

Union of Concerned Scientists

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Mr. Brian Stone

Chief of Staff; Performing the Duties of the Director
National Science Foundation
Randolf Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Acting Director Stone:

On December 17, 2025, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) announced its intent to “restructure critical weather science infrastructure at the NSF National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).” That announcement was followed by a “Dear Colleague Letter” in January soliciting proposals for transfer of stewardship of NCAR’s constituent equipment and capabilities.

As one of the leading science advocacy organizations in the country, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) has joined former directors of NCAR and UCAR, and scientists and scientific organizations across the country, in raising significant concerns with this plan. Through partnerships with hundreds of other organizations, mobilization of the 23,000 members of our Science Network, and advocacy by our 500,000 supporters, our nearly 250 scientists, analysts, policy experts, organizers, and communicators put rigorous, independent science into action, developing solutions and advocating for a healthy, safe, and just future. The work done at NCAR, as well as that done by scientists and experts who receive training there, is vital to that future.

NCAR’s research on atmospheric conditions like turbulence and microburst winds protects aviation safety. The stability of our nation’s agricultural economy depends on NCAR’s research into drought, heat waves, and floods. NCAR’s research and operational tools provide the environmental intelligence that defense planners, operators, and test authorities rely on to maintain national security and NCAR’s contributions to both dependable and public weather forecasts and warnings save lives and millions of dollars each year.

To date, no rational justification for dismantling the Center has been offered.

In order for the scientific community, as well as the public, to assess the merit of these reorganization proposals, it is necessary to understand the terms of the cooperative agreement governing the relationship between NCAR, UCAR, and the NSF. Somewhat surprisingly, the cooperative agreement does not appear to be publicly available, despite the use of public resources to fund both NSF and NCAR. The document is not currently available to the public despite requests from Members of Congress and formal requests through the Freedom of Information Act pending for weeks.

As the scientific community continues to try to better understand NSF’s plans for NCAR, UCS respectfully requests that the cooperative agreement governing the NSF/NCAR working relationship be made public. NSF has long maintained high standards for transparency and public access, and those standards should continue to apply. If, for some reason, the cooperative agreement requires secrecy, an explanation of those concerns would be instructive.

UCS understands the value of the NSF, including its programs that deliver immense societal benefits to the American people. We look forward to working collaboratively to determine the best future for NSF and NCAR.

Signed,

