Long, the Steere-Pfizer Professor of Biological Sciences at Stanford University, to be a member of the President’s Committee on the National Medal of Science;
- Latifa Lyles, Deputy Director of the Women’s Bureau at the Department of Labor, to be the Director of the Women’s Bureau; and
- Andrew Schapiro, partner at the international law firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart and Sullivan, LLP, to be Ambassador to the Czech Republic.
On Tuesday, the White House released its FY15 Budget Request (with a top-line of $3.9 trillion). This is the first step in the annual budget process. In the coming months, the House and Senate both will work through the Appropriations Committees to write their recommendations for funding levels for all federal agencies – such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) – with final decisions made though a conference or omnibus process around the end of the year. Below are highlights and links to the relevant budget documents.

*The Opportunity, Growth, and Security (OGS) Initiative:* The Budget Request includes an additional $56 billion – divided evenly between defense and non-defense programs -- for the new OGS initiative which is paid for “with tax loophole closers and spending reforms.” Congress is not expected to pass legislation to make OGS a reality. $5.3 billion of this proposed initiative would support research and development (R&D).

*Research:* The Budget Request targets R&D resources to areas most likely to contribute to the creation of transformation technologies that can create the businesses and jobs of the future. Examples are:
  - agriculture;
  - advanced manufacturing;
  - Brain Research though Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative;
  - clean energy;
  - climate change;
  - health care;
  - nanotechnology; and
  - science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

*WHITE HOUSE OVERALL BUDGET REQUEST:*

*WHITE HOUSE OVERALL R&D BUDGET REQUEST:*
http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/rdbudgets

AGRICULTURE
Recommends level funding for agricultural research formula funds (*Hatch*) and extension formula funds (*Smith-Lever*). Hatch would be funded at $244 million and Smith-Lever would be funded at $300 million.

*Agriculture and Food Research Initiative*: $325 million. This is a $9 million increase over the FY14 enacted amount.

*Innovation Institutes*: This *new* program would start three multidisciplinary Institutes -- each funded at $25 million per year (for a total of $75 million for no less than five years). The focus of these institutes would be:
- advanced bio-based manufacturing;
- anti-microbial resistance research; and
- crop science and pollinator health.

*Food Safety Outreach Program*: $2.5 million for this *new* program. To prepare the next generation of farmers, the program would provide food safety training and technical assistance, education, and extension to owners and operators of small farms, small food processors, and small fruit and vegetable vendors affected by the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011.

*OGS*: Would add $356 million for high-priority USDA research through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Service, as well as construction of a new biosafety research laboratory.


**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) R&D**

*TOTAL for Basic Research (6.1)*: $2.018 billion. Within this amount:
- *DARPA*: $2.9 billion ($80 million would go to the BRAIN Initiative.)
- *Army 6.1*: $424.2 million
- *Navy 6.1*: $576.3 million
- *Air Force 6.1*: $454.5 million
- *Defense-wide basic research programs*: $562.5 million


**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
Pell Grants: $22.8 billion, the same as the FY14 enacted amount. The maximum Pell Grant is scheduled to increase to $5,830 (+$100) for the 2015-2016 award year.

New programs:
• College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus: $7 billion over 10 years to provide bonus grants to colleges that successfully enroll and graduate a “significant” number of low- and moderate-income students on time.
• State Higher Education Performance Fund: $4 billion over four years for competitive grants to states to support:
  o implementation of performance-based funding; and
  o maintaining state expenditures on higher education or increasing state support in low-investment states. States would be required to match this funding dollar for dollar.
• STEM: $170 million.
• Effective Teaching and Learning Program: This program would replace the existing Mathematics and Science Partnerships program and make awards to states, or consortia of states and other entities, to implement a comprehensive strategy for STEM instruction to students.

International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs: $76.2 million, an increase of $4 million, or 6 percent.

Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), First in the World (FITW) and College Success Grants for Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs):
• FIPSE: $175 million. FIPSE awards competitive grants for exemplary, locally developed projects that are models for innovative reform and improvement in postsecondary education.
  o $100 million would fund the second year of FITW.
  o $75 million would support College Success Grants for MSIs.

Institute of Education Sciences: $637.2 million, an increase of $60.2 million over FY14.

Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need: $29.3 million, the same as the FY14 enacted amount.

Government Performance Results Act Data/Higher Higher Education Act Program Evaluation: $52.0 million, an increase of $51.4 million.

Campus-Based Aid: The Administration recommends level funding for:
• Federal Work Study ($1.2 billion),
• Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants ($975 million),
• Federal TRIO programs ($838 million), and
• GEAR UP ($302 million).
However, the Administration would revise current Federal Work Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants funding formulas to “reward institutions that enroll and graduate higher numbers of Pell-eligible students while offering an affordable and quality education.”

*Perkins Loan program:* The Administration would reform and expand the Perkins Loan program to provide $8.5 billion in new loan volume annually—eight and a half times the current Perkins volume. The expanded program would support Perkins Loans at approximately 2,700 additional postsecondary education institutions, providing more students with increased access to affordable loan funds that carry important protections and benefits.

*Advanced Research Projects Agency-Education (ARPA-ED):* Up to $49.5 million for ARPA-ED, an initiative that would aggressively pursue technological breakthroughs with the potential to dramatically improve the effectiveness and productivity of teaching and learning.

*Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Student Loan Repayment:* As in previous years, the Budget Request would extend the availability of the PAYE repayment plan to all student borrowers.

*DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY:*
http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget15/index.html

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)**

*Office of Science:* $5 billion. Specifically:
- *Advanced Scientific Computing:* $541 million
- *Basic Energy Sciences:* $1.81 billion
- *Biological and Environmental Research:* $628 million
- *Fusion Energy Sciences:* $416 million
- *High Energy Physics:* $744 million
- *Nuclear Physics:* $593.6 million
  - *Facility for Rare Isotope Beams:* $90 million

*The Office of Science’s Energy Hubs:* the request recommends funds for the Fuels from Sunlight and the Batteries Hubs.

*Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy:* $325 million (a 31% increase).

*Energy Security Trust:* $2 billion over 10 years from existing federal oil and gas revenue to fund R&D “on cost-effective, advanced transportation alternatives utilizing cleaner fuels such as electricity, homegrown biofuels, renewable hydrogen and domestically produced natural gas that reduce our dependence on oil.”
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy’s Clean Energy Manufacturing Institute:
DOE proposes funding at least one manufacturing institute in FY15. This institute would focus on composite materials.

OGS: Would add funds to support “additional investments in clean energy to accelerate both research and the development and deployment of new technologies, including innovative new materials, processes, and system designs for sustainable vehicles and fuels, advanced manufacturing, solar and wind energy, and more efficient buildings.”

* DOE BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY: http://www.energy.gov/budget

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

National Health Service Corps: $3.9 billion over the next six years to put 15,000 providers in high-need areas.

Grant-Based Graduate Medical Education Payment: $5.23 billion over 10 years.

National Institutes of Health (NIH): $30.2 billion, a 1% increase over FY14, but approximately $600 million below the FY12 pre-sequestration level of $30.8 billion.
• BRAIN Initiative: $100 million.
• Cures Acceleration Network: $30 million.
• National Research Service Award: The Budget Request proposes a 2% stipend increase.
• “DARPA-like” research funding mechanism: $30 million for a new advanced research program modeled after the cutting-edge DARPA program at the Department of Defense.
• Alzheimer’s Disease: estimated $566 million.
• Big Data to Knowledge program: This program facilitates sharing and protecting data among researchers, develops faster and more accurate analytical methods. It establishes Centers of Excellence to help solve the most intractable Big Data problems to deepen understanding of disease and speed translation of new treatments.
• OGS: Would add $970 million to support about 650 additional new grants and provide further increases for the BRAIN Initiative, Alzheimer’s research, vaccine development and another $30 million for the DARPA-inspired program.

HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES (HRSA):
• Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs: $224 million, the same as FY14.

* HHS/NIH BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY: http://officeofbudget.od.nih.gov/br.html
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)


OGS: Would add $885.5 million to support:
- the development of game-changing space technologies that will lower the cost and increase the capabilities of future space activities;
- the ability of American companies to carry people to space;
- science missions and research that will enhance human understanding of the Earth and solar system; and
- NASA’s investment in a heavy lift rocket and crew capsule for deep space exploration.


NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

TOTAL: $146 million, level with FY14.

Standing Together -- The Humanities and the Experience of War: This new program would support active duty military, veterans, military families, and civilians by encouraging and expanding humanities projects that focus on the history, experiences, and meaning of war and military service.


NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY (NIST)

TOTAL: $680 million.

Advanced Manufacturing Technology Consortia: $15 million

The Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership: $141 million, a $13 million increase over FY14.
* NIST BUDGET REQUEST OVERVIEW (additional details will be provided by NIST next week):

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) OFFICE OF OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH**

**TOTAL:** $495 million. This is a substantial increase over the FY14 recommendation of $416 million.

* NOAA BUDGET REQUEST OVERVIEW (additional details will be provided by NOAA next week):

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF)**

**TOTAL:** $7.3 billion (the FY14 appropriation was $7.2 billion). This amount includes:
$5.807 billion for *Research and Related Activities*.

The Administration’s priorities are very similar to its FY14 priorities. They include:
- *advanced manufacturing* ($151 million for fundamental research on revolutionary new technologies);
- *clean energy* ($362 million for fundamental research directly relevant to future clean energy technologies “such as solar power generation and energy efficiency”);
- “*innovative proposals at the intersection of biology, mathematics, the physical sciences and engineering*” ($29 million);
- *robotics* ($29 million for the NSF contribution to the National Robotics Initiative; and
- *cyber-infrastructure* ($125 million).

*BRAIN Initiative*: $20 million.

*Education*:
- $333 million to support graduate student researchers;
- $7 million for a new program to “spark innovation in graduate education by providing awards to universities to explore novel ideas in student training;”
- $118 million for a “consolidated program to implement evidence-based instructional practices, expand the evidence base, and support research on how new technologies can facilitate adoption and use of new approaches to instruction;” and
- $75 million for Research Experiences for Undergraduates.

*Innovation Corps*: $25 million.
OGS: Would add $552 million for:
- an additional 1,000 new research grants in areas such as neuroscience and materials science; and
- additional research traineeships to improve advanced education in high priority areas, impacting thousands of graduate students.

* NSF BUDGET REQUEST OVERVIEW (additional information will be provided by the NSF on March 10): http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2014/nsf14041/nsf14041.pdf

STEM

TOTAL: $2.9 billion. According to the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy STEM Education FY 2015 summary document, “Agencies will focus on internal consolidations and eliminations, while funding their most effective programs. As a result, the 2015 Budget continues to reduce fragmentation, building on the substantial number of internal consolidations and eliminations that agencies began implementing in 2013 and 2014.” The agencies are still expected to follow the Federal STEM Education Five-Year Strategic Plan and Committee on STEM Education report. The FY15 Budget Request proposes 31 additional STEM education program consolidations or eliminations.”

* STEM BUDGET REQUEST OVERVIEW: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/Fy%202015%20STEM%20ed.pdf

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)

Feed the Future (FTF): $924 million.

Global Climate Change (GCC): $316.9 million.

New Model of Development -- Global Development Lab: $146.3 million.

