DEPARTMENT OF ATMOSPHERIC AND CLIMATE SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Acting Director Brain Stone
Office of the Director

March 9, 2026

Dear Mr. Stone,

I am writing to urge NSF to preserve the effective, integrated, and co-located structure of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NSF NCAR. The high-level of capability and leadership across NSF NCAR's key activities, including predictive modeling, supercomputing, observational platforms, interdisciplinary research, and training, that enables advancement beyond what individual institutions can accomplish. These activities are essential for the economic resilience, public health, and public safety of the United States of America. NSF NCAR has led our community to gain the expertise and resources that enable us to achieve national research priorities and provide Americans with the information needed for safety and prosperity.

An issue that concerns me the most is preserving NSF's investment in the work that NSF NCAR does to safeguard our country from hazards from wildfires, heatwaves, droughts, hurricanes, severe storms, and more by supporting Earth system science. I have participated in the development of the Community Earth System model since 1998 and collaborated with NSF NCAR throughout this time. Through NSF NCAR's leadership, this project is truly a community activity that accomplishes more than any institution could do on its own. There are working groups that are nimble and responsive to the current development needs, a steering committee that manages communication across the working group, and an advisory board that advises NSF and the project at the highest level. Though I have always worked at universities, I have participated at each of these levels and have witnessed first-hand the superb results that have produced the undisputed world's best Earth system model.

I also had the honor of serving as the advisor board chair of the NSF Office of Polar Programs from 2011-2013, which gave me the opportunity to examine how NSF operates. The U.S. enjoys extraordinary public benefits from the gold standard science enabled by NSF's investments. These benefits are in no small part due to the community-organized scientific leadership programs such as the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) and its flagship operation that is NSF NCAR. Among these umbrella programs, UCAR is the most successful at coordinated great science, which is why it recently became the home for the Consortium for Ocean Leadership. It is this consortium of universities that started and continues to steer NSF NCAR. NSF NCAR is THE example of an ideal organization that meets the needs of its constituents. NSF NCAR is THE model of an excellent investment at NSF.

The open community infrastructure that NSF NCAR provides does not emerge naturally from competitive funding and requires dedicated effort and support. Without this national center, fragmentation and duplication dominate. Dismantling NSF NCAR would do irreparable harm just as it is leading our country's effort to harness artificial intelligence for Earth system prediction, data analysis, and scientific discovery. Dismantling NSF NCAR would destroy the key elements that make it effective and efficient, namely the integration of the many activities and foci of NSF NCAR and the community support to use the knowledge and tools produced by the center. The process of breaking it apart would also lead to lost data, expertise, and institutional knowledge, not to mention incur greater costs to do a fraction of what's needed in a distributed way. This would be highly inefficient and needlessly

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destructive, which will set back the ability of the US to predict and plan for complex hazards that pose a risk to life and property.

I strongly urge that NSF preserve the integrity and continuity of NSF NCAR and ensure that this indispensable national resource is supported for years to come.

Best wishes,

Cecilia M Bitz,
Former Advisory Board Chair to NSF Office of Polar Programs
Paros Endowed Chair in Atmospheric and Climate Hazard Research
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