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# Alarm raised after US presidential election

## Donald Trump ‘threatens lifeblood’ of international research

**THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION** may repel international students and academics, slash national research funding and ultimately affect collaborations with EU researchers, American policy experts have said.

“Climate change and immigration are probably the areas of biggest concern for the worldwide science community,” says Michael Lubell, director of public affairs at the American Physical Society, following the United States presidential election on 8 November.

Andrew Rosenberg, a policy expert at the Massachusetts-based Union of Concerned Scientists, says president-elect Donald Trump will have an “immediate impact” on the ability of the US to attract international researchers because of his anti-immigration rhetoric. “There will be students and academics who will be concerned about working in the US,” Rosenberg says. “The lifeblood of any serious research programme is the ability to attract talent.”

And because Trump’s campaign promised to increase defence spending by one-third without cutting social security or healthcare, he may well slash spending for science and research, Lubell predicts. This could target climate science, renewable energy technologies or public health research, scientists say, given that Trump has repeatedly stated he does not believe in anthropogenic climate change or vaccination programmes.

The fallout from the November election, in which former reality-TV host and Republican candidate Trump secured a shock victory against Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, has reverberated across the globe, throwing into doubt the future direction of policy in all areas.

For scientists, a major concern is international cooperation. Tighter immigration restrictions “would make it more difficult for people to visit the US to participate in collaborative research”, Lubell says.

Budget cuts could compound ongoing shortages in US investment in research facilities, says Lubell, leading the country to retreat further from international infrastructure. “Europe and Asia are going to be the go-to places for major world-class facilities.”

And the Trump administration could also open the door to growing attempts by a Republican-dominated

by **Eleni Courea**

[ecnews@ResearchResearch.com](mailto:ecnews@ResearchResearch.com)

Congress to “micromanage” research agendas by “scrutinising individual grants”, Rosenberg says—something President Barack Obama’s administration strongly opposed. “There could be real impacts on the way that research is conducted,” with fallout for both US and international science, Rosenberg says.

Not all observers are wholly pessimistic. Jennifer Zeitzer, director of legislative relations at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, draws attention to a survey by the campaign organisation Science Debate in which Trump acknowledged the importance of long-term investment in science.

And Tobin Smith, vice president for policy at the Association of American Universities (AAU), says that Trump’s budget plans remain a “closed book”—amid wider uncertainty about the predictability of Trump’s policy directions.

The Trump administration may also reduce regulatory burdens on researchers, Smith says, an agenda that has been “a high priority” for AAU.

Smith says that early indications of the new administration’s impact will be found in the federal budget in February, the content of Trump’s infrastructure package, and his choice of science adviser. Barack Obama appointed John Holdren as his science adviser before he was sworn in, and gave him a senior title. George W Bush didn’t appoint an adviser until months after he took office—and these were strong indicators of the respective presidents’ attitudes to research, Smith says.

Rosenberg says that the election result must be an immediate wake-up call. “It’s a cry for help, frankly, to scientists around the world not only to work with us but to encourage American colleagues to speak up.”

Although national research funding is a major concern, Rosenberg says that there is something much bigger at stake: society’s attitude to science. “If scientists don’t speak out, the consequences will be pretty dire.”

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