OGS: Would add funding for:
- bilateral food security to deepen and intensify the impact of the initiative as well as additional funds for multilateral food security funding; and
- science, technology, innovation, and partnerships to scale up innovative solutions and fund new programs focused on achieving transformational development results and accelerating progress toward development goals.
* USAID BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY:
http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222898.pdf

NEWS ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Table of Contents

**AGRICULTURE**
- USDA ANNOUNCES 2014 FARM BILL STAKEHOLDER MEETING DATES
- AGRICULTURE: WHITE HOUSE TRIES AGAIN TO SLASH CROP INSURANCE SUBSIDIES
- FRANK LUCAS: NO REST FOR HOUSE AG COMMITTEE FOLLOWING FARM BILL PASSAGE

**BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**
- COMPARING SUCCESS RATES, AWARD RATES, AND FUNDING
- BRAIN EAGERS TO ENABLE INNOVATIVE NEUROTECHNOLOGIES TO REVEAL THE FUNCTIONAL AND EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF NEURAL CIRCUITS UNDERLYING BEHAVIOR AND COGNITION
- CURING DISEASE WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

**FEDERAL BUDGET**
- THE 2015 BUDGET, REAL AND ILLUSORY
- OBAMA'S BUDGET PROPOSES INCENTIVES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
- MAJOR U.S. SCIENCE AGENCIES FACE FLAT PROSPECTS
- FEDERAL SPENDING ON SCIENCE, ALREADY DOWN, WOULD REMAIN TIGHT
- DOA BUDGET MAY HAVE LIFE AFTER DEATH

**HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**
- RATINGS STRATEGY WITH A COST?
- THE END OF ON-CAMPUS PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES?

**INNOVATION**
- PRESIDENTIAL INNOVATION FELLOWS INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED

**INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**
- USAID TO RELEASE WOMEN'S LIVES AND CHALLENGES REPORT
- NEW BILATERAL PILOT OPPORTUNITY WILL FUND COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN US AND UK BIOSCIENCE RESEARCHERS
- CAMPUSSES ENCOURAGED TO NOMINATE YOUNG SCIENTISTS FOR ASPIRE PRIZE
- ‘GENERATION STUDY ABROAD’
- THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS TO HOST WEBINAR SERIES ON INTERNATIONAL DESIGN INITIATIVES
- DESPITE TUG-OF-WAR, USAID GAINS LEEWAY ON FOOD AID

**PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING**
- ENERGY BUDGET WOULD BOOST BASIC RESEARCH, WEAPONS MAINTENANCE
- PRESIDENT REQUESTS $17.5 BILLION FY2015 BASE BUDGET FOR NASA PLUS $886 MILLION IN OGS INITIATIVE
• NASA TO SEEK IDEAS FOR $1 BILLION MISSION TO EUROPA
• CYBER-PHYSICAL SYSTEMS (CPS)
• NOAA SEEKS ANSWERS TO GREAT LAKES WATER LEVEL CHANGES
• DOD 'PLANNING MUCH MORE CAREFULLY' FOR SEQUESTER

**SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY**
• ACE SUBMITS COMMENTS TO PRESIDENT’S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

**SOCIAL SCIENCES, THE ARTS & THE HUMANITIES**
• UPCOMING GUIDANCE ON “WOMEN OF SOUL: IN PERFORMANCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE”
• OBAMA ADMINISTRATION REQUESTS $146,021,000 FOR NEH IN 2015
• PRESIDENT OBAMA RELEASES FY 2015 BUDGET NUMBER FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
• WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY REACHES MILESTONE AS 10,000 ITEMS NOW ACCESSIBLE

**STUDENT AID**
• OBAMA TO ANNOUNCE NEW FAFSA PUSH
• OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL: PROMOTING COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND GRADUATION

**TAXES**
• TAX BREAKS FOR STUDENTS
• WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR’S TAX OVERHAUL PLAN WOULD AFFECT UNIVERSITIES, STUDENTS

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**Summaries of News Articles of Interest**

*Please click on the Title to link to the entire article.*

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**AGRICULTURE**

**USDA ANNOUNCES 2014 FARM BILL STAKEHOLDER MEETING DATES**
USDA News Release, March 5, 2014

The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced a series of meetings to share information with stakeholders about the 2014 Farm Bill implementation process...

**AGRICULTURE: WHITE HOUSE TRIES AGAIN TO SLASH CROP INSURANCE SUBSIDIES**
By Philip Brasher, *CQ.com*, March 4, 2014

President Barack Obama’s 2015 budget for the USDA proposes to spend more money on research, school nutrition and protection of honeybees, while reviving the administration’s attempt to slash crop insurance subsidies, a proposal that went nowhere when lawmakers wrote the newly enacted farm bill. The crop insurance cuts, which would save $14 billion, won’t get anywhere this year either, but including them in the new budget proposal allowed
the administration to propose a way to pay for its other spending priorities. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in a briefing with reporters defended the administration’s decision to repeat its proposal to slash crop insurance spending so soon after the idea was rejected by Congress. He said the administration was staying consistent with past budget proposals while identifying ways to pay for other initiatives. “Budgets are statements of priorities, and as you know we’re dealing with a budget in which Congress has set a defined amount of money in which we are to fund all of the activities of the federal government,” he said. The budget proposal would reduce crop insurance premium subsidies and cut insurance companies’ rate of return to save $14 billion over 10 years. In addition, the USDA’s proposed budget calls for closing or consolidating 250 Farm Service Agency offices nationwide and creating service centers that are better staffed and can help producers with economic development assistance and other programs. As more farmers do their paperwork over the Internet, “we have to create new opportunities to keep those farm service agencies viable,” Vilsack said. “It’s more difficult to do that if you have an office that has one or two people in it.” Thirty-one FSA offices currently have no full-time employees. Savings from closing offices would be re-invested in creating the regional service centers. The USDA’s total budget authority is projected to drop from $158 billion in fiscal 2014 to $146 billion in 2015, mostly due to an expected $11 billion reduction on the mandatory side through the lower crop subsidies and crop insurance spending. Discretionary spending would fall from $24 billion enacted in 2014 to $23 billion, according to the USDA budget summary. The House Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee will start delving into the 2015 request at a 10 a.m. hearing Wednesday. The budget also revives another proposal rejected in the farm bill (PL 113-79) to buy more food assistance abroad, near where it is needed, in lieu of shipping U.S.-grown commodities. The farm bill would allow up to $80 million annually in cash aid. The budget would allow $350 million, or 25 percent of the $1.4 billion requested for Food for Peace, to be used for local or regional procurement as well as food vouchers or cash transfers. Last year’s budget proposed allowing 45 percent of Food for Peace to be used for local and regional purchases. The White House appears to be resigned to leaving Food for Peace at the USDA rather than turning it over to the [U.S.] Agency for International Development (USAID), as last year’s budget would have done. The farm bill would allow $80 million to be spent annually for local and regional aid purchases. The Food and Drug Administration is proposing again to impose user fees to pay for ramping up inspections the agency is required to do under the Food Safety Modernization Act (PL 111-353). A fee on imports would raise $169 million to pay for inspecting imported foods, and a fee on food facilities would bring in $60 million to inspect processors. Appropriators have routinely rejected such fees. The USDA’s budget includes $75 million to launch three new multidisciplinary agricultural research institutes dedicated to crop science and pollinator health, biobased product manufacturing and antibiotic resistance. According to the budget summary, the idea is to “leverage the best research within the public and private sectors to create opportunities for new business ventures.” The Obama budget also endorses western lawmakers’ efforts to change the way the federal government pays for the growing cost of combating large wildfires. The Forest Service, an arm of the USDA, is responsible for a major share of such fire fighting as the land manager of more than 200 million acres of forests and grasslands. Under the proposal, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior would be able to tap disaster money from a special fund of the Federal Emergency Management
Agency. The goal is reduce the amount of borrowing the agencies do from internal accounts such as thinning forests and clearing brush. Critics of the practice say such transfers shortchange efforts that could prevent or reduce fires. Other highlights of the budget:

- The Food Safety and Inspection Service’s $1 billion budget would by trimmed by $9.3 million compared with the 2014 enacted level, in part by implementing its controversial overhaul of poultry inspection. The department says that overhaul would allow the agency to focus more on microbial food safety and less on physical inspection. Also, the administration calls for a new fee it terms a performance-based user fee that would be charged to plants that do not comply with regulations or that require additional FSIS inspections because meat or poultry samples fail testing for pathogens such as salmonella. The fee would generate an estimated $4 million in fiscal 2015.
- The USDA’s general counsel’s office, which must review a long list of farm bill rules, would get a $6.4 million increase to support 31 full-time employees.
- The National Agricultural Statistics Service would fund a quarterly survey on bee and honey production with additional questions to assess colony loss, and an annual survey on pollination service costs.
- The Agricultural Research Service would fund new and expanded research initiatives in environmental stewardship; livestock and crop breeding and protection; food safety; human nutrition; and pollinator health. Money for the initiatives would come almost entirely from scaling back existing research lines.

* This is the complete news article.

**FRANK LUCAS: NO REST FOR HOUSE AG COMMITTEE FOLLOWING FARM BILL PASSAGE**

Though the bulk of the work with the 2014 Farm Bill is now behind him, Third District Oklahoma Congressman Frank Lucas said there is still more work to be done by the House Agriculture Committee which he chairs...Lucas says the USDA has gotten off to a quick start in the implementation process, especially after President Barack Obama’s recent focus on the California drought. “I think they’re working very hard to address the drought disaster payments, some of those that are backdated for years, trying to catch up on that. The rulemaking process to implement the two new choices in the commodity title, whether it’s PLC or ARC, so that producers will be able when they sign up for the 2014 farm bill will be prepared to make their choices, I think is somewhere into the summertime.”

**BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

**COMPARING SUCCESS RATES, AWARD RATES, AND FUNDING**
By Sally Rockey, *Rock Talk*, March 5, 2014
Let’s delve a bit deeper into one of your and my favorite topics: success rates. Most of you monitor success rates as an indicator of NIH funding trends but also as the main way to determine your chances of receiving an NIH award. But what exactly do these rates mean? Our official success rates for the fiscal year – as defined here – are based on the number of awards made divided by the sum of the applications reviewed that fiscal year where revisions submitted in the same fiscal year are collapsed and counted as one application.

**BRAIN EAGERS TO ENABLE INNOVATIVE NEUROTECHNOLOGIES TO REVEAL THE FUNCTIONAL AND EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF NEURAL CIRCUITS UNDERLYING BEHAVIOR AND COGNITION**

NSF Dear Colleague, March 7, 2014

The NSF is a partner in President Obama’s “BRAIN” Initiative. As part of a broader range of activities related to the BRAIN Initiative, the Divisions of Integrative Organismal Systems and Biological Infrastructure in the Biological Sciences Directorate seek Early Concept Grants for Exploratory Research proposals with the potential to transform our ability to analyze brain function underlying behavioral and cognitive processes. NSF’s interests lie in highly innovative projects in their early stages that utilize new and untested but potentially ground-breaking approaches and neurotechnologies that bridge multiple spatial, temporal, and organizational scales to provide fundamental insights into the emergent properties of neural circuitry that ultimately lead to behavior and cognition.

**CURING DISEASE WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS**

By Representative Fred Upton (R-MI), *U.S. News and World Report Opinion*, March 6, 2014

It has been nearly 50 years since the Beatles released their hit, “A Little Help from My Friends.” Yet decades later, the message is still timely, offering advice for an unexpected audience: a medical research apparatus that remains in the Sgt. Pepper era. In the 1960s, we understood disease based on clinical symptoms – the size of a tumor or a white cell count. As a result, drug approvals were – and largely still are – based on a static, impersonal paradigm of evaluating symptoms. Fast forward to today, when the most exciting medical breakthroughs evaluate indications of illness at the molecular level...Yet the revolution in molecular biology, computing power and social networks demands that we take a fresh look at our drug approval regime and make sure it is taking advantage of all these new tools. Over the next several months, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which I chair, will begin a series of listening sessions and roundtables to gather advice and advance ideas about how to streamline the approval process, spur more scientific collaboration and ensure the United States remains the world leader in this field.
THE 2015 BUDGET, REAL AND ILLUSORY
By Michael Stratford, Inside Higher Ed, March 5, 2014

President Obama on Tuesday sent Congress a budget request that would keep most student aid and basic research programs level-funded; the 2015 plan also included several ambitious new higher education proposals. But the new proposals stand little chance of passing a gridlocked Congress that is gearing up for the midterm elections this fall. The president’s budget is largely a political exercise this year, since Congress has already set top-line budget levels for federal spending.

OBAMA'S BUDGET PROPOSES INCENTIVES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The maximum Pell Grant would increase by $100, and states and colleges would get billions of dollars in incentive grants under President Obama’s 2015 budget proposal, released on Tuesday. The spending plan seeks $7-billion over 10 years to reward colleges that do a good job of graduating Pell Grant recipients and $4-billion over four years to encourage states to maintain their higher-education spending and adopt performance-based funding models.

MAJOR U.S. SCIENCE AGENCIES FACE FLAT PROSPECTS
By David Malakoff, ScienceInsider, March 4, 2014

President Barack Obama on Tuesday released a $3.901 trillion budget request to Congress, including proposals for a host of federal research agencies. The unveiling is just the beginning of the annual budget process; Congress will now chew on the proposal and is likely to ignore many of the White House's suggestions. Still, the budget request offers insight into the White House's research priorities and can play an important role in negotiating final spending levels for the 2015 fiscal year, which begins 1 October.

FEDERAL SPENDING ON SCIENCE, ALREADY DOWN, WOULD REMAIN TIGHT

The Obama administration, constrained by spending caps imposed by Congress, suggested on Tuesday a federal budget for 2015 that would mean another year of cuts in the government’s spending on basic scientific research. The budget of the National Institutes of Health, the largest provider of basic research money to universities, would be $30.4-billion, an increase of just $200-million from the current year. After accounting for inflation, that would be a cut of about 1 percent. Three other leading sources of research money to universities—the NSF, the DOD, and NASA — also would see their science budgets shrink or grow slower than the expected 1.7-percent rate of inflation. Over all, federal spending on research and development
would increase only 1.2 percent, before inflation, in the 2015 fiscal year, which begins on October 1. The portion for basic research would fall 1 percent, a reduction that inflation would nearly triple.

**DOA BUDGET MAY HAVE LIFE AFTER DEATH**  
By David Nather, *Politico*, March 4, 2014

Yes, we all know President Barack Obama’s budget is dead on arrival. But there are parts you should read anyway. Why? Because a president’s budget proposals don’t have to get through Congress to have an impact on the political debate. There are always going to be pieces that will show up again in Obama’s speeches, or in the speeches of Senate and House Democrats as they try to draw contrasts with Republican budget ideas. And there are even a few ideas that have just a hint of bipartisan support. Maybe not enough for Congress to pass them tomorrow but enough to guarantee that some lawmakers will keep pushing their own bills or raising the ideas in one form or another.

**HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**

**RATINGS STRATEGY WITH A COST?**  

Of all the criticism leveled at the Obama administration’s plan to rate colleges, perhaps the most widespread critique is that a ratings system will harm disadvantaged students’ access to higher education. It’s a theme that permeated the Education Department’s public hearings on the ratings proposal last fall as well as the hundreds of pages of comments officials have received about the plan. A ratings system in which colleges are judged based on the outcomes of their students, the argument goes, would create incentives for institutions to stop enrolling disadvantaged students, who may hurt the institution’s objective measures, such as graduation rates or post-graduate earnings.

**THE END OF ON-CAMPUS PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES?**  

A little-noticed question in controversial proposed IRS rules for politically active nonprofits could lead to the end of election debates on college campuses, colleges are warning. Plenty of colleges never want to host a debate - it's an expensive endeavor, with a minimum commitment of at least $1.5 million in 2012 - but there are always volunteers who want the fame it brings. "We really do believe this would undermine our civic mission, which goes way back, even before the country was founded," said Steven Bloom, director of federal relations at the American Council on Education.
INNOVATION

PRESIDENTIAL INNOVATION FELLOWS INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED
By Amy Stewart, Techwire, March 6, 2014

The federal government Thursday released a YouTube video to ask individuals from the private sector to work with them to help make government worker better. It is the third round of a program known as the Presidential Innovation Fellows initiative. Round three priorities include the use technology to help veterans get access to services, innovating data resources and crowdsourcing government. The deadline to apply is April 7. The application is at https://gsafas.secure.force.com/apply.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

USAID TO RELEASE WOMEN’S LIVES AND CHALLENGES REPORT
USAID Press Release, Friday, March 7, 2014

Today the USAID and the Demographic and Health Surveys Program released Women’s Lives and Challenges: Equality and Empowerment since 2000, a report that assesses gains in women’s status and gender equality worldwide. This report, among the most extensive recent assessments of women’s status, looks at women’s progress in four continents and more than 45 countries. Women’s Lives and Challenges evaluates trends in women’s employment, domestic decision-making, exposure to violence, and access to education and health care.

NEW BILATERAL PILOT OPPORTUNITY WILL FUND COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN US AND UK BIOSCIENCE RESEARCHERS
NSF News Release, March 4, 2014

A new, two-year pilot opportunity--known as The U.S. NSF/BIO-UK BBSRC Lead Agency Pilot Opportunity--is being formally launched today. This Pilot opportunity is designed to make it easier for research teams comprised of scientists from the United States and the United Kingdom to manage funding logistics and to simultaneously obtain funding from both countries. It is funded by the U.S. NSF Directorate for Biological Sciences and the U.K.’s Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).
CAMPUSSES ENCOURAGED TO NOMINATE YOUNG SCIENTISTS FOR ASPIRE PRIZE

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), an organization of 21 Pacific-Rim countries, including the United States, has announced the 2014 ASPIRE Award. The APEC Science Prize for Innovation, Research and Education -- called the "ASPIRE Prize" -- honors a young scientist who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in scientific research, has cooperated with scientists from other APEC-member economies, and has contributed to this year's theme of "Intelligent Transportation." Since each country submits a single nomination for the ASPIRE Prize, campuses interested in having a young scientist considered for the award should submit a nomination form to the State Department by Friday, April 11, 2014. Each campus may submit up to four nominations. (The State Department then submits a nominee to the awards committee by May 16, 2014.) Nomination materials are available here. Questions about the ASPIRE Prize should be directed to Jonathan Peterson (PetersonJE1@state.gov) in the State Department's Office of Science and Technology Cooperation. Please include "APEC ASPIRE Prize 2014" in the subject line.

