

NIH Indirect Costs Caps Toolkit

How to Fight Back Against the Trump Administration's Research Cuts

Draft an Op-Ed to Be Published in Your Campus, Local, or Regional Newspaper

Aim for 800 words.

Persuade your readers that they should care about cuts to federal research funding because it is their own well-being that is under attack (not just that of scientists and lab techs).

Start with a personal story about the impacts of your teaching or research that has emotional resonance. Opinion editors are looking first and foremost for a story people from all walks of life can understand. Academic work can be very abstract. The job of this op-ed is to make it clear how grant-funded teaching and research benefit everyday, ordinary people.

You can also center the voice/experience of another affected person, including workers or students who carry out politically popular research and/or patients and their families who are looking to research for treatments and cures.

Establish your credibility and don't be shy about your expertise, but use ordinary vocabulary that anyone can understand. Imagine that you're writing to a friend, neighbor, or family member who does not work in higher education. Focus on the impacts of your work, not the processes or methodologies.

Explain what the stakes are for your immediate local community: layoffs, job losses, less student access to a college education, and other harms/injuries. Adapt basic info from the attached NIH Indirect Rates Explainer in your own words. Demonstrate the direct impacts on your town, city, and state. Use tools such as the [NIH Reporter](#) or the United for Medical Research "[NIH in Your State](#)" tool to provide specifics about how much funding comes to your community from federal grant sources. If discussing NSF grants, you can use [NSF by the Numbers](#). If you would like help identifying numbers for other agencies, please reach out to AFT/AAUP staff.

Make it clear how your friends, neighbors, and coworkers will suffer because of federal policy decisions.

Explain what the stakes are for our nation: the interruption of lifesaving health research on cancer, viral pandemics, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease; loss of technological innovation; and diminished ability to understand and solve local and global problems.

Use examples that connect the federal funding cuts to local impacts: patients battling cancer who can't access a clinical trial that is their final shot for a cure, agricultural research put on hold that will

negatively impact our food supply, or a sudden program closure that makes it impossible for students to complete their degrees on time. Think broadly. For example, indirect costs of NIH grants cover facilities; has your campus built or renovated a facility recently? Who in your community worked on that project? Those jobs would be threatened.

Emphasize that every one of us needs healthcare, education, and a good job. By attacking colleges and universities, the Trump administration's executive orders are threatening our access to all three.

Share your understanding of what higher education actually is and does. Promote a positive vision that counteracts extremist narratives of waste and indoctrination.

Find more tips and advice for writing op-eds here: <https://www.theopedproject.org/resources>



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