April 21, 2015

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cochran, and Ranking Members Lowey and Mikulski:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities, an organization with 60 leading public and private research universities in the United States, we urge you to make research and higher education programs a top priority as you consider the FY 2016 302 (b) allocations.

Investments in higher education and research are proven drivers of economic growth. They are vital for the development of new technologies, processes, and a workforce that will advance our national security, our energy self-sufficiency, and our citizens’ health. With our investments in scientific research having flattened out and competitor nations pouring resources into research and higher education, we face a significant innovation deficit that threatens our nation’s global economic preeminence. If not addressed, it will soon force us to surrender America’s position as the global innovation leader.

Austere budgets and the spending cuts enacted under sequestration may have helped reduce the budget deficit in the short term, but they have widened the innovation deficit. This undermines economic growth and harms our nation’s overall fiscal health, thereby worsening long-term federal budget deficits and the national debt. Federal investments in research and higher education are not inconsistent with long-term deficit reduction; in fact they are vital to it.

The FY 2016 appropriations process provides an important opportunity to put our country on a path to closing the innovation deficit by reducing the gap between actual and needed federal investments in scientific research and higher education. As you consider FY 2016 spending measures, we urge you to seize this opportunity and ensure that the 302 (b) allocations for the Labor-HHS-Education, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Energy and Water Development subcommittees support robust investments in research and higher education agencies and programs, including: the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy’s Office of Science, Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, NASA’s...
science and technology programs, Pell Grants, Department of Education research programs, and other federal higher education programs. We also urge you to recommit to strong research investments in other agencies—the Departments of Defense and Agriculture, and the National Endowment for the Humanities—as you determine 302 (b) allocations and set priorities for the various appropriations measures.

Ignoring the innovation deficit will have serious consequences, including: a less prepared, less highly skilled U.S. workforce; fewer U.S.-based scientific and technological breakthroughs; fewer U.S.-based patents; fewer U.S. start-ups, products, and jobs; and reduced economic performance and security.

Please use the 302 (b) allocations process to enable Congress to make a significant down payment toward closing our nation’s innovation deficit in FY 2016. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
Association of American Universities

cc: Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees