September 2, 2003

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
H-149 Capitol Building
U.S. House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Murtha
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lewis and Ranking Member Murtha:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), which represent the nation’s leading public and private universities, we write to thank you for the commitment that you have demonstrated in your version of the FY 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill to research programs funded by the Department of Defense (DOD). In particular, we respectfully request that you support the basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research accounts at the levels which were recommended by your bill.

We fully appreciate the need to direct significant resources to meeting immediate and near-term military needs, and we support that effort. However, we believe that it is equally important to prepare for our future military challenges, and thus it is critical that we make a significant investment in the research that will help us to develop the technologies required to meet those future challenges. Just as basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research projects initiated 20 years ago led to technological developments which now form a large portion of the backbone of the current military, including inertial navigation, radar, the global positioning system (GPS), precision guidance, and advanced materials, resources devoted to current basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research projects will make it possible to defend our nation against the military threats we face 20 years from now.

To this end, we hope that you will support these programs as generously as possible in conference. We would also request that you resist specific reductions in funding that have been proposed by the Senate for key university-based basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research programs in areas including biological and materials research, semi-conductor research and computing.

We also want to express our concerns about the “devolvement” of several programs, and specifically the University Research Initiative (URI), from the direct purview of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to the individual services. We are disappointed that both the House and the Senate have allowed the devolvement of the URI program to proceed. We fear that the transfer of the URI program, originally designed to address the broad and cross-cutting scientific and human resource needs of the entire Defense Department, will lead to it becoming narrowly focused to meet the specific needs of each individual service. We, therefore, request that Congress exercise strict oversight of this program to ensure that its integrity and original purpose are maintained.
This nation’s research universities look forward to continuing our long-standing relationship with Congress and the Pentagon on defense matters. We appreciate this opportunity to share our concerns and again thank you again for your support of basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research.

Cordially,

Nils Hasselmo
President
Association of American Universities

C. Peter Magrath
President
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges