Washington University has formed a new team to track broad institutional and national research issues, assess their potential impact on the schools and faculty, determine if there are implications for the Washington University research enterprise, and identify strategies, opportunities, and actions necessary to maximize the continued success of research at Washington University. One role for this Research Leadership Working Group will be to develop communications about issues critical to the research community, such as the ongoing discussions in Washington DC about the federal budget. To this end, we are providing the first in what is anticipated to be a series of communications on Federal funding.

INTRODUCTION

Washington University, like all other research intensive academic institutions, operates in an era of increasing collaborative research, constrained research dollars, and continued reliance on support from the federal government. We expect continued uncertainties in the foreseeable future in terms of the federal budget, funding levels, and rules and regulations around research. Coincident with such uncertainties are bits of news and information, facts, and rumors. One adopted role for the Working Group is to sift the information that it receives from disparate sources, determine its veracity as best possible, and disseminate valid information to the WUSTL research community in a timely fashion. This is the first edition of a Newsletter to be issued periodically when news and events warrant.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The talent and initiative of the Washington University research community successfully attracted over $450 million in federal research funding in our last fiscal year. Those resources are made possible because the federal government has historically recognized the importance of fundamental research to our national security and economic competitiveness, to the discovery of cures and treatment of disease, and to the education of the best and brightest students in America.

A confluence of uncertainties and events, including the election, post-election congressional scrambling, and the expiration and implementation of specific laws, are creating a cloud of uncertainty regarding current and future federal spending.

The 2013 federal fiscal year began on October 1. As is often the case, the Congress and President were unable to reach an agreement to fund the entire year, so a compromise was reached to keep the activities of the government funded until March 31, 2013, through a short-term measure known as a continuing resolution (CR).
Because CRs are temporary funding mechanisms, the individual agencies, like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), take precautions in how they distribute funding so that the agency can have flexibility to operate under an unknown future final funding scenario.

Our federal sponsors are in the process of releasing information regarding their plans to fund existing grants through March 31st. For example, as had been the case under previous temporary CRs, the NIH announced plans to fund their awards up to 90% of the previously committed level. As this specific information becomes available, we will communicate it to Investigators, research team members, department representatives and institutional leaders via ResearchNews and other mechanisms as appropriate.

The uncertainty regarding the final FY13 funding level is eclipsed by what the press is referring to as the "fiscal cliff". This cliff is comprised of a tangle of items including a large number of expiring tax provisions, a scheduled reduction to Medicare physician payments, and large cuts to discretionary spending known as "sequestration."

Of these items, sequestration has the most immediate impact on federal research. Generally speaking, on January 2, the sequestration process will cut the funding available to research agencies by about 8.2%. According to the latest official projections from the Office of Management and Budget, the impact to NIH research would be $2.5 billion; NSF would see a decrease of $586 million; the Department of Energy’s Office of Science would be reduced by $400 million; and, NASA Science would lose $417 million in funding.

While most agencies have not clearly signaled how these reductions would specifically be absorbed, NIH Director Francis Collins has testified that the $2.5 billion cut to his agency could result in a reduction of 2,300 grant awards for FY13, a 25% decrease for the year.

Sequestration is part of current law and can only be avoided with the passage of a new law by the Congress and the President.

**WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO AS INDIVIDUALS**

WUSTL senior leadership has communicated the concern of the University about sequestration to our Congressional Delegation. We are aware that many scientific representative organizations are actively encouraging people to make their feelings about sequestration known to their elected officials. A number of scientific representative organizations are actively encouraging people to make their feelings about sequestration known to their elected officials, and as scientists who care about the future of research in this country, we encourage you to consider these requests. Many of these efforts have merit and should be considered. If you are interested in finding a means to contact your elected official as a concerned individual citizen, we provide this link to easily search for your elected official: [http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdirt](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdirt)

Please send comments or questions to the Research Leaders Working Group at overinfo@wustl.edu. We check this mailbox daily.