

April 10, 2017

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students:

As many of you are aware, as a part of President Trump's FY2018 budget proposal released on March 16, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) asked Congress to increase defense spending by \$30 billion and provide \$3 billion more for border security for the current fiscal year (FY2017). As an offset, the President proposed \$17.9 billion in unspecified spending cuts for FY2017. The Labor Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee would be asked to take the biggest of these cuts at \$7.2 billion. Among this amount is the proposed \$1.232 billion cut to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), including a \$50 million reduction achieved by eliminating spending on new Institutional Development Award (IDeA) grants and reducing research grants by \$1.182 billion.

It is important to emphasize that the proposed spending cuts, as they currently stand, are only recommendations and cannot go into effect without the approval of Congress. Further, Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle, including key members of the appropriations committee, have indicated that they reject the Administration's proposal to cut biomedical research funding. MUSC and our other research universities across the state have worked tirelessly to strengthen our relationships with policymakers and their commitment to research funding. We will continue to work hard to preserve and further develop this strong relationship. The historic partnership between federal government and research universities has produced tremendous return on investment through improvements in human health, transformative technologies and the development of the world's best research workforce. In FY2016, MUSC faculty received 1,188 extramural awards totaling nearly \$260 million. Federal funding constituted approximately 62 percent of this support, primarily funded by NIH.

We want you to know that MUSC leadership understands what impact this could have for MUSC and for our research enterprise if cuts of this magnitude actually occurred. As a leading health care organization and academic health science center, our voice on this topic is key. MUSC leadership has always advocated for – and will continue to personally communicate the message to our South Carolina Congressional Delegation – increasing, not reducing, the NIH budget. Given our longstanding commitment to research and advocating for research funding, we plan to continue to be in constant contact and advocacy with our Delegation.

Our advocacy for research funding is rooted in one of our institutional, strategic goals: Advance New Knowledge and Scientific Discoveries. As such, we wanted to take a moment to highlight several important actions and initiatives that reflect the commitment MUSC has to this goal, as an organization, and as individual leaders across many domains. We also wanted to share ways for each of you to become more engaged in advocacy to support this foundational goal.

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1. Through the establishment of the **MUSC Advocacy Committee**, chaired by MUSC **President David J. Cole**, and comprising leadership from across the MUSC enterprise, MUSC is committed to ensure that all three areas of our tripartite mission of education, research and patient care are well represented and prioritized at the state and federal levels. We have an outstanding State Legislative Liaison group, led by MUSC Director of Legislative Affairs, **Mark Sweatman**, and also have a Higher Education Advocacy group (Van Scoyoc Associates) in Washington, D.C., led by **Mike Adcock**, asserting our legislative priorities and keeping us informed of relevant changes as they occur in Congress. This process has allowed MUSC to be more strategically aligned and effective at communicating our needs to elected officials and government entities.
2. It is important to note that as a part of this advocacy effort, MUSC senior leadership has committed a significant amount of time to have one-on-one conversations in Washington, D.C. In just the past month, **Pat Cawley**, **Lisa Saladin**, **Kathleen Brady**, and **Mark Sweatman** have been present on Capitol Hill.
3. MUSC will continue to ask our policymakers to work towards bipartisan solutions to invest in the future of health care.
 - a. Due to longtime investment in relationship-building and advocacy, MUSC leadership and advocacy groups have worked with **Senator Lindsey Graham**, who recently formed the Congressional NIH Caucus to support our work in these areas. As a result, we believe we are making great progress on the topic.
 - b. At the request of Senator Lindsey Graham, MUSC Vice President for Research, **Kathleen Brady**, was in D.C. on April 4th to speak with the Caucus and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee about NIH funding and its crucial impact on the economy and on allowing us to advance health discovery and translational science for our citizens.
4. The Director of MUSC Hollings Cancer Center, **Gustavo W. Leone**, has written and submitted a letter in opposition to President Trump's proposed cuts to the FY2018 NIH budget. The letter was submitted to our Senators, **Lindsey Graham** and **Tim Scott**, and **Congressmen Mark Sanford**, **Joe Wilson**, **Jeff Duncan**, **Trey Gowdy**, **James Clyburn** and **Tim Rice**.
5. There will be a **March for Science** in Washington, D.C., on Earth Day, April 22, to acknowledge the role science plays in each of our lives, along with the need to respect and actively support research and researchers. There will also be a large number of satellite marches around the country, including one in Charleston, S.C. Should you choose to join your MUSC colleagues or classmates in participating, please see the attached "March for Science – Charleston" flier for more information. (**Leadership is asking that any signs that are carried be positive in nature and serve to advocate for science – NOT to be protests or partisan statements.*)
6. **Do your part!** Contact your senators and representatives. Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle, including key members of the appropriations committee, have indicated that they reject the Administration's proposal to cut biomedical research funding. Click [here](#) for contact information for your South Carolina Congressional Delegation.

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As a collaborator in innovative research, health care and education efforts across the state, MUSC has the unique privilege to be a driving agent for our community's role as a knowledge-based economy. MUSC's strength has always been found in the quality and commitment of its faculty, staff and students. As an organization, we each have a role to play. We thank you for your work every day to make MUSC a state and national leader for the lives we touch.

Yours in service,

David J. Cole, M.D., FACS
MUSC President



Mark Sweatman, M.P.A.
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