



October 8, 2020

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Vought:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), membership associations of more than 200 research universities, we urge you to prioritize the U.S. government-university partnership and its importance to our nation's health, economic competitiveness, and security as you develop the administration's FY 2022 budget.

After a decade of discretionary spending caps, our nation has an opportunity to make vital strategic investments in research and higher education essential to fostering innovation and increasing higher education access, affordability, and success. The discretionary spending caps of the past decade have significantly hampered federal investments that have historically fueled the government-university partnership and America's position as the unrivaled global innovation leader and destination for higher learning. The next fiscal year provides an opportunity to take a significant step toward renewing this partnership by restoring the government's commitment to funding the scientific research that fuels American innovation and student aid that builds the next generation of skilled workforce and extends the essential economic mobility benefits of higher education to more Americans.

The last six months have further shed light on the need to invest in the work of research universities. We are presently urging Congress to provide emergency supplemental appropriations to mitigate the harmful disruptions to higher education and research caused by the pandemic. We urge you to consider the need for additional pandemic relief in FY 2022 should Congress and the administration fail to reach an agreement in the current fiscal year on needed relief.

The administration recently outlined its proposed pathway to remaining the global leader in science and technology research and innovation in the Office of Management and Budget and Office of Science and Technology Policy's [memo](#) on the administration's FY 2022 R&D budget priorities. American preeminence in scientific innovation is particularly important as our nation and the world confront the COVID-19 pandemic, and as other nations have made significant gains in recent years in research outputs. We agree the FY 2022 budget should reinforce this commitment by "ensuring departments and agencies deliver maximum return on investment to the American people" as well as making significant increased investments in higher education

and critical areas such as AI, quantum computing, advanced communications, and biotechnology. We urge that needed investments in areas, such as the industries of the future, not come at the expense of currently funded research investments that are vital to our nation's innovation ecosystem.

Our research priorities align with the administration's commitment to investments in the industries of the future. Our success in these areas is dependent on a unified and comprehensive government approach to the funding of basic science across all research agencies. To ensure that the U.S. remains the global innovation leader, we strongly urge the administration's FY 2022 budget align with the recommendation of the new report, [*The Perils of Complacency: America at a Tipping Point in Science & Engineering*](#) to increase federal funding for basic research at a sustained real growth rate of *at least* four percent per year, with the goal of raising federal basic research funding as a percentage of GDP by 50 percent from the present 0.2 percent to 0.3 percent. This funding would go to key federal research agencies, including:

- National Institutes of Health;
- National Science Foundation;
- Department of Energy's Office of Science and Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy;
- Department of Defense's Science and Technology programs and DARPA;
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration;
- National Endowment for the Humanities;
- Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture – particularly agriculture research, capacity building and extension programs;
- Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and National Institute of Standards and Technology;
- Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences; and
- Agency for International Development – particularly Feed the Future Innovation Labs, Higher Education Solutions Network, and university partnerships program.

Further, as our nation continues to reel from the economic impacts of COVID-19, students must be financially supported through federal student aid and increased scholarship and fellowship opportunities in order to promote college completion and ensure we can upskill and reskill our citizenry. With nearly two-thirds of all jobs requiring some form of postsecondary education, supporting more Americans as they pursue higher learning is critical to our nation's economic recovery. Individuals with a bachelor's degree are more likely to be employed, working in areas of significant national need and earning higher wages in their field. As a result of higher earnings, college graduates also pay more in federal, state, and local taxes, providing the necessary resources to help fuel our long-term economic recovery.

To ensure the current crisis does not derail the educational outcomes of today's students, the FY 2022 budget should include substantial new investments in federal Pell Grants and other federal student aid programs that expand college access. We recommend a significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant award for FY 2022 as a clear step toward restoring the Pell Grant's purchasing power and expanding its reach to more low-income students of all backgrounds. We must continue to provide Americans access to higher education and facilitate pathways of success and completion for students, our nation's future leaders.

Additionally, we respectfully request greater investments in the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study, and other critical Department of Education programs. These programs provide students access to high quality higher education and facilitate pathways of success and completion for students. We also ask that the administration's budget increase funding levels for graduate education across federal agencies including the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program, which assists talented students studying in areas such as the STEM fields.

Finally, we ask that the administration's FY 2022 budget strongly support Title VI and Fulbright-Hays international education programs. These programs support foreign language and cultural education programs critical to building the global workforce of the future. They are essential to maintaining a pipeline of language and international experts needed for global collaboration, competition, and national security.

We urge a FY 2022 budget that prioritizes these areas to strengthen the U.S. government-university partnership and enhance the ability of research universities to contribute to our nation's competitiveness and wellbeing. If we can provide any additional information or assistance, please contact Matt Owens (matt.owens@aau.edu) and Craig Lindwarm (clindwarm@aplu.org). Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson
President, APLU



Barbara R. Snyder
President, AAU

cc: Dan Brouillette, Secretary, Department of Energy
Betsy DeVos, Secretary, Department of Education
Dr. Mark T. Esper, Secretary, Department of Defense
Sonny Perdue, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
Dr. Kelvin K. Droegemeier, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
Jim Bridenstine, Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., Director, National Institutes of Health
Dr. Walter G. Copan, Director, National Institutes of Standards and Technology
Dr. Neil Jacobs, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director, National Science Foundation
Jon Parrish Peede, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities