AAU COMMENTS ON PRESIDENT OBAMA’S FY13 BUDGET

Following is a statement by Hunter R. Rawlings III, President of the Association of American Universities, on the President’s FY13 Budget, which was issued today.

In general, the President’s FY13 budget maintains the robust investment his Administration has made in scientific research over the past three years. This investment is vital to the nation’s long-term economic growth, health, and national security, and we hope that it will continue to receive the bipartisan support it has in past years. That this investment continues to be a priority for the President in a budget constrained by the Budget Control Act makes it all the more powerful a statement. The budget provides strong support to the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy’s Office of Science and ARPA-E, and the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative in the Department of Agriculture, which supports competitive research.

While the budget for the National Institutes of Health avoids harmful cuts to the largest federal science agency, additional funding will be needed in FY13 to preserve the nation’s investment in biomedical research if we are to maintain U.S. leadership. Similarly, funding for basic research at the Department of Defense is essentially level despite significant cuts elsewhere. Congress needs to consider whether this is sufficient to provide the technological advances we need to meet national security challenges.

With respect to federal student aid, the budget reaffirms the President’s commitment to increase funding for key student aid programs and to encourage the states to reverse their extremely damaging disinvestment in higher education. We support these goals, though it is important that new funding criteria not narrowly define educational quality using short-term, quantitative measures or inadvertently provide incentives that would harm quality. It is important that the federal government as well as colleges and universities continue working to make college affordable for all, regardless of their economic status.

Finally, we are pleased that the budget provides an increase for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the nation’s most significant source of support for research and scholarship in the humanities.

The Association of American Universities is an association of 59 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.