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# index

# Science Inc.



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As the United States cuts billions of dollars in federal funds for research, the role of the private sector in driving and supporting science and innovation has been put under the spotlight. Could US pharmaceutical giants support drug- or vaccine-development projects that have lost their funding? Will tech and engineering firms use their clout to advance defunded research in green energy? And if companies do fill the funding gap, how might the priorities of research projects shift to meet business goals and pressures?

We can look at the landscape for clues. Research publishing by firms seems to be on the wane, which could reflect a preference for keeping discoveries close to the chest. But there are ways to incentivize the private sector to publish peer-reviewed research – if that is a desired policy goal (see page S2). China, meanwhile, which lags behind the United States for company research published in the Nature Index journals but is catching up fast, is rapidly developing how its private sector works with academia. Leaps in highly competitive technologies such as artificial intelligence and electric vehicles also point to a key difference between its approach and that of the United States (see page S6): the Chinese government is much more likely to shoulder the financial risk of such ventures.

If the United States continues to cut funding for fundamental research, it could undermine its own innovation pipeline with potentially dire consequences. Long-term economic growth in any country is often rooted in research that emerged from universities and government-backed institutes. On page S10, we showcase three science-first start-ups from Singapore, Switzerland and the United States that speak to the need for a healthy academic research system to feed clever ideas and people into the commercial space – people and ideas that no nation can afford to lose for long.

**Bec Crew**
Senior editor, Nature Index

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**On the cover**
Twelve co-founders Etosha Cave and Nicholas Flanders.
Cover image: Mark Leong

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