FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE                      CONTACT: Barry Toiv
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AAU PROPOSES HIGHER EDUCATION, INNOVATION AGENDA FOR
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, NEXT ADMINISTRATION

Calls for Strengthening Partnership
Between Federal Government and Research Universities

The Association of American Universities (AAU) today proposed for the next Administration a
detailed agenda for strengthening the partnership between the federal government and the nation’s
research universities as a means of fostering innovation, prosperity, and economic growth.

The paper also lists steps that universities need to take to strengthen the partnership and improve the
ways they carry out their missions of education, research, and public service.

AAU will provide the policy paper, entitled “Partnering for a Prosperous and Secure Future: The
Federal Government and Research Universities,” to both major Presidential campaigns.

For some of its key proposals, the paper relies on the recent National Research Council (NRC) report,
“Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation’s
Prosperity and Security.” AAU is an association of leading public and private research universities
that focuses on national and institutional issues important to research-intensive universities, including
funding for research, research and education policy, and graduate and undergraduate education.

The policy paper issued today provides recommendations for government and for universities in the
following areas:

Addressing the nation’s fiscal challenge. The report calls for “a balanced approach that seriously
and thoughtfully addresses entitlement programs, which are a primary source of long-term spending
growth, and incorporates substantial tax reform that is designed both to encourage economic growth
and to raise revenues needed to reduce the deficit.”

Cultivating human capital by strengthening access to college. The report calls on the federal
government to sustain vital student aid programs, especially Pell Grants, and ensure that student loan
programs encourage sound borrowing and manageable repayment plans. It also emphasizes the
importance of universities controlling costs while sustaining educational quality, providing appropriate
institutional financial aid, and ensuring transparency about costs as well as financial aid.

Attracting and developing talent by strengthening graduate and STEM education and reforming
immigration laws. To strengthen graduate education, the report calls on universities to become more
efficient by increasing completion rates and reducing time-to-degree and to strengthen pathways for students in a broad range of careers, not only in academia. It calls on government to adopt career development initiatives designed to supplement and expand fellowships and traineeships.

The report notes AAU’s five-year initiative to strengthen undergraduate education in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and urges government to encourage such initiatives.

The paper also calls for comprehensive immigration reform as well as specific reforms designed to “turn immigrant talent into American talent,” including establishing a clear pathway to citizenship for advanced STEM degree graduates from U.S. colleges and universities; enacting a version of the DREAM Act to help make it possible for children whose parents brought them to the U.S. to attend college; and gradually replacing the seven-percent-per-country cap limitation for employment-based green cards with a first-come, first-serve system for qualified highly-skilled immigrants;

**Fostering new ideas and discoveries.** The report urges the next Administration to follow through on the NRC’s recommendations for sustaining federal support of basic research, including full funding of the America COMPETES Act. It also expresses support for allocating research funds by merit review as well as for sustained funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Ensuring a regulatory and legal framework that encourages innovation.** The association calls for regulatory reform to simplify and make more efficient the regulatory framework governing federal research and higher education programs. It also urges maintaining the current legal framework for university technology transfer, as set forth by the Bayh-Dole Act; developing proof-of-concept and gap funding programs that would support the translation of ideas generated with federally funded research into viable commercial products; and rejecting proposals that would allow faculty to be “free agents” and directly commercialize federal research results. To further promote innovation, AAU calls for legislation to encourage federal research agencies to build and inter-connect public access repositories of peer-reviewed articles developed from the research they fund. The association also advocates policies that support expanding public access to both domestic and international research repositories.

**Encouraging other sources of support for research universities.** The policy document calls for federal initiatives to encourage states to live up to their obligation to support public higher education, including federal-state matches that require maintenance of effort by states. The report also calls for extending and improving tax policies that aid students and families in financing higher education, particularly permanent extension of the American Opportunity Tax Credit and its consolidation with the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit and the deduction for undergraduate education. The report also calls for the preservation of strong tax incentives for charitable giving.

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The Association of American Universities is an association of 61 leading public and private research universities in the United States and Canada. AAU focuses on issues important to research-intensive universities, such as funding for research, research policy issues, and graduate and undergraduate education. AAU universities award over one-half of all U.S. doctoral degrees and 55 percent of those in the sciences and engineering. They are on the leading edge of innovation, scholarship, and solutions that contribute to our nation's economy, security, and well-being.