APLU/ Gordian Study Rollout Toolkit

Investing in America's Colleges and Schools of Agriculture

Overview and Contents

This resource was created for your use to help amplify the public release of "A National Study of Capital Infrastructure at Colleges and Schools of Agriculture" commissioned by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities and the Experiment Station Section. Together, we can educate stakeholders and policymakers about the urgent need for $11.5 billion in funding to transform the research and education infrastructure at colleges and schools of agriculture.

The report will be released on March 4, 2021.

The toolkit includes:

- **Press Release:** *For your reference and embargoed until 9 AM, March 4, 2021*
- **Talking Points and Earned Media Guidance:** *For use in crafting op-eds and pitching local media outlets*
- **Social Media Copy and Graphics:** *Template content for sharing across social channels*
- **Newsletter Content:** *Template blurb for inclusion in your newsletter or other materials*

Press Release

For Immediate Release:
March 4, 2021

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New Study Sounds Alarm about Agriculture School Infrastructure

Gordian/APLU Study Finds $11.5 Billion Facilities Funding Gap, Warns of Impact on American Innovation and Leadership

Investing in Infrastructure Upgrades Would Create 200,000 Jobs, Support a Modern Workforce, and Bolster American Competitiveness

Washington, D.C. – Gordian and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) today released a comprehensive study that found there is a collective total of nearly $11.5 billion in needed repairs and renovations at the buildings and supporting facilities at schools of agriculture authorized to receive U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research funding. The study notes that 69 percent of the buildings at these schools – 97 land-grant universities in total – are more than 25 years old and require urgent upgrades to remain safe and useful. Without action, the declining state of these facilities threatens to hinder critical research on food safety and security, natural resources, climate change, and other key matters.

This urgent need is caused by the postponement of maintenance activities and capital investments – such as repairs on property, facilities, and machinery – in order to match limited budgets or realign available resources. The research finds that state and federal governments will need to help institutions preserve the quality and integrity of agricultural research, education, and Extension, and that by making needed investments, these governments can seize short-term and long-term economic opportunities.

According to Gordian, "The economic impact of a $11.5 billion investment would extend far beyond just improving the facilities and student, faculty, and staff experiences of those at the colleges and schools of agriculture…approximately 200,000 new local jobs would result from funding capital infrastructure investment to address the deferred maintenance identified in this study." This economic activity would provide a desperately needed boost to campus

communities while enabling the work that will secure America's strategic position as a global leader in agricultural science.

Agriculture, food, and related industries contribute $1.1 trillion to America's economy and support 22 million jobs. These contributions are made possible by the cutting-edge research and innovation taking place within the land-grant university system. Increasingly inadequate infrastructure threatens to constrain the ability of these vital institutions to continue to deliver game-change breakthroughs while training the next generation of bioeconomy workers and innovators at a time when America is working to keep up with investments made by global competitors such as China. Much of this critical research and the associated economic benefits are at risk due to crumbling labs.

The study found that two-thirds of such deferred maintenance is impacting research, teaching, and Extension space. Without substantial additional investment, the schools of agriculture can be expected to experience buildings with: roofs that leak, foundations that crack and doors and windows that don't keep the heat in or cold out; laboratories that cannot function; and health and safety problems for building occupants. Further, these conditions are impairing researchers' ability to conduct cutting edge agricultural research from expanding growing seasons to conserving energy use to developing more environmentally safe textiles.

"Today's report offers a sobering reminder on the cost of failing to address longstanding maintenance needs at our nation's agricultural colleges," said Doug Steele, Vice President of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources at APLU. "In just five years, our land-grant colleges' maintenance needs have climbed nearly 40 percent. In order for these institutions to conduct innovative research in areas such as food safety and security they need cuttingedge research facilities, not buildings with failing utility systems, leaky roofs, and outdated equipment. Modernizing agricultural research infrastructure will not only solve an existing problem; it will allow us to seize a new opportunity."

The study was conducted for APLU by Gordian, a leader in helping academic institutions better manage their facilities and capital investment strategies. Gordian studied deferred maintenance in buildings on campuses that house agriculture, forestry, veterinary sciences, food sciences and human sciences academic programs, and agriculture extension sites. These buildings are used to conduct major research funded by the USDA, as well as other public and private entities

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APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. With a membership of 244 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations, APLU's agenda is built on the three pillars of increasing degree completion and academic success, advancing scientific research, and expanding engagement. Annually, member campuses enroll 5.0 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.3 million degrees, employ 1.3 million faculty and staff, and conduct $49.2 billion in university-based research.

Talking Points and Earned Media Guidance

Talking Points

- Agriculture, food, and related industries contribute $1.1 trillion to America's economy and support 22 million jobs. Helping to fuel this economic output are schools of agriculture, where critical research and public outreach on food safety and security, natural resources, climate change, and other key matters take place.

- A new study by Gordian -- in collaboration with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) -- finds there is an alarming $11.5 billion funding gap at schools of agriculture authorized to receive U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research funding.

- Sixty-nine percent of the buildings at these schools are more than 25 years old and require urgent upgrades. Modernizing agricultural research infrastructure will not only solve an existing problem; it will allow us to seize a new opportunity.

- Without government infrastructure investment in colleges and schools of agriculture, America won't be able to keep up with countries who are increasingly outspending us. The U.S. risks losing the ability to compete internationally if we continue to conduct research in facilities from the 1950's and 60's, while expecting 21st-century results.

- An investment in infrastructure for our colleges and schools of agriculture could create approximately 200,000 new local jobs. This economic activity would provide a desperately needed boost to campus communities while supporting the work that will secure America's strategic position as a global leader in agricultural science.

- Through strategic investments in research facilities at colleges of agriculture, the United States can transform our agricultural research capacity, grow America's biobased economies, secure our domestic food supply for the long term, face a dynamically changing climate, prepare a modern workforce, and advance U.S. global competitiveness.

Op-ed Template

Agriculture, food, and related industries contribute $1.1 trillion to America's economy and support 22 million jobs. Helping to fuel this economic output are colleges and schools of agriculture, where critical research and public outreach on food safety and security, natural resources, climate change, and other key matters takes place. The value of schools of agriculture is clear, so why is the U.S. still trying to conduct 21st century research in facilities built in the 1950s?

It is past time to invest in our future.

A new study by Gordian, a leader in facility and construction cost data, and released by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) finds there is a nearly $11.5 billion funding gap at colleges and schools of agriculture authorized to receive U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research funding. A whopping majority of the buildings at these schools, 69 percent, are more than 25 years old and require urgent upgrades. At [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION], we've seen the detrimental effects of this funding gap firsthand.

[INSERT LOCAL ANECDOTE]

Luckily, by solving these infrastructure problems, the benefits will reach far beyond colleges and schools of agriculture. With investment, we can create approximately 200,000 new local jobs. This economic activity would provide a desperately needed boost to campus communities while enabling the work that will secure America's strategic position as a global leader in agricultural science. The United States can transform our agricultural research capacity, grow America's biobased economies, secure our domestic food supply for the long term, face a dynamically changing climate, prepare a modern workforce, and advance U.S. global competitiveness – and this important work can start right here in [INSERT TOWN].

The Gordian research found that state and federal governments will need to help institutions preserve the quality and integrity of agriculture research, education, and Extension, and that by making needed investments, these governments can seize short-term and long-term economic opportunities. [INSERT NAME OF OFFICIAL], will you help us rise to the challenge? America's future depends on it.

Sample Pitch

To pitch your opinion content to a local outlet, first you'll need to know who to contact. Try searching "[OUTLET NAME] + op-ed submissions" to find a submission email address. Alternatively, you can check the outlet's staff directory on their website for the Editorial Page or Opinion Editor. For letters to the editor, there is often a submission form or email, though you can also search for the Opinion Editor.

Once you've found contact information, you can begin drafting a pitch email. You'll want to highlight what your op-ed or LTE is about and why you're a credible voice on the topic. Be sure to copy your piece directly below your signature. Your pitch email might look something like:

Subject line: Op-ed: Benefits of agricultural investment in [INSERT STATE]

Hi there,

Attached and copied below is an op-ed by for [INSERT OUTLET NAME]'s exclusive consideration. I [OR NAME/DETAILS OF PERSON WHO IS THE SIGNER] wrote this piece now given the prominence of agriculture research in [INSERT TOWN] and new findings about America's $11.5 billion funding gap for schools of agriculture.

Without urgent investment from state and federal governments, America and [INSERT STATE] will fall behind the rest of the globe when it comes to critical research on food safety and security, natural resources, climate change, and other key matters.

Would [OUTLET NAME] be interested in running the op-ed?

Thank you,
Name

[COPY OP-ED BELOW]

Social Media Copy and Graphics

Copy

All posts should include a link to the report.

For colleges and universities:

- Schools of agriculture:
  ✅ Research on food safety and security
  ✅ Respond to climate challenges
  ✅ Provide community support

  To protect our critical work, urgent infrastructure investments are needed. Learn more.

- DYK: 69% of buildings at schools of agriculture are at the end of their useful life. Infrastructure investments are direly needed to protect American innovation and the future of ag research. #ActOnAgriculture

- America has always been a leader in agricultural science, and that is thanks to the work done by colleges of agriculture. But according to a @GordianCompany and @APLU_News report, they've been neglected and need urgent funding. #ActOnAgriculture

- University researchers should focus on breakthroughs, not buildings breaking down. Learn more about why the future of agricultural research is at risk without increased funding for infrastructure. #ActOnAgriculture

- To maintain our global edge, university research needs a strong foundation – literally. A new @GordianCompany and @APLU_News finds an $11.5 billion funding gap for infrastructure at colleges and schools of agriculture.

For other stakeholder audiences:

- Agriculture, food, and related industries contribute $1.1 trillion to America's economy and support 22 million jobs. But a new @GordianCompany / @APLU_News report shows the future of the ag economy is at risk. Learn more. #ActOnAgriculture

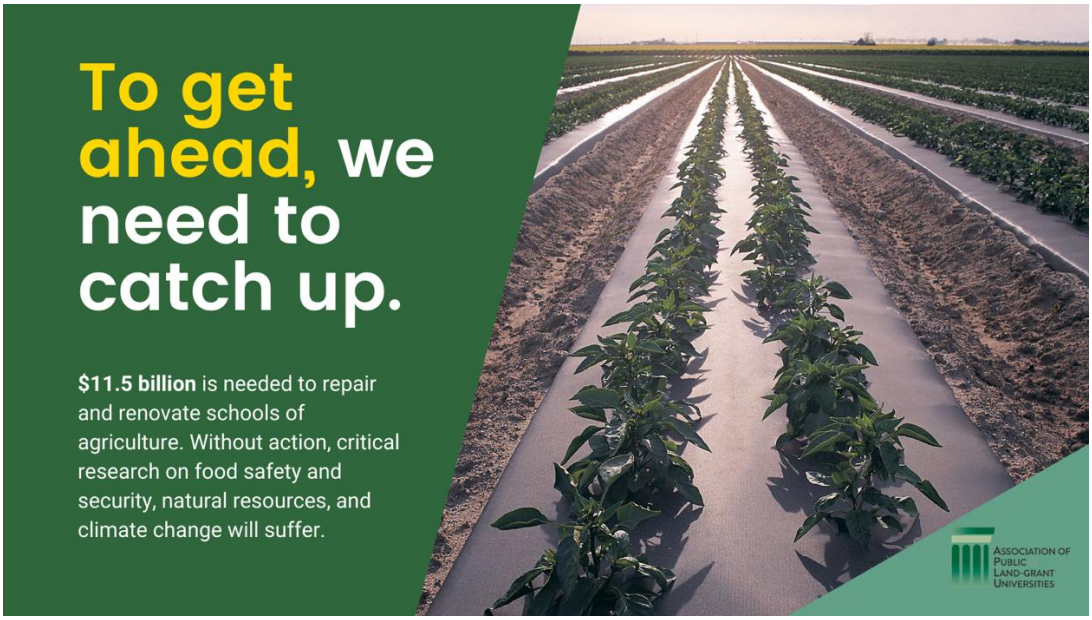
- 21st century solutions can't come from 1950s labs. Learn more about why an $11.5 billion investment in infrastructure at schools of agriculture is needed now. #ActOnAgriculture

- To get ahead, we need to catch up. Without government infrastructure investment in colleges and schools of agriculture, America won't be able to keep up with countries who are increasingly outspending us. Learn more. #ActOnAgriculture

- 🚨🚨🚨The alarm bells are sounding: America is at a critical moment – invest in agricultural infrastructure or risk derailing important research on food safety and security, natural resources, and climate change. Learn more from @GordianCompany / @APLU_News' new report.

