AAU Leaders Applaud Administration’s Planned Export Control Reforms

AAU President Robert M. Berdahl and Stanford University President John Hennessy issued the following statements today in response to an announcement by the White House of its plans to reform the nation’s system of export controls. President Hennessy leads AAU’s Export Controls Task Force and served as co-chair of the National Academies’ Committee on Science, Security and Prosperity, which issued the 2009 report, “Beyond ‘Fortress America’: National Security Controls on Science and Technology in a Globalized World.”

Robert M. Berdahl, President, Association of American Universities:

The nation’s research universities are encouraged by the Administration’s planned actions to revise the nation’s system of export controls. They represent an important first step towards achieving meaningful and sensible export control reform. The current export control system is based upon an antiquated model developed to address Cold War threats. It needs serious modifications if it is to truly address the national security and economic threats facing our country today.

We are particularly pleased that the Administration’s proposals look to protect national security without disrupting university research that is critical to our long-term economic and national security, and that the proposals are intended to ensure that the world’s best talent can participate openly in that research. We will continue to work closely with the Administration as it implements the proposed reforms.

John Hennessy, President, Stanford University:

President Obama and this Administration are to be commended for taking a serious look at the changes that are needed in our export control policies to make them more effective in the global business, research, and education environment of the 21st century.

The export controls regulations that served the United States well 40 years ago no longer meet the country’s needs. In fact, many current requirements actually impede our national security
and thwart our ability to compete. As we noted in our National Academies committee report, “Beyond ‘Fortress America,’” in a world of globalized science and technology, our security will come from our ability to “run faster” than our competitors, not from building walls around our nation. A more agile and responsive system of controls will allow us to focus our energies on serious security risks, make informed decisions, and make them more quickly.

I am especially grateful to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, the President’s National Security Advisor, James Jones, and the rest of the National Security Council staff for their leadership on this very complex issue.

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