* This is the complete news article.

‘GENERATION STUDY ABROAD’
By Elizabeth Redden, Inside Higher Ed, March 3, 2014

More than 150 U.S. colleges have pledged to increase their study abroad participation rates as part of a new national initiative, Generation Study Abroad, being spearheaded by the Institute of International Education. The initiative has the exceedingly ambitious aim of doubling American study abroad enrollment, to about 600,000, by the end of the decade. According to IIE data, just under 10 percent of American undergraduates currently study abroad during the course of their degrees.

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS TO HOST WEBINAR SERIES ON INTERNATIONAL DESIGN INITIATIVES
National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) News Release, March 6, 2014

Sessions on March 19, May 7, and June 18, 2014 are free and will be archived for later viewing. Exciting developments in design are taking place all over the world, as design-based solutions are increasingly used to meet societal, environmental, and system challenges. To explore some of these significant advances, the NEA will host a three-webinar series highlighting international design initiatives and partnerships. The NEA's Design Programs office, led by Director of Design Programs Jason Schupbach, will convene panels of leading practitioners to present case studies and provide insights on successful design models. Titled Learning from Abroad, the series will include a conversation with finalists of the 2013-2014 World Design Impact Prize, the
possibilities for government innovation through design thinking, and the intersection of universal design and landscape design.

DESPITE TUG-OF-WAR, USAID GAINS LEEWAY ON FOOD AID
By Ellyn Ferguson, CQ.com, February 28, 2014

The Obama administration gained some ground during this Congress in its bid to change the way the United States buys and delivers emergency food aid to hungry people around the globe. However, groups that opposed the administration’s plan say they succeeded in stopping the White House from achieving sweeping changes. The administration and its opponents have each declared victory, but the tug-of-war between them over how the United States — the world’s top humanitarian food aid donor — provides food assistance seems likely to continue. The direction of the Food for Peace program has been a contentious topic over the years, causing divisions among key players such as agriculture groups, food processors and nonprofit food aid organizations. The recently signed 2014 farm bill gives the USAID and the USDA more leeway to use money to buy emergency food closer to areas of need. USAID also would be able to cut back on the criticized practice of selling U.S. food abroad to raise money for nonemergency development projects. Lucas said it appears the administration wanted to tap the USDA budget because it would not win congressional support for additional foreign aid money for disaster food aid. But the Obama administration failed to persuade Congress to shift up to 85 percent of the Food for Peace funding out of the USDA and into USAID. Also largely unchanged is the policy of buying most humanitarian food aid in the United States and then shipping it to overseas destinations aboard U.S.-flagged ships. The Obama administration and supporters of the change say the current practice is inefficient and reflects the 1954 origins of the program. Its original goal was to aid not only the hungry of the world, but also U.S. agriculture and shipping. The administration’s call for greater flexibility drew support from the Democratic-leaning National Farmers Union, and multi-national food giant Cargill. But Ellen Levinson, who represented a coalition of unions, shipping companies, agriculture groups and others opposed to the administration’s proposal, said the would-be reformers reached too far. The Alliance for Global Food Security, led by Levinson, developed a campaign that highlighted potential job losses in the U.S. commercial shipping fleet and the closing of a market for some U.S. farmers and processors. The campaign also played to lawmakers’ emotions by noting that more cash purchases overseas would mean fewer bags of food with a U.S. logo to remind recipients which country provided the aid. Sen. Mark Pryor, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee, pulled one of the bags out for display when Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack testified in defense of the administration’s plan. The Arkansas Democrat seemed unswayed by Vilsack’s assurances that up to 55 percent of the money could still be spent in the United States. Now Levinson says her coalition will review the new rules and guidelines proposed for the small shifts in food assistance. “We’re focused on the regulatory process. That’s most important,” Levinson said. “We have to make sure that they are streamlined and that they are usable and practical in the field.” Christopher Barrett, an agriculture and development economist, said Levinson’s group is a winner because most U.S. food aid, known as in-kind aid, will continue to be bought in the United States and transported
to disaster areas. Governments, nonprofit groups and nongovernmental organizations distribute the food. But Barrett said provisions in the new multiyear farm bill will also allow administration officials to build on earlier efforts under President George W. Bush to revamp U.S. food aid. The two administrations shared a bipartisan view that the United States needs to buy food closer to emergency areas, a practice used by other food aid donors such as the European Union. “Ideally, USAID and USDA should have total flexibility in choosing cash and or in-kind. The in-kind should be readily available, as should cash,” said Catherine Bertini, a current advisory board member to USAID and a former director of the United Nations World Food Programme. The administration sees a victory. In a round of recent press calls, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said the 2014 farm bill and spending bill represent a congressional nod to the need for greater efficiency in food aid. “America can only maintain its role in the world in humanitarian aid as long it is effective and efficient,” Shah said. For example, USAID will now be able to limit the practice of monetization of food aid to Bangladesh. Under monetization, the United States ships food overseas, where it is sold and the proceeds distributed to U.S. nonprofits in the regions to pay for nonemergency development projects to address long-term hunger. In 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) questioned the practice, noting that USAID and the USDA often netted less in the sales than it cost to buy the food in the United States and transport it on U.S.-flagged vessels. The GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, said the U.S. food sales also had the potential to depress market prices, which undercut local farmers in poor countries. Shah also said the 2014 farm bill and the spending bill will allow the United States to feed 800,000 more people because of the greater flexibility to buy food in regions closer to areas in need. The farm bill converts an expired small pilot program to a permanent one with $80 million a year in authorized funds over the life of the five-year bill for local and regional food buys. Overall, though the purchases will only account for about 3 percent of food aid spending, supporters see it as a toehold in their push for broader change. The administration’s original proposal debuted to bipartisan objections from House and Senate Agriculture appropriators and authorizers because it would have moved funding out of their committees’ jurisdiction and out of the USDA budget. Lawmakers said it looked as though the administration wanted to dismantle the program. The plan appeared dead, but House Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce and ranking Democrat Eliot L. Engel sought to keep much of it alive. They lost a close 203-220 vote on a floor amendment to the farm bill that would have limited monetization and allowed up to 45 percent of food aid money to be used for purchases overseas. Royce, a California Republican, and Engel, a New York Democrat, got another chance to advocate for change in international aid as farm bill conferees. House Agriculture Chairman Frank D. Lucas recently said the compromise reflected in the final version of the farm bill that became law does not reflect a change of heart on his part. “There were forces pushing from all directions and ultimately putting together a consensus to pass something a lot of folks, including me, had to make some adjustments both big and small. I prefer to think of this as a small one,” the Oklahoma Republican said. Lucas said it appears the administration wanted to tap the USDA budget because it would not win congressional support for additional foreign aid money for disaster food aid. “If the administration simply wanted to spend more cash money on cash programs, then they need to get the foreign aid bill pumped up. Obviously, they couldn’t get that so they wanted to reallocate part of these [Food for Peace] resources,” he said.
This is the complete news article.

**PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING**

**ENERGY BUDGET WOULD BOOST BASIC RESEARCH, WEAPONS MAINTENANCE**

President Obama’s proposed budget asks for $27.9 billion in discretionary spending, a 2.6 percent increase, for the Energy Department, featuring boosts in spending on basic research and costs associated with maintaining the nation’s nuclear weapons stockpile.

**PRESIDENT REQUESTS $17.5 BILLION FY2015 BASE BUDGET FOR NASA PLUS $886 MILLION IN OGS INITIATIVE**
By Marcia Smith, *SpacePolicyOnline.com*, March 4, 2014

President Obama’s FY2015 budget request for NASA of approximately $17.5 billion could be augmented by another $886 million if Congress goes along with his "Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative." The chances seem slim, but prognosticating what Congress will do is always a difficult task. The base budget request is $17.461 billion, a reduction of $186 million from NASA's FY2014 appropriation of $17.647 billion. It is essentially a status-quo request.

**NASA TO SEEK IDEAS FOR $1 BILLION MISSION TO EUROPA**
By Dan Leone, *Space News*, March 6, 2014

One day after the White House unveiled a 2015 NASA budget request that funds new designs for a robotic probe to Jupiter’s ice-covered moon Europa, space agency officials said they would be requesting ideas soon for a mission with a price tag of $1 billion or less.

**CYBER-PHYSICAL SYSTEMS (CPS)**
NSF Program Solicitation, March 6, 2014

Submission Window Date(s) (due by 5 p.m. proposer’s local time): May 19, 2014 - June 02, 2014; December 01, 2014 - December 15, 2014; and December 1 - December 15, Annually Thereafter. CPS are engineered systems that are built from, and depend upon, the seamless integration of computational algorithms and physical components. Advances in CPS will enable capability, adaptability, scalability, resiliency, safety, security, and usability that will far exceed the simple embedded systems of today. CPS technology will transform the way people interact with engineered systems -- just as the Internet has transformed the way people interact with
information. New smart CPS will drive innovation and competition in sectors such as agriculture, energy, transportation, building design and automation, healthcare, and manufacturing.

NOAA SEEKS ANSWERS TO GREAT LAKES WATER LEVEL CHANGES
NOAA News Release, March 6, 2014

As people who live along our nation’s coast experience rising sea levels, residents along the Great Lakes – the Earth’s largest lake system – are adapting to the opposite problem: chronic low water levels and a receding shoreline. A key question is what is causing the recent record low water levels. Answering this question can help planners adapt to these fluctuations and plan appropriate strategies.

DOD ’PLANNING MUCH MORE CAREFULLY’ FOR SEQUESTER
By Austin Wright, Politico’s Morning Defense, March 5, 2014

The Defense Department is "planning much more carefully" for the threat of sequestration if it returns in fiscal year 2016, the Pentagon comptroller said, but that wouldn't make it any less dangerous. Hale told reporters at the Pentagon that DOD had made reasonable warnings to Congress about the dangers of sequestration the first time around, and that the dangers of more sequestration are also real.

* This is the complete news article.

SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY

ACE SUBMITS COMMENTS TO PRESIDENT’S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE
American Council on Education (ACE) News Release, March 5, 2014

ACE and six higher education associations have submitted comments to the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, outlining a series of recommendations to consider as it drafts a proposal in response to the president's call to action. The associations affirm their support for the task force's work and their commitment to ensure a safe, secure environment for their students. They urge the task force to use colleges and universities as a resource, so institutions can share their expertise and provide input about the types of initiatives that would best support existing campus efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assault. They also recommend flexible standards that allow institutions to develop the most effective strategies for their particular students.
UPCOMING GUIDANCE ON “WOMEN OF SOUL: IN PERFORMANCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE”
White House Press Release, March 4, 2014

Thursday, March 6, White House – As part of their “In Performance at the White House” series, the President and First Lady will invite music legends and contemporary major female artists to the White House for a celebration of the great “foremothers” of American music, with songs expressing the struggles and achievements of women. The program will include performances by Tessanne Chin, Melissa Etheridge, Aretha Franklin, Ariana Grande, Patti LaBelle, Janelle Monâe and Jill Scott, with Greg Phillinganes as music director. The President’s remarks will be pooled press and the entire event will be streamed live at WhiteHouse.gov/live at 7:30 PM ET. “Women of Soul: In Performance at the White House will be broadcast Monday, April 7 at 9:00 PM ET on PBS stations nationwide (check local listings).

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION REQUESTS $146,021,000 FOR NEH IN 2015
NEH News Release, March 4, 2014

The Obama Administration requests a budget totaling $146,021,000 for the NEH for fiscal year 2015. At the request level, all NEH program divisions and offices would receive increases over their FY 2014 funding. Highlights of the FY 2015 funding request include:
- continued support for a special initiative, Bridging Cultures: Understanding the U.S. and the World, that is helping Americans better understand their rich and diverse history and heritage and the histories and cultures of other nations;
- a new initiative, entitled Standing Together: The Humanities and the Experience of War, that will support the nation’s active duty military, veterans, military families, and civilians by encouraging and expanding humanities projects that focus on the history, experiences, and meaning of war and military service; and
- continued support for creative partnerships, such as NEH’s ongoing collaboration with the National Science Foundation for projects that document, record, and archive endangered languages worldwide that are on the verge of extinction.

