April 20, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As president of the Association of American Universities, I write to thank you for your leadership and efforts to sustain strong federal investments in student financial aid and scientific research in the final FY11 spending measure. We are deeply grateful for your efforts to prevent the spending cuts that were proposed in H.R. 1 that would have caused significant harm to low-income college students, scientific research, and the nation’s future competitiveness and security.

We especially appreciate that the Pell Grant maximum award was preserved at $5,550. We pledge to continue to work with the Administration and Congress on ways to shore up the Pell program, as well as other federal student aid programs, so they can serve the needs of students into the future.

Despite spending reductions to some student aid programs and scientific research at the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy Office of Science, we appreciate that support for student aid and federally sponsored research was a priority for the Administration. We will continue to promote the type of student aid and research investments you have called for and that will pay dividends in a highly trained workforce and innovations that lead to new technologies, industries, and jobs.

We commend your offering a framework to address the nation’s growing debt. We appreciate that difficult choices must be made on federal spending and revenues, and agree that part of the solution must include investments that give the nation the best chance of improving our future. As the report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform makes clear, one of the reasons that deficit reduction is so important is to ensure our nation’s continued ability to make critical investments, particularly in the key areas of education, research, and infrastructure.

Thank you for insisting that fiscal responsibility and long-term economic security are not to be found by reducing federal investments that help build a better America.

Respectfully,

Robert M. Berdahl
President
Association of American Universities

cc: Jacob J. Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education
John P. Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy