

From the St. Louis Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2025/05/01/washu-research-big-benefits-stl-opinion.html>

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

Education • Viewpoint

WashU chancellor: Our research brings big benefits to St. Louis. You can help protect it.



Image: Getty Images

"The future of St. Louis is being shaped in WashU laboratories today," says Chancellor Andrew Martin.

HALBERGMAN | GETTY IMAGES

By Andrew Martin – chancellor, Washington University

As chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis, I have the privilege of witnessing firsthand how our institution's research enterprise transforms lives, not just through scientific breakthroughs, but through tangible economic and social benefits that strengthen our entire region and state.

For the first time in our history, WashU [surpassed \\$1 billion in annual research funding](#) in fiscal year 2024. This milestone is a testament to the extraordinary talent and dedication of our researchers, and a powerful economic catalyst for St. Louis and Missouri.



Image: SLBJ

Washington University Chancellor Andrew Martin

DILIP VISHWANAT | SLBJ

When our researchers make breakthroughs, our neighbors reap the benefits in many ways. Our biggest research expense is people: brilliant minds working

tirelessly to solve pressing challenges that affect us all. Data shows that every \$1 million in research funding creates 11 local jobs, meaning our current funding level supports thousands of positions for St. Louisans. These aren't just jobs for scientists and doctors. They include research technicians, administrative staff, facilities personnel, IT specialists, manufacturing workers at supply companies, construction jobs for new facilities, and service industry positions that support our growing campus community.

Consider our School of Medicine, which received \$948 million in research funding last year, including \$683 million from the National Institutes of Health. In 2024, WashU Medicine [climbed to No. 2 in NIH funding](#) nationwide among medical schools. This remarkable achievement not only enhances our reputation but also brings substantial resources to our community.

These research dollars boost Missouri's economy by sparking job growth, new construction and local spending. When researchers receive grants, they hire staff, purchase equipment and supplies from local vendors and contribute to the region's economic vitality in countless ways.

Innovation and commercialization: From lab to market

University research doesn't stay within campus boundaries. In fiscal year 2024, WashU filed 442 patents and formed 10 new startup companies. Each represents potential new industries, jobs and economic opportunities for St. Louis.

The recently dedicated Fort Neuroscience Research Building is a great example. This [\\$616 million investment](#) on the eastern edge of our campus in the city's Central West End is positioned to become one of the nation's premier neuroscience research hubs. By situating it in the Cortex Innovation District, we're creating synergy with entrepreneurs and startup companies, accelerating the commercialization of WashU discoveries.

Attracting the best and brightest talent

WashU's research capacity is a powerful talent magnet. Our programs attract leading scientists, physicians and students from across the globe who might otherwise never consider making St. Louis their home. This influx of talent contributes to a stronger regional workforce and attracts companies needing specialized expertise.

The presence of world-class research also creates a virtuous cycle. Companies choose to build their businesses here to tap into our talent pipeline, which creates more opportunities and attracts more talent. Together, WashU and industry partners can build a region where innovators thrive.

Real-world impact: Advancing health care through innovation

Let me share an exciting example of how our research translates into real-world benefits. Researchers at WashU Medicine recently developed a groundbreaking method for analyzing mammograms that identifies individuals at high risk of developing breast cancer with unprecedented accuracy – 2.3 times more accurately than standard methods.

This innovation, powered by artificial intelligence, could help predict breast cancer risk and inform the treatment path to ultimately save lives. The researchers have launched a new startup company, Prognosia, with the help of WashU's Office of Technology Management and its Venture Fellows Program, and the company has licensed the patent and algorithm. This exemplifies how university research creates both societal and economic value.

It's exciting to share the technological advancements and the dollars that flow to our economy due to this innovative research; but it's even more gratifying to think about the mothers, sisters and friends who will gain precious additional years to celebrate family milestones.

St. Louis on the map: Reputation and reach

The discoveries emerging from WashU research labs bring positive attention to our region, enhancing our reputation as an innovation hub. This visibility extends beyond academic circles. It means St. Louis becomes a top-of-mind destination for patients seeking groundbreaking treatments and access to over 2,500 active clinical trials, for companies looking to collaborate with cutting-edge researchers, and for conferences and events that generate tourism revenue.

A word about federal investment in university research

Given recent news of the federal government's [cuts to research funding at many universities](#), some may wonder why the federal government invests so heavily in university research rather than institutions funding it entirely through their own resources. The answer lies in both purpose and scale. Since the end of the second world war, federal funding has directed research toward national priorities that benefit all Americans, from curing diseases to enhancing national security to driving economic competitiveness. The scope of today's scientific challenges requires investment at a scale that even the wealthiest universities couldn't sustain while fulfilling their educational missions and honoring the constraints put on endowment spending through legal agreements with donors.

Additionally, this approach ensures research capacity is distributed across regions, creating economic benefits nationwide rather than concentrating them at just a few institutions. When federal dollars are invested in university labs, they generate returns that extend far beyond campus boundaries, creating jobs, launching companies and solving problems that matter to everyone.

A partnership for regional prosperity

University research is a powerful economic engine, but its full potential is realized through partnerships with business leaders, policymakers, investors and community stakeholders. Together, we can ensure that the innovation happening in our labs translates into economic opportunities for all St. Louisans.

As we celebrate our success and seek ways to maintain this great momentum, I invite the business community to explore new ways to collaborate with WashU. Whether through research partnerships, technology licensing, talent recruitment or investment in startups, there are numerous opportunities to leverage our research enterprise for mutual benefit. So, too, do I encourage our area's business leaders to advocate for research with members of Congress in order to advance economic prosperity and physical health in our region.

The future of St. Louis is being shaped in WashU laboratories today. By working together, we can ensure that the economic and social benefits of university research reach every corner of our region, creating a healthier and more prosperous future for all.

THE LIST

Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois' largest colleges and universities

Total Headcount Enrollment 2024-2025

Rank	Prior Rank	School / Prior Rank (*not ranked)
1	1	University of Missouri-Columbia
2	2	Washington University in St. Louis
3	3	St. Louis Community College

[View This List](#)

Missouri and Southern Illinois' largest research universities

Research Funding Received 2023

Rank	Prior Rank	University / Prior Rank (*not ranked)
1	1	Washington University in St. Louis
2	2	University of Missouri-Columbia
3	3	Southern Illinois University Carbondale

[View This List](#)