TALKING POINTS: THE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Investing in the ability of students to attend college, regardless of economic status, is one of the most important things government can do to boost our economy in the short term and make our economy and our society stronger in the long term.** AAU strongly supports efforts to enhance the Pell Grant and other key student financial aid programs.

- **We commend Congress and President Obama for investing in higher education to help stimulate the nation’s economy.** From the beginning of the economic crisis, protecting student financial aid has been our first priority. The Recovery Act increases in the Pell Grant maximum award, along with the Act’s additional Federal Work-Study funds, will help thousands of students to stay in or enroll in college. It will also help displaced workers enroll in college to acquire new skills.

- **With college enrollments continuing to increase, we must build on the student aid investments made in the Recovery Act and in the FY09 appropriation to safeguard America’s economic future.** We support a broad array of Department of Education programs that help millions of low-income students and their families pay for college; these programs will complement the investments that colleges and universities make to meet the greater need for financial aid in the coming year. Investments in student financial aid are important to maintaining and strengthening our nation’s highly skilled workforce and promoting its innovative capacity and economic competitiveness.

- **We strongly encourage Congress to build upon recent increases in the Pell Grant maximum award.** Providing aid to more than five million undergraduate students, Pell Grants are the federal government’s most important means of providing our nation’s neediest students access to higher education. In the current economy, it is more important than ever to provide a predictable, steady, and sustained funding stream for the Pell Grant program to help students prepare for their futures.

- **AAU looks forward to discussions with the Obama Administration and Congress about proposed changes to student loan programs.** AAU supports efforts to improve the student loan industry to the benefit of all students, without jeopardizing the ability of institutions of higher education to tailor programs that best fit their students’ needs.

- **We are pleased with the Administration’s proposal to provide additional funding for a new version of the campus-based Perkins Loan program, the nation’s original student loan program.** Additional details are needed, however, on how the new program would affect students and the 1,800 institutions that currently participate in the program. We look forward to a dialogue on the proposed expansion of the Perkins Loan program in the coming months.

- **We urge increased support for international education and foreign language programs, including the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs.** According to the National Research Council, a pervasive lack of knowledge of foreign cultures and languages threatens our national security and global competitiveness. An infusion of funds would help address the nation’s need for a steady supply of workers with high levels of language proficiency and knowledge of world cultures.

- **AAU supports greater investment in the U.S. system of graduate education, as a means of protecting the pipeline of young scholars and researchers who are critical to our economic competitiveness.** Without a renewed investment, the nation will face a real loss of talent, with far-reaching consequences in areas such as teaching and research.

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