Robert M. Berdahl announced today that he will retire as president of the Association of American Universities, effective May 1, 2011, when his current contract expires. Berdahl has served as president of the association of leading research universities since May, 2006.

In a message to the presidents and chancellors of the 63 AAU member institutions today, Berdahl said, “I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have served as president of AAU; the last four-and-a-half years have enabled me to work on important issues facing higher education with a splendid staff and a wonderful group of university leaders…My only regret is that the calendar tells me that it is time to retire.”

Berdahl, who is chancellor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former president of the University of Texas at Austin, said that he intends to remain active in higher education and undertake some long-delayed writing projects.

The AAU executive committee will organize a search for Berdahl’s successor.

The committee’s current chair, Chancellor Henry Yang of the University of California, Santa Barbara, said, “Bob has been an extraordinary leader for AAU. His intimate knowledge of the challenges facing America’s research universities and his ability to articulate the value of these institutions has made him a strong and effective advocate in the halls of Congress and the Administration, as well as to the public. Under Bob’s leadership, AAU has contributed to major policy successes, including the enactment of the America COMPETES Act, significant increases in the federal investment in basic research, revitalizing the Defense Department’s commitment to basic research, and working with key members of Congress to call for a review of the nation’s research universities by the National Academies of Science. In addition, Bob’s visionary and wise management of AAU during the period following the financial crisis was responsible for the association emerging from that crisis as strong as ever.”

The Association of American Universities is an association of 61 U.S. and two Canadian research universities organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate and professional education, undergraduate education, and public service in research universities.