October 6, 2005

AAU APPLAUDS SENATE PASSAGE OF KENNEDY-COLLINS AMENDMENT TO DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The Senate last night (October 5) passed on a voice vote an amendment proposed by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) that provides an additional $40 million in Fiscal Year 2006 for defense research and to encourage more students to enter the sciences and engineering.

Specifically, the amendment provides $10 million to double from $10 million to $20 million the funding in the bill for the Department of Defense’s SMART/National Defense Education Program, which aims to attract undergraduate and graduate students to study fields of science and engineering critical to national defense. It also provides an additional $30 million for defense research, most of which is for basic university research.

Following is a statement by Association of American Universities (AAU) President Nils Hasselmo:

AAU and the 60 leading U.S. research universities it represents applaud Senate passage of the Kennedy-Collins amendment to the FY06 defense appropriations bill.

The technological advantage produced by the work of America’s scientists and engineers has helped make our fighting men and women world’s best. Unfortunately, the nation faces a dangerous shortage of scientists and engineers who are U.S. citizens qualified to work for the Defense Department and the defense industries. The Kennedy-Collins amendment will help us give our men and women in the armed forces the cutting edge science and technology they need by ensuring that we have a strong supply of American scientists and engineers in fields critical to our national defense.

In the long run, we need to create a new National Defense Education Act (NDEA), modeled on the post-Sputnik program that inspired many of today’s U.S. scientists and academic leaders to enter the sciences and to study foreign languages and cultures. Our nation's economic competitiveness and national security relied then, as they do now, on well-educated and talented individuals to drive innovation. The NDEA of 1958 and subsequent investments in basic research at universities spawned a generation of highly talented individuals and a U.S. workforce second to none. The Kennedy-Collins amendment will help us maintain America’s leadership.

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The Association of American Universities 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.