- 200,000 new jobs: That's the power of investing in infrastructure for schools of agriculture. Learn more. #ActOnAgriculture

Graphics




The economic impact of a $11.5 billion investment would extend far beyond just improving the facilities and student, faculty, and staff experiences of those at the colleges and schools of agriculture...
approximately 200,000 new local jobs would result from funding capital infrastructure investment.
GORDIAN/ APLU STUDY
on funding gap for infrastructure at schools of agriculture
Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities


Food security, climate change, job creation, global competitiveness...
To get ahead, we need to catch up.
Learn more about the urgent need to repair America's schools of agriculture.
Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities

Newsletter Content

Out now, a study from Gordian and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) shows close to $11.5 billion is necessary for building repairs and renovations at USDA funded schools of agriculture. Sixty-nine percent of the buildings at these schools are more than 25 years old and require urgent attention to remain safe, useful, and equipped to address this century's greatest challenges, from food security to climate change and beyond. Additionally, two-thirds of this deferred maintenance is impacting research and teaching, inhibiting the growth and development of tomorrow's scientific workforce.

The Gordian study makes clear that unless the federal government moves quickly to address the growing funding gap for schools of agriculture, the United States risks falling behind on the world stage. Countries like China have spent the last several years increasing investments into their agricultural enterprise. APLU is urging stakeholders to help sound the alarm and make clear to lawmakers that investments in schools of agriculture can transform our research capacity, grow America's biobased economies, secure domestic food supply for the long term, prepare to face a dynamically changing climate, and advance U.S. global competitiveness.

Land-Grant Agricultural Research Facilities Safeguard U.S. Farms and Prepare the Nation for Future Food and Agricultural Challenges

Agriculture is place-based; a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not possible. Climate, soils, natural resources, demand, and cultures vary greatly from location to location, even within each state in the United States. Land-grant universities direct agricultural research that reflects the diverse U.S. population with its varied needs. Institutions in all 50 states and many U.S. territories operate research and outreach sites, both on- and off-campus, that represent diverse ecosystems, communities, and food production systems.

Agricultural research programs at land-grant universities and historically black and tribal colleges and their affiliated state Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES) form the nexus of an ongoing partnership between local, state, and federal governments. Scientists, technicians, students, and staff conduct research that provides evidence-based information to support local, regional, national, and global communities across a range of areas, including agriculture, health and nutrition, and economic development. Extension transmits such knowledge directly to the farmer while also listening to input from farmers about pressing issues on the horizon. This coordinated system meets the diverse and changing food and agricultural needs of local producers and communities.

A fundamental strength of the AES network, with its numerous field outreach and research stations, is its diversity. All the AES stations are interconnected and support each another. As long as the place-based system is maintained and further developed, AES can respond at the local level to such disruptive, wide-ranging threats as zoonotic diseases, crop pests and diseases, adaptation to climate change, and the need to develop new agricultural products.

Targeted infrastructure support will allow AES to perform 21st century, cutting-edge research. Many solutions to the grand challenges facing agriculture and food systems rely on bioinformatics, data analytics, and other modern technologies. Strategic investment to transform the AES field and laboratory infrastructure, instrumentation, and connectivity is necessary for the land-grant university system to maintain its capacity to effectively address current and future challenges.

The local components of our food system differ greatly across the U.S. and within each state—infrastructure and technology must be appropriate to each community. Branch Experiment Stations are located in the exact places where they can most help local stakeholders (e.g., agricultural producers, agricultural industries, food processing industries, other allied industries, and community partners) to address critical issues specific to each locale.

Stakeholder-driven processes are used to develop site-specific research leading to impartial, verified science, technology, and recommendations customized to local, state, and national needs. These not-for-profit centers perform experiments to determine the applicability and viability of new developments for local agricultural and food industries, support rural communities, and develop strategies for harnessing and applying advances at the local level. They then communicate that information with a focus on the benefits that are relevant to the communities they serve. They also provide local jobs and respond to urgent emerging issues in the agricultural economy and food supply chain, and deliver practical tools, technologies, and information to a variety of community stakeholders.

Each state's agricultural research, teaching, and Extension outreach requires adequate infrastructure. An investment in maintaining and enhancing the agricultural infrastructure associated with our state-based land-grant university system is necessary to ensure that it can meet territorial, state, regional, and national needs. **For this reason, the APLU BAA advocates that $11.5 billion in federal economic stimulus spending be dedicated to agricultural research facility infrastructure at the colleges of agriculture over the next five years. Strategic federal investment in facilities at 1862, 1890, 1994, and insular land-grant and non-land-grant schools of agriculture would create 200,000 new jobs nationwide and safeguard the nation's food supply.**