December 9, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC  20515

The Honorable James T. Walsh
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Representatives Obey and Walsh:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU), which represents 60 leading U.S. public and private research universities, I am writing to ask that you provide the House committee-approved funding levels for the Department of Education higher education programs in the final FY09 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill and provide the full $1.9 billion increase requested by the advocacy community for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Added funding for these agencies would both sustain important research and education programs and help stimulate economic recovery. Historically, our country has responded to crises by investing in postsecondary education to help students gain access to and remain in college.

While colleges and universities are working to provide students and families with additional financial aid, the federal government can help ensure that students are able to enter and stay in college by increasing funding for the Pell Grant and other need-based aid programs. This would include supporting the House provision to raise the Pell Grant maximum by at least $169, as well as the House funding levels for the TRIO and GEAR UP programs, the Javits and GAANN graduate education programs, and the Title VI and Fulbright Hays international education programs. In combination, increased funding for these programs would help provide educational opportunities not only for millions of low-income students, but also for those who have lost their jobs in the economic downturn.

NIH funding remains an extraordinary long-term investment in our nation’s health, quality of life, and future economic competitiveness. NIH funding can be disbursed quickly into thousands of highest-quality, competitively selected research proposals. Acting NIH Director Raynard S. Kington testified before the House Health Subcommittee on November 13 that:

- each NIH grant creates or sustains seven high-skilled and high-paying jobs, the average salary of which is more than $50,000 annually;
- NIH has 14,000 competitively reviewed research applications that should be funded but aren’t due to declining NIH budgets; and
- each $500 million provided to NIH would allow the agency to fund 1,400 such grants in just four to six weeks.

NIH funding provided through the FY09 omnibus appropriations package would put some of America’s brightest young scientists to work immediately.
In closing, as you prepare the final FY09 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, we ask that you support House funding levels for higher education programs and an increase of $1.9 billion for NIH.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

With best regards,

[Signature]

Robert M. Berdahl
President

cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, House Minority Leader John Boehner
December 9, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
131 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
131 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Harkin and Specter:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU), which represents 60 leading U.S. public and private research universities, I am writing to ask that you provide the House committee-approved funding levels for the Department of Education higher education programs in the final FY09 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill and provide the full $1.9 billion increase requested by the advocacy community for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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Thank you for your consideration of our request.

With best regards,

Robert M. Berdahl
President

cc: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell