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NSF Awards NAIRR Operations Center to SDSC and TACC

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RECENT DEVELOPMENT

With [\\$35M total to be awarded over five years](#), the National Science Foundation (NSF) has identified the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC) and the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC) to jointly lead the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Operations Center (NAIRR-OC). The NAIRR-OC will be tasked with creating and managing the ongoing operations for a sustained national academic AI research infrastructure.

ANALYST COMMENTARY

The creation of the NAIRR-OC signals a commitment by the US government to continue funding the NSF to support access to a national-scale AI research infrastructure designed to accelerate fundamental, early-stage academic research into scientific discovery and broad workforce development.

On the surface, solidifying the NSF's NAIRR with the creation of the NAIRR-OC may seem redundant with the DOE's Genesis Mission initiative and charter. Both are applying AI to accelerate scientific discovery, investing in high-performance computing and advanced AI models, and highlighting workforce development and training. They are, however, taking complementary approaches. NAIRR is democratizing broad access for the US academic community to AI infrastructure for wide-ranging early-stage research while Genesis Mission is harnessing US government lab infrastructure to address mission-driven national challenges and national security.

Despite their independent missions and unique goals, there could be benefits to collaboration between NAIRR and Genesis Mission. Cooperation on data integration and standards could streamline migration of datasets from the academic community into DOE workflows, as would coordination between NSF programmable cloud libraries and Genesis' American Science Cloud. Early-stage research supported by NAIRR could feed into larger scale mission-driven Genesis Mission programs.

National and regional interests in sovereign AI may be critical to long-term economic competitiveness and national security. The US is not alone in investing in sovereign AI-for-science leadership. EuroHPC has been investing in similar infrastructure and programs for Europe with its AI Factory, AI Antenna, and AI Gigafactory strategy that is inclusive of both academic and governmental needs. Regardless of whether the US or EuroHPC investments produce a definitive leader, broad-based accelerated scientific discovery benefiting global society at large could be the ultimate benefactor.

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