The Honorable Ted Stevens  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Defense  
SD-119 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  

Dear Chairman Stevens:

As you move to mark-up the Senate Defense Appropriations Bill, I write on behalf of the Association of American Universities, which represents 60 leading public and private research universities in the U.S., to thank you again for your continued strong support for defense Science and Technology (S&T) programs. I also write to make you aware of the Senate Armed Services Committee’s views concerning an issue I mentioned in my previous letter to you concerning FY2004 appropriations. The issue is the Administration’s budget proposal to transfer certain defense S&T programs, particularly the University Research Initiative (URI), from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the individual services.

We urge that your Subcommittee appropriate funds in accordance with the guidance provided by the Senate Armed Service Committee in their Authorization bill (S.1050) and the accompanying report (S. Rept. 108-46). Included in the bill is a provision that directs the Secretary of Defense to retain funding for five devolved programs, including the URI, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The Senate Armed Services Committee notes in its report that:

“The committee remains concerned about the devolution of numerous research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) programs from the OSD to the military services and defense components….The statement of managers accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 required OSD to report to Congress prior to the devolvement of a number of RDT&E programs. The report failed to answer many basic questions and did not provide adequate justification for the devolvement of these programs….The committee also notes that two previous attempts to devolve RDT&E programs from the OSD have failed.”

We strongly support the position taken by the Senate Armed Services Committee. Our universities have serious concerns with the proposed devolvement of the URI. Such a move could damage the unique nature and design of the URI by eliminating the competition that currently exists between the services for URI
funding. Moreover, it would inhibit the type of cross-service integration and coordination of S&T research that the URI was specifically designed to promote. Finally, if moved out of OSD, and into the services, we are concerned that immediate needs would prompt the services to re-direct funds away from long-term multidisciplinary research focused on meeting the nation’s future defense needs. We therefore request that you maintain funding for the URI in PE 61103D8Z located with the RDT&E Defense-wide Program account, and not fund this program in the specific military service account lines.

In closing, I would again like to commend you and the subcommittee for your ongoing support of Defense S&T. We hope that you will be able to continue this support during the FY 2004 appropriations process.

Cordially,

Nils Hasselmo
President

cc: The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Ranking Member