AAU CRITICIZES OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Following is a statement by Robert M. Berdahl, President of the Association of American Universities, on the FY08 omnibus appropriations bill now under consideration in Congress.

The FY08 omnibus appropriations bill is very disappointing to those who support the competitiveness and innovation agendas of the President and Congress. After accounting for inflation, this legislation essentially flat-funds or cuts funding for key science agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy Office of Science. Additionally, the bill cuts need-based student aid, making it more difficult for low-income students to attend college and contribute to the nation’s economy.

The America COMPETES Act, enacted earlier this year, was a far-reaching response to concerns about the nation’s long-term competitiveness, particularly those described in the National Academies report “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” It proposed new funding and programs that would enhance the nation’s research capabilities while improving science and math education for students from elementary schools right through postgraduate education.

The America COMPETES Act has little meaning if it is not funded, and this bill does not fund it. We will work with Congress and the President in hopes that they begin to fulfill that commitment next year, because this year has been a severe disappointment. In exchange for an arbitrary cap on domestic spending and thousands of earmarks, the Administration and Congress have sacrificed investments in research and education that would help assure our nation's long-term national and economic security.

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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.