The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
404 Hart Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dodd:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU), an organization of 62 leading public and private research universities, I am pleased to express support for the Getting Results for Advanced Degrees (GRAD) Act and the International and Foreign Language Studies Act. These measures would renew and enhance Department of Education graduate and international education programs that are essential to our nation’s economic and national security and continued global leadership.

The GRAD Act would help to reinvigorate the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) and Jacob Javits Fellowship programs. Both programs are vital elements of the federal government’s support for graduate education. Javits is the only federal fellowship program that supports students in the humanities and arts. GAANN is specifically aimed at providing support to students pursuing graduate study in fields vital to our nation’s economic and security interests. The GRAD Act makes important enhancements to both programs and provides for greater funding authorizations that would permit an increased number of awards for students.

The GRAD Act would also increase the unsubsidized Stafford loan limit for graduate students and eliminate the taxation currently levied on fellowships and other forms of student aid. Moreover, the bill would make sensible modifications to the needs analysis formula and cost of attendance calculations for independent students. All of these changes would greatly benefit graduate students and their ability to finance their education.

The bill would also create the Patsy T. Mink Fellowship Program, which would provide assistance to students from underrepresented groups who choose to pursue a Ph.D. or other graduate terminal degree. This new fellowship program would help institutions of higher education and partnering organizations to further open the door to graduate education for all qualified Americans.
The International and Foreign Language Studies Act would make important improvements to the Department of Education's international and foreign language education programs. The war on terrorism and increasing global economic competitiveness underscore the need to increase our nation’s international knowledge, skills, and competency. Importantly, your bill would make qualified undergraduate students eligible for Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) program awards, which would provide greater opportunities for undergraduates to pursue advanced studies in these fields. Additionally, the bill would provide for greater funding authorizations so that the programs are better able to meet current and future international and foreign language needs and challenges.

We greatly appreciate your leadership on graduate and international education issues, as well as other student aid and higher education issues. As the process to reauthorize the Higher Education Act continues, we look forward to working with you to advance these measures.

I thank you for your leadership in introducing these important legislative measures.

Cordially,

Nils Hasselmo
President