November 14, 2011

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
SH-722 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510-1102

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
SD 113 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510-2402

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
H-232 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515-6501

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2467 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515-4706

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Members Cochran and Dicks:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), whose combined memberships include most of the major public and private research universities in the United States, we write to express our concerns about the proposed reduction in federal funding for the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) for fiscal year 2012. In our view, reducing the office’s budget by more than half would adversely impact the formulation, coordination, and implementation of policies that are integral to America’s scientific research and technology enterprise.

In 1976, OSTP was established for the multifaceted purpose of providing valuable scientific and technical advice to the President and White House senior staff, developing sound scientific and technology policies for the research agencies within the federal government, and acting as a conduit between the federal government, private sector, state and local governments, and the scientific and higher education communities on scientific policies and initiatives that are critical to innovation and the nation’s research enterprise. For the last 35 years, the relationship between OSTP and the nation’s research university community has been strong, consistent, and well-grounded in the understanding that federal investment in scientific policies and initiatives are absolutely critical if our nation is to remain the world leader in innovative ideas, concepts, and technologies.

The university community has many priorities within H.R. 2112, the FY12 Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, including the research and education programs within agencies such as the National Science Foundation, NASA, and USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). These priorities were addressed in our earlier letters to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. OSTP plays a particularly
important role in coordinating the research enterprise across these agencies, as well as the entire federal government, ensuring that taxpayer investments in research are used efficiently.

Thus, as the Joint House-Senate Conference Committee continues negotiations on H.R. 2112, we respectfully request that you consider the vital role OSTP plays in the development of scientific and technology policies for the nation and fund OSTP as close as possible to the $6 million level of funding included in the Senate’s version of H.R. 2112.

Sincerely,

Hunter R. Rawlings III  
President  
AAU

Peter McPherson  
President  
APLU