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AAU PRAISES PELL GRANT INCREASE

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education today approved a Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bill that increases funds for two programs of importance to U.S. research universities – Pell Grants for low-income students and the National Institutes of Health. The full Appropriations Committee is expected to consider the bill next week.

The subcommittee voted to raise the maximum annual Pell Grant for a low-income student from the current $4,310 to $4,700. The Administration proposed an increase to $4,600.

The subcommittee approved an increase of $750 million for NIH, a 2.6-percent increase over Fiscal Year 2007. The Administration proposed a cut of $511 million, or 1.8 percent.

Following is a statement by Robert M. Berdahl, President of the Association of American Universities (AAU), on the subcommittee action.

On behalf of the 60 leading U.S. research universities of AAU, I commend the House Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education for providing a substantial increase in the maximum Pell Grant for low-income college students. This legislation provides greater college opportunity for millions of needy college students, whose participation in higher education is an essential ingredient of American competitiveness. We hope this increase can be sustained through the appropriations process.

With respect to NIH funding, we appreciate that the subcommittee has provided the second straight increase after three years of flat funding and despite the Administration’s proposed cut. We are well aware of the strong support for NIH in the subcommittee, and we look forward to working with the Chairman to enhance this increase later in the appropriations process. We need to restore momentum to NIH as it seeks to fulfill expanding opportunities for medical breakthroughs that prevent illness and save lives.

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The Association of American Universities (www.aau.edu) is an association of 62 leading public and private research universities in the United States and Canada organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate, professional, and undergraduate education, and public service in research universities. AAU universities award over one-half of all U.S. doctoral degrees and 55 percent of those in the sciences and engineering.