Science Cuts Affecting Students Hurt All of Us

Federal science funding is foundational to America's health, economic success and national security. But reduced staff, frozen grants and other cuts are already limiting the essential work of our science agencies. Further reductions would be even more devastating. Scientists are already seeing the consequences — here are their stories.

Impacts of Federal Cuts to Students in STEM

The loss of funding for science research is resulting in fewer graduate positions being offered, fewer research opportunities for current students, and fewer job and internship positions available for recent graduates. Students who have spent years preparing for careers as scientists who will contribute vital research to society are finding themselves unable to progress in graduate programs or unable to find work after graduation, leading a generation of scientists to transition to other careers or seek positions outside of the US.

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In Their Own Words

Cuts to science aren't abstract: they affect lives and livelihoods. These scientists know firsthand.

For me personally this has been quite chaotic and scary, I have worked for the past 8 years of my life since high school to become a scientist, and this is my senior year of my bachelor's. This is usually an exciting time for young scientists like me who are getting accepted into schools and getting to start their own research projects to better society. But for me, **my grant was taken away and a lot of my friends are getting rejected from schools because they are not accepting new graduate students.** It's very disheartening to see that sciences are not being valued and especially, as a person with a physical disability**, I rely on a lot of extra grants to help make sure I have all of the resources I need to be able to perform the work I do in the lab**. If this continues, I am scared for not only my future but the future of the generation under me that will be walking into a world lacking scientists able to help them and provide new medicine and solutions to whatever problems may arise.

Student in Plant Sciences/Environmental Science (Missouri)

I've had three fellowships defunded. Everything I work on is about developing methods to predict the impacts of hazards so that we can have a more informed emergency response framework. Flooding, extreme heat, wildfires, blizzards, landslides, and more will continue to happen regardless of whether the science is properly funded. **But without the methods that scientists are actively developing and improving, the US will continue to waste billions of dollars on unnecessary hazard responses instead of hazard mitigation. If the administration wants to improve efficiency in terms of reducing the money that is wasted on rebuilding after every natural disaster, it starts with predicting the hazards.**

Student in Hydrology (Texas)

I am a graduate student that currently has an internship at NOAA under a NOAA scientist who is teaching me lots of different molecular analyses for research purposes. If proposed budget cuts to the department of commerce are approved, my mentor is likely to lose his job, and **I am likely to lose access to essential scientific training I need to be successful as a scientist in the future. I have always had my sights set on NOAA as a career scientist and now I am unsure if I will have a job in the future** that is relevant to my degree.

Student in Oceanography (Hawaii)

I am one of many recent graduates in consideration for two selective summer internship programs, through the USGS and Park Service respectively. These programs would be a massive boon to my career, allowing me to gain insight on how federal geoscience careers work, network with many departments, and develop essential skills like using ArcGIS and analytical instruments. Either program would help get my foot in the door of my ideal career. With the federal hiring freeze, the program organizers are unsure of whether they will be able to hire anyone for the season. This pushed the timetable back immensely and has made it difficult to balance my graduate school applications as well as finding a job to support myself in the present. **These federal hiring freezes directly hurt early career scientists and STEM students, and these effects will certainly ripple out into future hiring and sustaining of USGS, Park Service, and other department's essential programs.**

Student in Petrology (Arizona)

I couldn't access NOAA sea-surface temperature (SST) data for my PhD dissertation. I foresee that a lot of datasets like the meteorological datasets that I use will end at January 2024. **It will make our predictions for extreme weather worse, and prevent us from tackling global warming and extreme hazards like flooding, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions.** Firings at NOAA's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL) means that the state-of-the-art atmosphere-ocean model is missing people who would normally be improving this model that is used by scientists nationwide.

Student in Climate Science (New York)

I had secured a postdoctoral research position at Georgia Tech in February 2025. This position was funded through a USDA Climate Smart Commodities initiative. My contract started on 2 April 2025. On 15 April, less than 2 weeks into my contract, my PI was advised by his USDA program manager that funding for the project and my position was rescinded. This news was devastating as it took my 6 months post defending to secure a position. **It has felt like I started my career in science on a sinking ship.**

Student in Soil Science (Mid Atlantic)

In the short term (as a grad student funded through a federal grant), grad students have to think much more critically about their future careers and make contingency plans. Universities are unsure of the money they will be getting, and, if my funding stops, I am not certain my university would be willing or able to keep paying me. In the long term, **this is going to decimate a generation of US based scientists.** If they do cut federal funding for space sciences, I will have to change careers or emigrate, since virtually all astrophysics is federally funded in some way. I've lived my entire life in the US and had no plans of leaving until this happened.

Student in Astrophysics (Maryland)

I am a graduate student on a federal fellowship living in fear that I won't get paid. I depend on this job. I have no family to support me. And I know people who have lost their jobs felt just as I do now before they were fired. With the influx of people looking for jobs, those already in transitions have no chance, there are not enough jobs out there. Furthermore, **the important work they do will be left undone, leaving communities across the nation at risk of environmental hazards and natural disasters. Federal grants that focus on DEI are vital for allowing opportunities for students from section 8 and rural underprivileged communities.** I should know, I grew up in section 8. I found a summer internship for underrepresented students, applied, and was accepted. That program changed my life and provided me the opportunity to see myself in a STEM role. I am working to become an expert in hydrology and geomorphology to help mitigate climate disasters that will harm are local communities. But **without programs backed by federal grants more students will be trapped in poverty, incapable of getting themselves out.**

Student in Hydrology (California)

I had an internship with a local Tribe, but, because it was a Conservation internship whose funding was from the federal government, the funding was cut for the program before I even had a chance to start it. **As a low-income student, these internships are important because they would not only allow me to get experience, but they would also provide a stipend that I could use for educational and living expenses.** I was counting on this internship to help fund my moving expenses to attend graduate school next fall, which will be expensive. The program I was accepted into is geared towards Indigenous students. Because of this, I am very worried that the funding for this program will be cut as well. If I cannot attend this program, I have little options left because I do have disabilities so finding programs that can accommodate those is difficult.

Student in Geology

I was in the process of establishing an applied research project with Taiwan through Future Earth. Future Earth is a global network of scientists, researchers, and innovators collaborating for a more sustainable planet. However, I have heard that this designation is being canceled. **Collaboration between Taiwan and the US, in particular Arizona, is critical at this time as the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company TSMC begins to transition some chip production to the new facility in Arizona. Chip making is a highly water-intensive process and will rely on water from the Colorado River and Arizona groundwater, both of which are dwindling supplies and critical for agriculture.** A project between Taiwan, TSMC, and Arizona is needed to ensure water use of TSMC does not cause water availability issues to people and agriculture. Additionally, The Presidential Management Fellowship has been canceled. My friend who is a recent PhD graduate was a semifinalist and was hoping to use this fellowship to help secure a job at NOAA. Some of the best and brightest graduate students who want to join the federal government are now being blocked.

Student in Hydrology (California)