

July 18, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

As the President of the University at Albany, State University of New York (UAlbany), it is my distinct honor to invite you to visit our campus. UAlbany is one of 187 public Carnegie Classified “Research 1” doctoral granting universities and is distinguished for many academic strengths including weather and climate, emergency management, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence, and health sciences.

Of particular interest to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), UAlbany is home to the nation’s first standalone College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security, and Cybersecurity. We are also home to the New York State Mesonet, a network of 127 weather stations across the state that supplement National Weather Service modeling and observations to provide more accurate and real-time weather information, improving forecasts and informing weather alerts. Both are housed, along with other weather-climate-emergency management assets, within our state-of-the-art ETEC building.

As you may know, UAlbany was awarded a \$3 million DHS grant in 2023 – entitled Exploiting Mesonets for Emergency Preparedness and Response to Weather Extremes (EMPOWER) – to leverage data collected from weather stations to improve emergency management decisions. However, on July 8, with 15 months remaining in the three-year project, we were notified of the grant’s termination. I urge you to reconsider this decision.

The EMPOWER project utilizes the Mesonet’s real-time data to develop cutting-edge tools designed specifically for emergency managers and first responders. In a world with increasingly frequent and unpredictable severe weather, these new tools will provide community safety professionals with unparalleled information to make fast, well-informed decisions when disasters strike, alerting communities to imminent threats and protecting lives and property.

Through the EMPOWER initiative, DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) has operationalized more accurate weather hazard impact warning and emergency response capability to keep Americans safe. This project focused on extreme weather like rapid and severe flooding similar to what communities in Central Texas experienced in early July. Any funding that is rescinded or stalled could put lives at risk.

I would like to invite you to visit the University at Albany campus, tour our ETEC facility, and learn more about how our research can support DHS as the Department upgrades technologies to provide the public with advanced warning that will serve to mitigate risks, damage, injury, and loss of life.

Thank you for your consideration and your service. We look forward to working with your team to coordinate your visit soon.



Havidán Rodríguez
President