September 2, 2003

The Honorable Ted Stevens                  The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman                                    Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee                 Appropriations Subcommittee
on Defense                                  on Defense
SD-119 Dirksen Senate Office Building      SH-722 Hart Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate                                 U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510                       Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Stevens and Ranking Member Inouye:

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 your past commitment to research programs funded by the Department of Defense (DOD). As the FY 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill approaches conference, we hope that you will continue to fund these research programs generously. In particular, we respectfully request that you support the basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research accounts at the highest levels possible.

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 would request that reductions in funding for key university-based basic (6.1) and applied (6.2) research programs in areas including biological and materials research, semiconductor research and computing be removed in conference. We hope that you will support these programs as generously as possible.

We also want to express our concerns once again about the “devolvement” of several programs, specifically the University Research Initiative (URI), from the direct purview of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the individual services. While we appreciate that the Senate did not support the devolvement of certain programs, we are disappointed that the transfer of the URI program was allowed to proceed. We fear that the transfer of the URI program, originally designed to address the broad and crosscutting scientific and human resource needs of the entire
Defense Department, will undermine the program’s usefulness by narrowing its focus to the specific needs of the individual services. If the transfer is to take place, we 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 longstanding relationship on defense matters with Congress and the Department of Defense. We appreciate this opportunity to share our concerns and thank you 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