AAU STATEMENT ON THE PRESIDENT’S FY2012 BUDGET

Following is a statement by Robert M. Berdahl, President of the Association of American Universities (AAU), on the President’s FY12 budget.

We applaud the President’s continuing commitment to scientific research and innovation. His budget, while freezing discretionary spending and taking other steps to reduce deficits, invests in research that will help us grow our economy, conquer disease, achieve greater energy independence, and strengthen our national security. More steps are clearly needed to get deficits and our national debt under control, but when it comes to cutting spending, those cuts must be smart and strategic. As is widely recognized, the largest portion will have to come from entitlement programs.

This budget contrasts sharply with the approach taken in H.R. 1, the FY11 continuing resolution introduced last week in the House. That measure would truly harm this nation’s capacity for innovation by slashing research spending for nearly every agency that sponsors scientific research. This is exactly the wrong approach to deficit reduction, and it is our hope that the Senate, the President, and ultimately the House will agree on deficit reduction measures that enhance, not stifle, innovation and long-term economic growth.

We applaud the President’s effort to enable students with economic hardship to attend college by maintaining the maximum Pell Grant at its current level. We are concerned that the President’s proposal to eliminate the in-school interest subsidy on loans to graduate students as a means of covering some of the costs of the Pell program may discourage American students from attending graduate school at a time when the nation needs to encourage its own best talent. We look forward to working with the Administration and with Congress to mitigate any negative impact on these students.

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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.