



VIRGINIA ALLIANCE OF
*Public Research and
Land-Grant Universities*

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY · OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY · UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA ·
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY · VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY · VIRGINIA TECH · WILLIAM & MARY

May 5, 2025

Dear Virginia Delegation Members:

The Virginia Alliance of Public Research and Land-Grant Universities is committed to working together to support programs and policies that benefit Virginia and our students. Collectively, our universities enroll approximately 129,300 undergraduate and nearly 44,500 graduate students, serve more than 35,000 Pell-eligible students, and account for more than \$2.2 billion in research and development expenditures annually – 96 percent of all research expenditures by Virginia institutions of higher education.

Our universities power economic growth in the Commonwealth and beyond, helping to educate and train Virginia’s workforce, advance breakthrough discoveries, create new technologies, seed new businesses, and attract major employers to the region. According to a 2023 Economic Impact Study of Public Higher Education, Virginia’s public institutions contribute more than \$52 billion annually to the Gross State Product, generate over \$25 in economic activity for every \$1 invested, support more than 188,000 jobs across the Commonwealth, and return nearly \$2 in new state revenue for every \$1 in state expenditure.

We are proud of these contributions and recognize the important role of federal funding in helping our institutions thrive. We respectfully request Congress’ support in response to research cuts, including proposed changes to Facilities and Administrative (F&A) rates, that will have devastating consequences for discovery and innovation, economic impacts, and national security.

Below are the Alliance’s joint appropriations priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. We have carefully selected these based on the positive impacts they have on our students, research enterprises, and regional and state economies. We appreciate your consideration of these requests and stand ready to serve as a resource to you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

George Mason University
Old Dominion University
University of Virginia
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia State University
Virginia Tech
William & Mary

FY2026 RESEARCH PRIORITIES

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Alliance Request: \$51,303,000,000

The NIH is our nation's primary supporter of biomedical research and research to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. The investments we make in biomedical research are helping advance breakthroughs in cures and treatments for diseases that affect millions of Americans. In addition to saving lives, improving health, and offering hope to people affected by disease, NIH is also a major catalyst for local economies. According to a report by United for Medical Research, NIH research funding in Virginia supported 6,828 jobs and drove \$1.65 billion in economic activity in FY2024. Our research in addiction, cancer, neuroscience, and early childhood development, amongst many other areas of expertise, is having a major impact on populations across Virginia, throughout the United States, and around the world.

In addition to robust appropriations for NIH, we respectfully request that Sec. 224 of the FY2024 bill be extended into FY2026, carrying forward language that Congress has included in the Labor-HHS-Education bill since 2017 to prohibit changes to Facilities and Administration (F&A) rates at the NIH.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

Alliance Request: \$9,900,000,000

The NSF is the government's primary funder of basic research, supporting work that has the potential to foster breakthrough discoveries across all scientific disciplines. The NSF is the funding source for approximately 24 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America's colleges and universities. This research leads to innovation, which not only solves real-world problems and improves people's everyday lives, but also translates into new jobs and economic development. Virginia Alliance institutions were awarded over \$139.5 million in NSF research and training grants in FY2023. With these funds, we are making advancements in cybersecurity and big data analytics, promoting the development of smart cities, working to advance entrepreneurship and innovation, improve STEM education, and train the STEM workforce of tomorrow.

Department of Defense, Science and Technology Program Element 6.1-6.3

Alliance Request: \$22,817,000,000

The Defense Science & Technology (S&T) program seeks to support basic and applied scientific research that leads to advancements in technological capabilities. Investing in the Defense S&T program can ensure the U.S. military has the technical superiority it needs to succeed.

DOD funds basic research to explore new knowledge that is the basis of future military capabilities. Countless technologies that have helped to ensure our military superiority were funded by defense basic research—stealth and counter stealth, night vision, global positioning

technology, precision munition, radar, sonar, nanotechnology, military drones and biological detection capabilities just to name a few. Developing future military capabilities could be jeopardized by lack of sustained support for defense basic research.

Applied Research supports the exploratory development and initial maturation of new technologies for specific military applications (or further developing existing technology for new military applications). It carries the basic research into the field to assist the warfighter in his/her mission.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Science Mission Directorate

Alliance Request: \$9,000,000,000

The NASA Science Mission Directorate (SMD) is essential to meeting the growing challenges to fully understand global changes to the Earth and answer fundamental questions regarding the universe through space exploration. In addition, new knowledge made possible by the Science Mission Directorate inspires future generations to pursue careers in STEM fields, sustaining U.S. leadership in groundbreaking discoveries. NASA Science includes four distinct divisions: Earth Science, Planetary Science, Astrophysics, and Heliophysics. Investment in the SMD is critically important for preparing the next generation of scientists, advancing cutting-edge research, maximizing scientific returns on taxpayer investments, and creating new and innovative techniques for future missions.

Department of Energy, Office of Science

Alliance Request: \$9,500,000,000

The Office of Science is our nation's largest supporter of foundational research in the physical sciences, the steward of 10 national laboratories, including Jefferson Lab in Newport News, and the lead federal agency supporting fundamental research for energy production and security. Additional investment is needed to enhance groundbreaking scientific discoveries, advance energy innovation, develop industries of the future and emerging technologies, and maintain the highly-skilled science and technology workforce that is essential for the United States to compete globally. As more countries continue to invest heavily in research and development, the U.S. must make bold new investments in fundamental research to stay ahead of international competition, maintain U.S. competitiveness, and create American jobs of the future in key energy sectors as well as new technology areas such as high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and quantum information science.

Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

Alliance Request: \$853,900,000

The Institute of Education Sciences was established by Congress to support non-partisan, independent research on and dissemination of effective education practices. IES awards grants for the study of evidence-based classroom interventions to better inform educational practices at all levels. The critical work of IES contributes to ensuring effective school readiness and education as well as addressing the issues impacting students throughout the Commonwealth. However, IES remains underfunded: only one out of ten applications is approved, preventing high-quality education research from being conducted and evidence-based findings from being implemented in the classroom. Increased support for IES is essential to further education research with real-world impacts.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)

Alliance Request: \$721,000,000

NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) sponsors multi-disciplinary research and outreach that improves the accuracy of weather forecasts, enables communities to plan for and respond to short- and long-term weather-related events, and enhances the protection and management of the nation's coastal and ocean resources and the communities that depend upon them. A primary component of the NOAA OAR research network includes the National Sea Grant College Program. Virginia Alliance institutions participate in this program via the Virginia Sea Grant, which conducts and funds research, education, outreach, and communications services that make science-based information accessible to citizens, businesses, educators, resource managers, industry stakeholders, and policymakers across the Commonwealth and the nation.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Agriculture remains Virginia's largest private industry. The industries of agriculture and forestry together have a total economic impact of over \$105 billion and provide more than 490,000 jobs in the Commonwealth. Every job in agriculture and forestry supports 1.6 jobs elsewhere in Virginia's economy. As Virginia's two land-grant universities, Virginia Tech's and Virginia State University's research supports the economic viability and sustainability of Virginia's agricultural, forest, and aquaculture industries. We respectfully request Congress continue to prioritize funding for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. We specifically request funding in FY2026 for the following programs, which support research, education, and extension efforts at America's land-grant universities:

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Request of \$500,000,000
- Hatch Act – Request of \$300,000,000
- Smith Lever - Request of \$420,000,000
- McIntire Stennis Cooperative Forestry- Request of \$46,000,000
- Evans-Allen Program - Request of \$125,000,000
- 1890s Institutions Extension Services - Request of \$125,000,000

FY2026 STUDENT AID AND ACCESSIBILITY PRIORITIES

Department of Education, Pell Grant

Alliance Request: Sums necessary to reach a maximum award of \$7,595

Pell Grants are the cornerstone of financial aid, targeting federal resources to students most in need of support to access and afford a college education. They are critical to making higher education more affordable for Virginia's low-income students and families. In the 2023-2024 academic year, more than 35,000 Pell-eligible students at Virginia Alliance institutions received \$192.4 million in grants. Over seven million students, or about 40 percent of undergraduates, receive a Pell Grant each year, including more than 2.5 million students at public four-year institutions. Pell Grants are well-targeted to students with clear financial need: approximately three-fourths of all Pell Grant dollars are awarded to students with a family income below \$30,000. Congress has made tremendous progress over the past several years, increasing the Pell Grant maximum award by more than \$1,000. To make higher education more affordable and accessible to those most in need of support, we need to build upon this progress with bold new investments.

Department of Education, Federal Work-Study

Alliance Request: \$1,306,000,000

The Federal Work-Study program provides part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses. The Federal Work-Study program is a critical partnership between the federal government, institutions, and students. It is an essential part of a financial aid package and a strong alternative to additional loan debt. In the 2023-2024 academic year, Virginia Alliance institutions received \$8.9 million in Federal Work-Study grants to support nearly 4,000 students. Work-Study students are not allowed to replace what would otherwise be a job that goes to a regularly employed staff member. These grants help our students pay for school expenses, gain employment experience, and serve their community.

Department of Education, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)

Alliance Request: \$966,000,000

The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program provides up to \$4,000 in additional need-based grant aid to eligible Pell Grant recipients, thus further reducing the cost of college and enhancing access for the neediest students. Federal SEOG dollars are matched by participating institutions, requiring colleges to contribute at least 25 percent of the awarded funds. In the 2023-2024 academic year, Virginia Alliance institutions received over \$7.8 million in federal funding through the SEOG program to support nearly 11,000 students. These supplemental resources are a critical tool to help students continue accessing higher learning opportunities and stay on the path to degree completion.

Department of Education, TRIO Programs

Alliance Request: \$1,227,000,000

The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs. In 2019, a study conducted by the Department of Education found TRIO students are 47 percent more likely to complete community college or transfer to a four-year college and are 18 percent more likely to complete a four-year degree than comparable low-income students. Alliance institutions received approximately \$4.8 million and supported nearly 3,300 students through TRIO programming in FY2024.

Department of Education, Post-Secondary Student Success Program

Alliance Request: \$55,000,000

The Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG) program was established by Congress in FY 2022 “to support evidence-based activities to improve postsecondary retention and completion rates.” Public universities measure success not just by the number of students admitted, but also the students who cross the finish line and earn their degree. The PSSG program helps colleges and universities scale evidence-based student success initiatives and build the research base for effective interventions. However, severely limited funding, despite an encouraging growth trajectory, limits the impact of the program. Additional appropriations are needed to scale up the impact to improve college completion and maximize federal and state investments in higher education.