



A Message from the Director of the National Science Foundation

The heat of August reminds us that cooler temperatures and the start of the academic year are just around the corner. I'm very proud of the multiple opportunities NSF's education and training portfolio supports to enrich the educational experience for all students. These opportunities provide a chance to push beyond what students think is possible and often help direct future career choices. Two initiatives making a strong impact in this area are NSF's Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP) and the Community College Innovation Challenge (CCIC).

TCUP's wonderful work was recently highlighted in the video ["A Best Kept Secret: STEM Research at Tribal Colleges and Universities."](#) Over the last 15 years, the program has helped build robust science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) degree programs at the 37 tribal colleges and universities nationwide. Through NSF support, these institutions offer two- and four-year STEM degree programs that provide opportunity and bring economic development to Native American communities.

For the last four years, [the CCIC](#) has encouraged community college students to work collaboratively to find solutions to pressing challenges facing society. Sponsored by NSF and the American Association of Community Colleges, the CCIC highlights the extraordinary talent that exists in the nation's community colleges. Over the course of [the competition](#), students develop communication and problem-solving skills that are essential to success in the technical workforce and to help maintain the nation's competitive edge. This year, [Western Dakota Tech](#) from Rapid City, South Dakota, earned first place with an innovative approach to reducing U.S. hunger using aquaponics -- a combination of aquaculture and hydroponics.

Speaking of competitions, I want to alert you to a new one coming up in just a few weeks. The [NSF 2026 Idea Machine Challenge](#) is an opportunity for the research community, and the general public to submit topics for future investment by the agency. The competition's entry window will run from late August until late October. [NSF 2026](#) is one of [NSF's 10 Big Ideas](#).

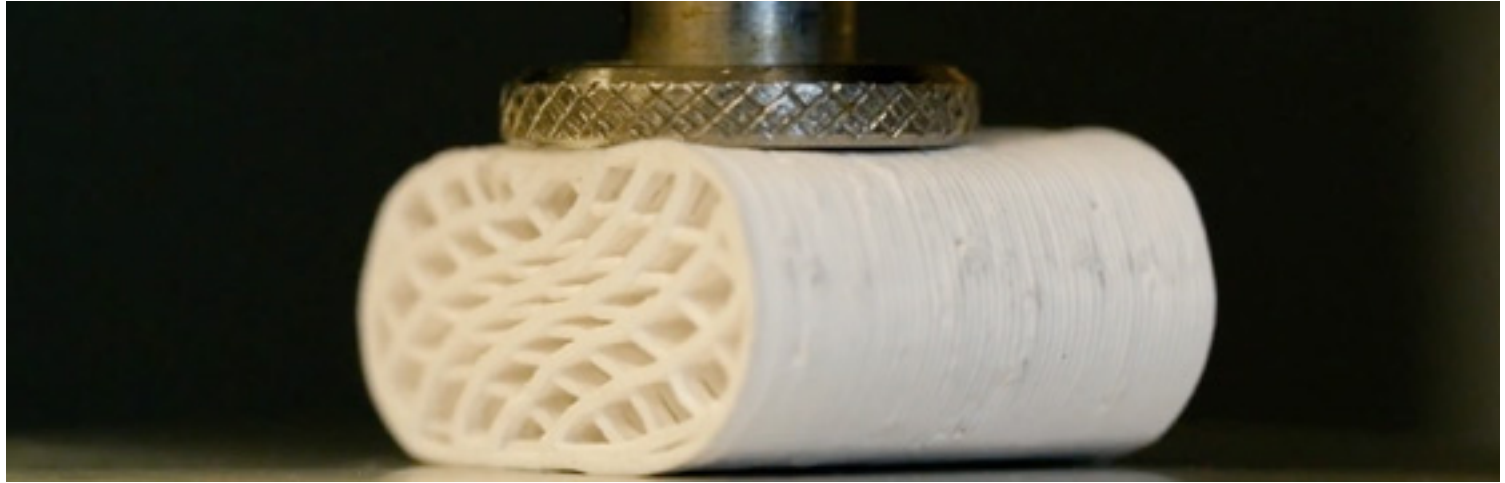
Through initiatives like TCUP and CCIC and innovative approaches to future investment, NSF will continue to expand the frontiers of inquiry, strengthen the nation's technical workforce and support next generation scientists and engineers on their STEM journeys.



Francis A. Cordova

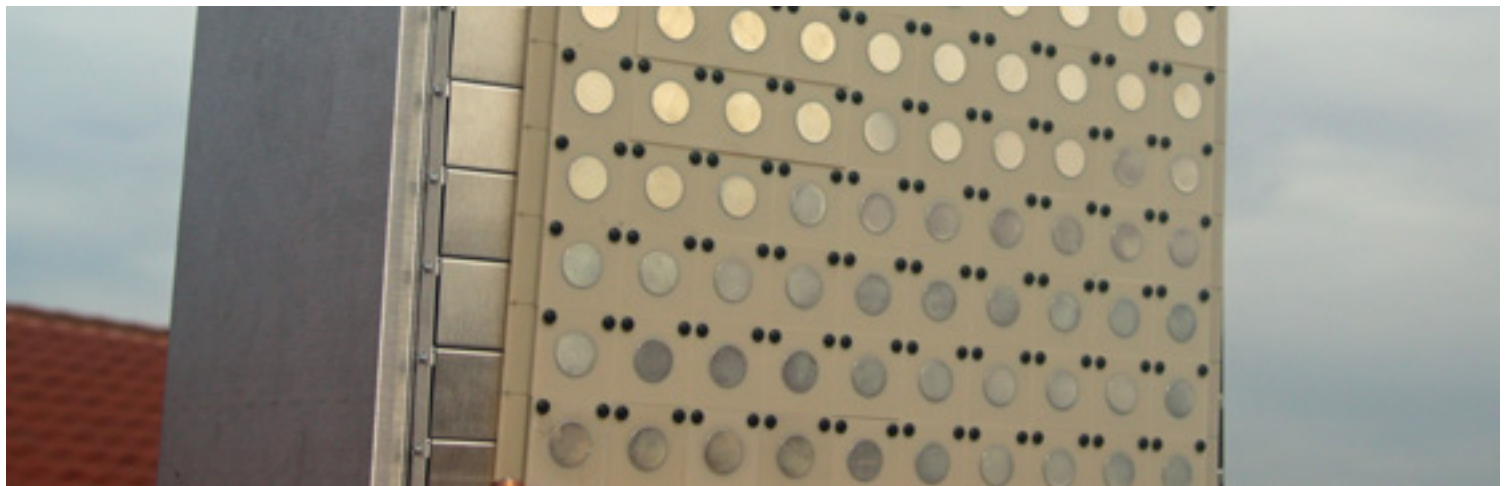
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What's Next

Make sure to visit NSF's [visual identity site](#) to learn more about the agency's guidelines for using its logo and other image identifiers.

On Sept. 6, the NSF Director will speak about NSF's long-term research agenda, especially the research processes that are part of the foundation's 10 Big Ideas at the [Federal Demonstration Partnership](#) at the Hyatt Regency in Washington, D.C.

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