AAU STATEMENT ON THE PRESIDENT’S FY09 BUDGET

Following is a statement by Robert M. Berdahl, President of the Association of American Universities, on President Bush’s FY009 budget, which he submitted to Congress today:

“Question: Is the President’s budget good or bad for the vital research and education that is performed by America’s research universities? Answer: Yes.

“We certainly appreciate the President’s continued advocacy of the American Competitiveness Initiative. This would boost basic research funding at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy’s Office of Science, as well as support for the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Democrats in Congress have a similar agenda, but both Congress and the President simply must do a better job this year of following through on their commitments.

“We are especially pleased that the President is calling for a substantial increase in basic research at the Department of Defense. Defense basic research, which has led in the past to technologies ranging from global positioning systems to stealth technology and the Internet, has been decimated over the past several years. The President’s budget would begin to set this critical research on the right funding path to help our fighting men and women to protect our country.

“At the same time, it is disturbing that the President proposes once again to flat-line funding for the National Institutes of Health. If approved, this will mean that, over six years’ time, NIH’s purchasing power for conducting groundbreaking biomedical research has been cut by one-seventh. We hope Congress will find the means to begin reversing this trend.

“Finally, the President once again proposes to kill financial aid programs that help thousands of students attend college, offsetting one-third of the total increase proposed for Pell Grants. Congress has rejected these proposed funding cuts before, and we trust Congress will do so again this year.”

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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.