

THE Current

December 4, 2012

Gail Gallessich

UCSB Vice Chancellor Contributes to Report to President Obama That Calls for Renewed Focus on Basic Research to Sustain Innovation, Create Jobs

While American ingenuity and commercial vibrancy lead the world, the U.S. position could be eclipsed if the country does not renew its focus on basic research to sustain innovation and create jobs, according to a new report to President Obama by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST).

Michael Witherell, vice chancellor for research at UC Santa Barbara, contributed to the report that calls for attention to basic research as a way to keep American industry competitive and jobs located at home. Witherell is a member of the PCAST working group that was charged with creating the report.

"Transformation and Opportunity: The Future of the U.S. Research Enterprise," warns that a convergence of global economic trends is eroding U.S. scientific and technological dominance, demanding bold investments in domestic research, and a new focus on the nation's great universities and national laboratories, according to a White House news release.

Witherell said: "U.S. research in science and technology has easily been the most productive in the world for over 60 years. We have had the strongest research

universities, supported by federal agencies, the best national laboratories, and the most dynamic commercial research laboratories. Europe and Asia are now investing a great deal to reproduce this success, however, and the global research environment has become much more competitive. Our group recommends steps the federal government can take to strengthen basic research at universities and policies that will encourage industry to invest in the commercial stages of the national research enterprise."

William Press, who co-chaired the PCAST working group, explained that the message is two-pronged. "We need to strengthen basic research at our great universities -- that's the primary platform on which new industries are built," he said. "And we need policies that encourage industry to keep the commercially directed parts of research and development in the United States. If we do both, we can continue to create new industries and new jobs here at home."

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.