



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES



August 29, 2012

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Zients:

As presidents of organizations that represent most of the nation's public and private research universities, we recognize the unprecedented challenges our country faces in addressing budget deficits while creating economic and job growth to ensure our long-term prosperity and fiscal health. The federal government must continue to play a critical role in fostering U.S. economic competitiveness and economic growth; therefore, even as the overall budget may be constrained, certain investments for the future must remain a top priority. As a recent National Research Council report on the future of research universities stated: "In the United States, the primary source of the new knowledge and talented individuals who apply it to achieve our security, health, prosperity, and other national goals continues to be the basic research and graduate education programs of our nation's research universities."

For these reasons, we strongly urge you, as you craft the Administration's FY 2014 budget, to uphold the President's demonstrated commitment to invest in student financial aid and scientific research programs that will contribute to future economic growth and security.

The main role of the federal government in higher education is to help ensure access regardless of socioeconomic status – one of the reasons this nation's higher education enterprise is the envy of the world. The Pell Grant and other federal need-based student financial aid programs have been the foundation on which access to higher education for all has been built. Our institutions are committed not only to access, but also to promoting student success and completion, as well as supporting the President's college degree attainment goal. As other nations aggressively invest in their human capital, we cannot afford to relinquish our leadership.

In addition to sustained support for student aid programs, we hope that the Administration's FY 2014 budget will reflect the importance of the Department of Education's graduate education and Title VI international education programs. Efforts to build our country's human capital and increase U.S. competitiveness must ensure not only that students are able to earn a degree, but also that they have opportunities to gain advanced levels of graduate training and the foreign language and cultural skills necessary to be successful in the global marketplace. We encourage the Administration to preserve the longstanding focus of Title VI programs on in-depth training and research capacity in foreign languages and international studies, which help inform classroom teaching and strengthen the pool of international experts in areas that are essential to national security. Similarly, we hope the Administration continues its commitment to encouraging and improving STEM education. All of these education programs are important not only to meeting the President's college degree attainment goal, but also to our future economic competitiveness.

Just as the federal government plays an essential role in American higher education through student financial aid programs, it also fulfills a vital and unique role in the nation's scientific research enterprise. Several federal agencies invest in basic research – the kind of research whose outcomes are often initially unknown but later prove essential to technological and medical innovation. In fact, we can trace the origins of many of today's leading

industries and products – computers, nanotechnology, wireless communications, and pharmaceuticals, to name a few – to federally funded basic research. Economists estimate that half of the growth of the U.S. economy in the last 50 years can be attributed to research and technological innovation, much of which has been spurred by federally sponsored research.

We commend the Administration for its unwavering commitment to scientific research, and we urge you to uphold that commitment in the FY 2014 budget submission for basic research sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy’s Office of Science and ARPA-E, the Department of Defense including DARPA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Department of Agriculture including AFRI and the other agriculture research and extension programs, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

Moreover, our nation’s long-term success in meeting global challenges depends on understanding not only technological and scientific complexities, but broader social and humanistic challenges as well. As the only federal agency tasked with advancing U.S. achievement over the entire range of academic fields in the humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provides critical grant support for the activities of hundreds of educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and individual scholars nationwide. We applaud the President’s support for the NEH and urge the Administration to continue to champion increases in these critical programs, particularly the competitive grants that fund high-quality humanities research and education programs.

Finally, we appreciate the Administration’s continued commitment to addressing the serious issues of global food security through the Feed the Future (FTF) Initiative. The unique scientific and research capabilities that U.S. universities can bring to support and further FTF’s mission cannot be overstated. We urge continued investment in the important USAID programs which harness the talent and resources of our universities on the daunting challenges of the developing world.

As you work with federal agencies to craft the FY 2014 budget, we strongly urge you to continue to make federal student aid and basic research priorities for strategic investment spending. Given their importance, we ask the Administration to maintain its strong commitment to these programs by recommending funding levels that, at a minimum, keep pace with inflation and create a pathway for sustained growth. We also continue to strongly urge the Administration’s leadership in forging a major, balanced long-term deficit reduction agreement that will help provide economic stability and prevent the indiscriminate cuts of sequestration in FY2013 and beyond.

We stand ready to work with you and thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
AAU



Peter McPherson
President
APLU

cc: John Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
Charles Bolden, Administrator, NASA
Steven Chu, Secretary, Department of Energy
Francis Collins, Director, National Institute of Health
Arne Duncan, Secretary, Department of Education
Patrick Gallagher, Director, National Institutes of Standards and Technology
Jane Lubchenco, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Leon Panetta, Secretary, Department of Defense
Jim Leach, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities
Rajiv Shah, Administrator, Agency for International Development
Subra Suresh, Director, National Science Foundation
Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture