

acm

The Association for Computing Machinery

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Virginia Gold
ACM
(212) 626-0505
vgold@acm.org

Cameron Wilson
ACM Public Policy Office
(202) 659-9711
cameron.wilson@acm.org

**CONGRESS EXPRESSES CONCERN ON FUTURE OF
COMPUTING RESEARCH FUNDING IN US**

Washington, DC, May 12, 2005 – In a hearing today before the House Science Committee, the committee indicated strong support for the position held by ACM’s U.S. Public Policy Committee (USACM), the Computing Research Association (CRA), and other computing societies that the federal government has shifted its focus away from long-term research in Information Technology, which has been so vital to America’s prowess in defense and essential to a robust economy. In statements from House Science Committee chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) and ranking member Lincoln Davis (D-TN), both underscored their belief that IT advances are fundamental to the nation’s productivity and economic health, and expressed concern about the diminished federal role in supporting computing research.

“IT research has driven innovation with results that reach well beyond the IT sector,” said David A. Patterson, president of ACM and professor of computer science at the University of California, Berkeley. “IT has played an indispensable role in fostering economic growth in the US over the past 20 years. In fact, recent studies suggest that the remarkable growth the US experienced between 1995 and 2000 was spurred by an increase in productivity enabled almost completely by factors related to IT,” said Patterson.

Patterson, a member of both the National Academy of Engineering and the President’s Information Technology Advisory Committee, cited DARPA’s diminished role in supporting computing research. “In FY 1998, DARPA funding constituted 30 percent of federal IT R&D spending, but in FY 2005, DARPA’s \$143 million represents just 6 percent of the overall IT budget,” he said.

Chairman Boehlert noted that current federal funding is not properly balanced. “It does not adequately continue the nation’s historic commitment to longer-range, more basic research in computer science,” he said. Congressman Davis said the national cannot afford to squander its technological edge in a field that will only grow in importance. “The status quo is simply unacceptable,” he said.

In written testimony provided to the committee, DARPA Director Tony Tether said that while DARPA's funding for computer science research has increased slightly since FY 2001 to \$583 million in FY 2004, its funding for computer science research in universities had fallen by nearly half over the same period – from \$214 million in FY 2001, to \$123 million in FY 2004.

“This confirms the concerns expressed by the computing research community that DARPA has essentially pulled out of funding long-term computing research at U.S. universities, leaving a significant gap in the federal research portfolio that no other agency has yet stepped forward to fill,” said Patterson.

In response to statements that research is receiving an adequate level of funding, Patterson pointed to the increased number of IT proposals to NSF which jumped from 2,000 to 6,500 in the last five years, forcing the agency to leave many worthy proposals unfunded.

“Congress clearly pointed out that we face critical challenges for IT in the 21st century,” Patterson continued. “And numerous reports, including the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee, the Defense Science Board, and CRA have detailed these challenges. It's simply astonishing that DARPA, once the mainstay for funding these kinds of challenges, is cutting long-term computing research at universities.”

He concluded that the US still has the world's strongest capability in fundamental research in IT, and the most experience in how to leverage that capability toward economic growth. “But we run a grave risk in cutting funding for fundamental IT research,” said Patterson. “Our concern is that the total level of national investment in fundamental IT research needs to be restored to meet the needs of our economy in an increasingly competitive world.”

A copy of the joint statement of the computer science community, submitted for the hearing, may be found at <http://www.acm.org/usacm/>

ABOUT ACM

ACM (www.acm.org) is widely recognized as the premier organization for computing professionals, delivering resources that advance the computing and IT disciplines, enable professional development, and promote policies and research that benefit society. ACM hosts the computing industry's leading Digital Library and Guide to Computing Literature, and serves its 80,000 global members and the computing profession with journals and magazines, conferences, workshops, electronic forums, and its Career Resource Centre and Professional Development Centre.

ABOUT USACM

The [ACM U.S. Public Policy Committee \(USACM\) www.acm.org/usacm](http://www.acm.org/usacm) serves as the focal point for ACM's interaction with U.S. government organizations, the computing community, and the U.S. public in all matters of U.S. public policy related to information technology. Supported by ACM's Washington, D.C., [Office of Public Policy](#), USACM responds to requests for information and technical expertise from U.S. government agencies and departments, seeks to influence relevant U.S. government policies on behalf of the computing community and the public, and provides information to ACM on relevant U.S. government activities.

###