

Subject: NSF 26-203 Response to NSF Intent to Restructure Critical Weather Infrastructure

Date: March 11, 2026 at 2:09:15 PM MDT

To: NSF_NCAR@nsf.gov

To NSF, regarding Intent to Restructure Critical Weather Infrastructure:

The National Center for Atmospheric Research belongs to the American people. Fragmenting NCAR, or worse, selling NCAR assets to private companies, would prevent the work that NCAR does from taking place. That work involves an ever-changing network of scientists reaching beyond NCAR. It has built over years, and has given us better predictive capability. That in turn has led to safer aviation, better food security, and greater military preparedness. We are better able to predict and respond to weather-related disasters. With extreme weather becoming more frequent, this work should not be interrupted by fragmenting the institution at its center.

The NCAR-led scientific advances that have made us safer and more prosperous come only with time, dedication, and a scientific workforce that has a stable core at its center; a core that provides the infrastructure, both physical and human, that enables a large, agile, and durable network. Restructuring NCAR will disable the network. NCAR is a world-renowned Earth science research laboratory. Disbanding NCAR would signal that the US is intent on giving up its leadership role in atmospheric science.

I am a recently retired researcher who worked projects that included NCAR scientists as well as those from academia and federal labs. These projects led to improved short-term sea ice forecasting, but that was just one of the applications of the research that depended on many scientists building on previous work, all of it taking place over years and none of it profit-driven. NCAR connects and maintains disparate atmospheric science research activities over careers and administrations. This is fundamental to scientific progress that benefits society, and this is what we stand to lose.

Finally, NCAR Mesa Lab is a source of national pride that schoolchildren and others visit freely to learn about weather, and to walk the Walter Orr Roberts Weather Trail that joins the building. I. M. Pei, who later went on to design buildings including the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, took his responsibility to design a publicly owned building seriously, and the result is an icon unlike any other. Converting it to private use would be theft.

Sincerely,

Florence Fetterer