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STATEMENT BY AAU PRESIDENT ROBERT M. BERDAHL ON PRESIDENT'S FISCAL 2008 BUDGET

The budget proposed today by the President has much positive news for the nation’s research universities, but it also raises some very serious concerns.

The President proposes to continue the substantial increases in important research at the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy’s Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology begun last year. These investments have bipartisan support, and we strongly urge Congress to adopt them. We also hope that basic research at the Defense Department, so important to our long-term national security yet seriously shortchanged in this budget, will be a priority for Congress.

We are also pleased that the President is proposing a significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant scholarship for low-income students. However, the budget also calls for eliminating significant campus-based aid programs. Thus, for thousands of low-income students, this budget would take with one hand what it gives with the other. Our nation needs to make college opportunities real for all young people, regardless of income, but we cannot do that by eliminating the very programs that enable colleges to assist them.

Finally, our greatest disappointment with this budget is that it actually would cut funding of the National Institutes of Health $500 million below the amount that Congress appears poised to approve for FY2007. This erosion of the research capacity created just a few years ago by the doubling of NIH is very disturbing. We are throwing away research opportunities that could lead to discoveries that prevent disease, extend lives, and improve quality of life. It is essential that Congress accomplish what this budget fails to, and not only sustain but increase the nation’s investment in NIH research.

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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.