PRESIDENT OBAMA RELEASES FY 2015 BUDGET NUMBER FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
NEA News Release, March 4, 2014

Today, President Obama released his fiscal year 2015 budget request of $146.021 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, the same amount as the current year’s budget. In fiscal year 2013 with a budget of $138.383 million, the agency awarded 2,153 grants totaling $112.734 million. For the NEA's appropriation history, please click here. The NEA's fiscal year 2015 budget submission to Congress will be available on arts.gov on Friday, March 7, 2014.
**WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY REACHES MILESTONE AS 10,000 ITEMS NOW ACCESSIBLE**
Library of Congress News Release, March 6, 2014

The World Digital Library (www.wdl.org), a collaborative international project led by the Library of Congress, now includes more than 10,000 manuscripts, maps and atlases, books, prints and photographs, films, sound recordings, and other cultural treasures. The 10,000-item milestone was reached earlier today with the addition of a set of priceless manuscripts from the Walters Art Museum of Baltimore, Maryland, a WDL partner since 2010.

**STUDENT AID**

**OBAMA TO ANNOUNCE NEW FAFSA PUSH**
By Caitlin Emma, *Politico’s Morning Education*, March 7, 2014

The president and first lady travel to Coral Reef High School in Miami today to announce a new effort to get more students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - including sharing data so that districts can track students and see who hasn't yet filled out the form. The nationwide campaign builds on a pilot program in 2010, as well as a spreadsheet that shows the number of students who've completed the FAFSA at each high school nationally. Obama will also talk up the education ideas he proposed in his budget earlier this week, including $4 billion in new mandatory spending to encourage states to change how they fund higher education and the $300 million new Race to the Top competition for educational equity. Coral Reef has embraced the president's call for high school redesign, the *Miami Herald* reported Thursday: http://hrld.us/1cGxkJQ. The event starts at 1 p.m.

* This is the complete news article.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL: PROMOTING COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND GRADUATION**
White House Fact Sheet, March 7, 2014

Today at an event with the First Lady at Coral Reef High School in Miami, President Obama will lay out additional details of his plan to equip all Americans with the education and skills they need to compete in the 21st century economy and launch a new FAFSA Completion Initiative to give more Americans the opportunity to afford, attend, and graduate from college. The President’s budget, released earlier this week, includes investments and initiatives to expand opportunity for all Americans by improving education at every level, from early childhood through college. But the President has also been clear that while he wants to work with Congress wherever they are willing, he is also going to make 2014 a year of action and won’t hesitate to take steps on his own wherever he can. That’s why today President Obama will
announce the launch of a new FAFSA Completion Initiative, led by the Department of Education, to help ensure that more of America’s students take the first step towards college success: completing the FAFSA form.

**TAXES**

**TAX BREAKS FOR STUDENTS**

President Obama's budget for the 2015 fiscal year will call for extending a tuition tax credit and providing tax relief to student loan borrowers whose debt is forgiven under income-based repayment plans. The White House on Monday night outlined, in broad terms, several of the tax proposals in the president's budget, which will be released formally today. The budget will ask Congress to make permanent the American Opportunity Tax Credit, which currently expires in December 2017. The administration says the credit will provide an average benefit of $1,110 to 11.5 million families. The benefit provides up to $2,500 in partially refundable tax credits for tuition. Obama is also proposing a simplification of taxes for nearly all Pell Grant recipients. The administration wants Congress to clarify tax credit rules and simplify calculations for the credit so that Pell recipients see a reduction in their taxes or an increased tax credit.

**WAYS AND MEANS CHAIR’S TAX OVERHAUL PLAN WOULD AFFECT UNIVERSITIES, STUDENTS**
*AAU Weekly Wrap-Up*, February 28, 2014

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI) on February 26 introduced an ambitious plan to overhaul the federal tax code that contains several provisions of significant concern to the higher education community. The proposal would streamline individual and corporate tax brackets, lower tax rates, and modify or eliminate a number of tax breaks and incentives, including several that are important to higher education. An initial review indicates that the bill contains provisions that would adversely affect students’ ability to pay for college, potentially reduce charitable giving, increase regulatory and compliance burdens, and make it harder for universities to carry out their missions. See the *Inside Higher Ed* story for additional views. The legislation would, among other things:

- incorporate elements of the Black-Davis Student and Family Tax Simplification Act (H.R. 3393), including making permanent the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) and allow some Pell Grant recipients to better benefit from the AOTC;
- repeal the tuition deduction for both undergraduate and graduate students;
- repeal the student loan interest deduction;
- significantly pare back Section 127 employer-provided education assistance benefits;
- repeal Section 117(c) tuition remission benefits that universities may offer their employees;
• modify provisions affecting charitable giving, including provisions affecting valuation of property and limitations on taxpayers’ adjusted gross income levels, and establish a two-percent floor before charitable contributions could be deducted;
• allow the IRA charitable rollover to expire;
• add new requirements affecting executive compensation for nonprofits;
• make taxable private activity (tax-exempt) bonds for private colleges and universities;
• change unrelated business taxable income (UBIT) provisions affecting tax-exempt entities, including making name and logo royalties subject to taxation, requiring UBIT to be calculated separately for each trade or business activity, and limiting the UBIT exemption for research income to income derived from research made available to the public;
• impose a new excise tax on investment income of private colleges and universities; and
• modify and make permanent the R&D tax credit.

There are other provisions in the legislation that also would affect research universities. The plan was met with little enthusiasm on Capitol Hill. House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) said he welcomed “a public conversation about the issue of tax reform,” without offering comments on specific provisions in the measure. Both Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said the package stands no chance of approval in this election year.

* This is the complete news article.