Donald DeHayes
University of Rhode Island

As the Chief Academic Officer of a flagship public research and land grant university, I am deeply concerned about the pattern of erosion in the federal investment in research and higher education. In inflation-adjusted dollars, federal R&D investment grew by only 0.3% per year from 1987 to 2008 as compared to nearly 5% annual growth during the previous three decades. Further current and future reductions - including sequestration - will only serve to exacerbate the problem, limit our capacity and potential for discovery and dissemination of critically needed knowledge and information, and compromise efforts to understand and counter major challenges facing humanity. The Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land- grant Universities (APLU) has described this funding shortfall as an innovation deficit, which compromises our nation’s position as the world’s innovation and knowledge leader.

I have spent much of my academic career studying atmospheric deposition and the implications and mechanisms of its impacts on terrestrial ecosystems. The need for further investment in research in atmospheric and climatic processes, atmospheric chemistry and dynamics, ocean-atmospheric interactions, and climate modeling are both urgent and compelling. Given my location in the Ocean State of Rhode Island, I am particularly concerned with implications of ocean acidification, sea-level rise and coastal erosion, and increased frequency of intense storms. These issues threaten the vitality and economy of coastal regions as well as the nation’s fiscal health.

As an academic leader at an institution with significant expertise in global and atmospheric change, an engaged congressional delegation, and a community threatened by complacency in regard to climate change and its implications, I am committed to advancing an agenda for sustained and strategic federal investments in atmospheric science research and higher education support more broadly.