STATEMENT ON THE NATIONAL INNOVATION ACT OF 2005

The Association of American Universities applauds Senators Ensign and Lieberman for their introduction of the National Innovation Act of 2005. This legislation responds directly to the outstanding set of recommendations made by the Council on Competitiveness for much-needed improvements in our nation’s ability to innovate and compete globally.

The Council’s report, like subsequent reports by the National Academies and a host of business and academic organizations, makes a powerful case that the nation’s ability to compete effectively in the 21st century is under serious threat. That threat is posed largely by continuing underinvestment in fundamental research and our growing weakness in producing scientists, engineers, and others with the technological skills needed for the workforce of the future.

The proposals contained in the National Innovation Act represent a critical step toward strengthening the nation’s innovation infrastructure for the 21st century. Among other things, the measure would create a Presidential Council on Innovation, authorize doubling research funding at the National Science Foundation by FY 2011, expand graduate fellowships and traineeships, and encourage federal research agencies to devote three percent of their research and development budgets to “high-risk frontier research.”

The legislation not only addresses the Council’s recommendations but also reflects what has become a consensus among the nation’s business and academic communities concerning actions we must take to ensure our future global competitiveness and our national security. It is the hope of AAU and the 60 leading U.S. research universities that comprise its membership that Congress will begin acting on these proposals at the earliest possible date.

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The Association of American Universities (www.aau.edu) is an association of 60 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.