

Campus & community, Politics & society, Research

## Researchers and students gather in Sproul Plaza to 'Stand up for Science'

*The rally was part of a nationwide day of action in support of federal funding for scientific research.*

By Robert Sanders, Jason Pohl



Members of a crowd on Sproul Plaza on March 7 carried homemade signs supporting science.

Glenn Ramit for UC Berkeley

**March 10, 2025**

Over a thousand people crowded around UC Berkeley's Savio Steps in Sproul Plaza on Friday (March 7) to protest ongoing or threatened cuts to federal research funds, part of a day of action organized by research scientists around the country.

Gathering in the warm sun, the crowd, bearing placards and signs in support of scientific research, heard from speakers who excoriated the Trump administration for trying to shut down one of the most productive economic engines of all time.

The event was one of nearly three dozen [“Stand up for Science”](#) rallies held nationwide to protest mass government firings, the attempted elimination of all USAID funding, proposed cuts to research grants from National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), and “the mass cancellation of research projects that the administration is opposed to on ideological grounds,” said Edward Miguel, one of the organizers of the event.

“This dual assault on science and democracy is not aligned with our country’s founding vision,” said Miguel, UC Berkeley Distinguished Professor of Economics and founder of the Center for Effective Global Action. The founding fathers created scientific societies, he added, “to promote scientific research and they saw it as essential to our democracy. ... And their vision has paid off handsomely. The U.S. has been the world’s unrivaled scientific and technological leader for the last 80 years.”



At a March 7 rally in Sproul Plaza to “Stand up for science,” crowds listened to speakers arguing that federal funding is essential to discovering new cures for disease, stoking the U.S. economy and training the next generation of scientists and engineers.



“It is our role as researchers, scholars, artists, students and intellectuals to stand up now and tell the truth, maybe before it’s too late for our scientific community. Destroying American science is not patriotic,” he said.

Nobel laureate Jennifer Doudna, one of the inventors of the revolutionary CRISPR gene editing technology, lamented the attack on NIH funding, in particular, because of its critical role in training the next generation of biomedical researchers eager to solve today’s major health problems.

“I would not be here without support from the National Institutes of Health. A training grant paid for me to go to graduate school at a time when my family from a small town in Hawaii could have never afforded it .... So I am incredibly grateful to the NIH,” said Doudna, a professor of chemistry and molecular and cell biology and founder of the Innovative Genomics Institute.



Many in the crowd held signs emphasizing the key role that basic science research plays in improving health and saving lives.

Stanley Luo for UC Berkeley

Threatened cuts would damage the “kind of curiosity-driven, intellectually-driven science that we’re all proud to do here at Berkeley,” she said. “We can’t take that support for granted. We have to be standing up for it, we have to be informing our congressional representatives how important it is and encouraging them to reach out and stand up for what’s right in science. And the science can only be done with appropriate federal funding.”

One engineering student, Negar Morshedian, who leads outreach for the campus's Society of Women Engineers, expressed her reluctance to speak on Friday for fear of retribution. Yet she felt compelled to do so out of concern for future generations of scientists and engineers, the students she and society members mentor. These include first-generation students and "girls who have never considered engineering," she said, yet who thrive at UC Berkeley.

"In a few years, these kids will be ... standing exactly ... where I am right now," said Morshedian. "The way things are going, they will enter a workforce, a world that has fewer and less accessible research and education opportunities. With our efforts, with our advocacy, this will not become a reality."

Many in the crowd held signs highlighting the role basic research has played in our lives: "Got polio? Me neither. Science FTW (for the world)" and "Fund Science Like Your Life Depended on it." Other signage addressed some of the proven scientific benefits of research that the current administration has targeted: "Vaccines Work. Climate Change is Real."

David J.X. González, an assistant professor of environmental health sciences at Berkeley's School of Public Health, addressed these issues in his remarks. González, who studies the health effects of climate change and the polluting industries that harm communities, mentioned recent fires in Los Angeles and said that it's impossible to argue with the fact that disasters are becoming more dangerous and more costly, especially in vulnerable communities and among marginalized populations.



Following a noon rally on Sproul Plaza, a crowd marched through campus with signs and flags protesting proposed cuts to the federal government's funding for scientific research.

“We need science to learn, when disasters like wildfires happen, how to protect people,” González told the crowd. “If we can’t study wildfires when they happen, more people will be hurt when these disasters inevitably return.”

He cited research he and his colleagues do that directly influences policymakers working to protect communities nationwide. Any interference from the federal government, he said, will have “real costs to real people.”

“We are here at Cal ... today because we believe in our mission to promote long-term positive societal impacts,” said Emily Ozer, a professor of community health sciences and director of the Institute of Human Development. “Let us rise to this historical moment together, standing up to support science and the communities we serve. We are the ones we’re waiting for.”

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