

# 2017 Annual Report

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

February 2018

Dear AAU colleagues,

To say 2017 was tumultuous would be an understatement. This past year was marked by various affronts to the values and principles our institutions have long embraced and sought to advance. Our collective efforts at the state, local, and federal levels are vital to preserving the trust citizens and policymakers put in universities to serve society.

In 2017, we worked together to elevate our collective voice. We continue to fight for a permanent legal solution to protect DACA registrants. On the travel ban, we sent a clear message to policymakers and the world that U.S.

immigration policies must welcome international students, scholars, and researchers. When presented with a tax bill that would have devastated higher education, our collective efforts helped maintain important student benefits. We also continued to work with our institutions to improve the quality of undergraduate education through our undergraduate STEM initiative. All this work required new ideas and heightened collaboration to achieve our common goals, and I am grateful for your investing time and energy into AAU's collective efforts.

As we look to 2018, we plan to build upon the success of the undergraduate STEM initiative by launching a new effort focused on graduate education. AAU will also continue its work to combat sexual assault and misconduct by preparing to administer a campus climate survey in 2019 as a follow-up to our highly-cited 2015 survey. Like its predecessor, this survey will provide participating institutions with detailed information on student experiences and attitudes. In addition, AAU will

convene a small group of university officials to discuss free speech issues and to identify effective practices for fostering free speech protections, safety, and civility on campus.

We also expect to engage with federal policymakers on several key issues, including: reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, immigration reform, the university-government research partnership, and proposals affecting federal investment in research and higher education programs.

As we enter another challenging year, I hope you will find this report useful. Prepared by the staff, it contains information on AAU activities in the past year. We welcome your comments and look forward to continuing to advance our common goals in 2018.

Sincerely,



Mary Sue Coleman

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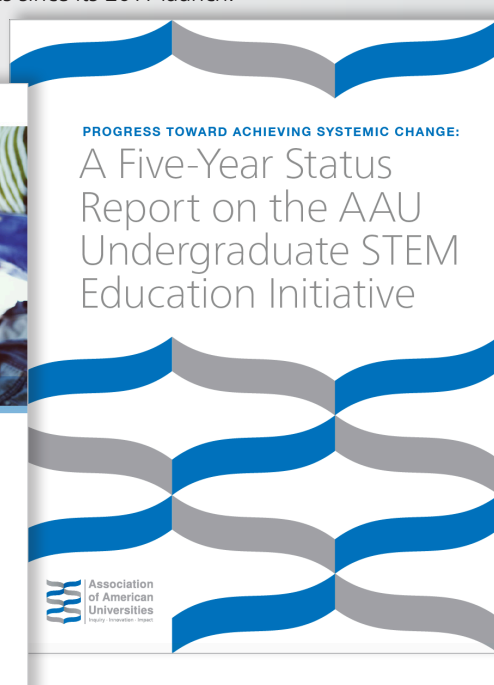
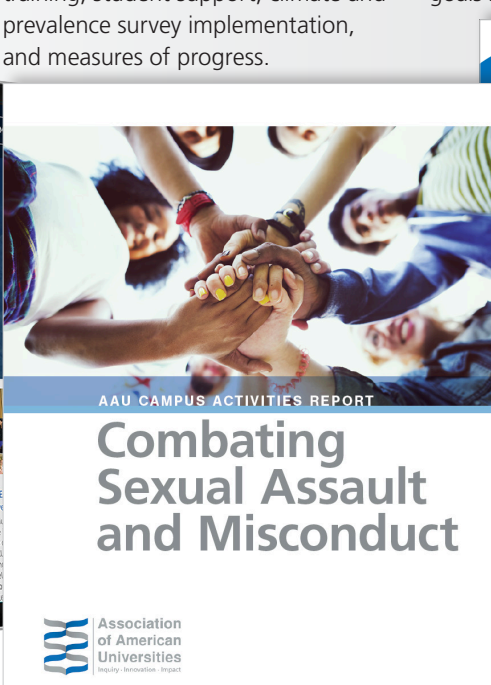
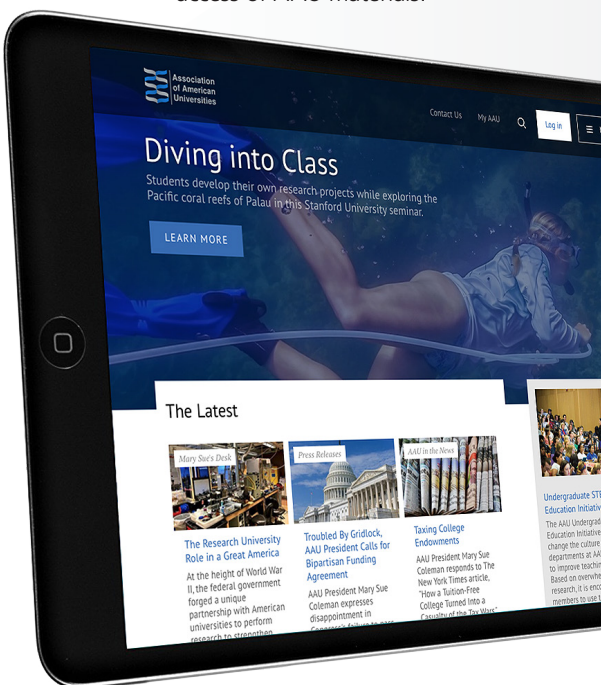
# Accomplishments

We were troubled, but not surprised when federal lawmakers were unable to agree on FY18 appropriations and repeatedly delayed final funding decisions. AAU, however, remained productive by making consistent calls for a bipartisan budget agreement that raises FY18 discretionary budget caps. AAU's collective efforts led to another year of proposed increases in NIH funding, the preservation of many important student tax benefits, and the defeat of a proposed cap on NIH facilities and administrative costs. **Among AAU's 2017 internal accomplishments:**

**We launched a new website** to further elevate our value of research universities campaign; better highlight member university research; and improve member navigation and access of AAU materials.

**We released the Campus Activities Report** to cite concrete examples of university actions to combat sexual assault and misconduct on campus, including education and training, student support, climate and prevalence survey implementation, and measures of progress.

**We released a Five-Year Status Report on the AAU Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative**, which has received 11 grants totaling \$7.9 million in support of the Initiative's goals since its 2011 launch.



## AAU Leadership in Research and Education Advocacy Coalitions

AAU participates in coalitions of business, science, higher education, humanities, and other groups. In 2017, AAU continued its leadership in several federal funding coalitions that share our priorities for federal investments in research and student aid.

## We are on the leadership teams of:

- [United for Medical Research](#)
- [Task Force on American Innovation](#)
- [Coalition for National Science Funding](#)
- Coalition for National Security Research

## We also help drive policy and actions in the:

- Energy Sciences Coalition
- Coalition for Aerospace and Science

- [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative \(AFRI\) Coalition](#)
- [Supporters of Agricultural Research Foundation](#)
- [National Humanities Alliance](#)
- [Committee for Education Funding](#)
- [Non-defense Discretionary \(NDD\) United](#)
- [Student Aid Alliance](#)

# Communications

## New Website

Consistent with redesign goals, the new website makes it easier for constituents to find pertinent information and allows AAU to showcase member university research effectively. Our most popular piece was a June 2017 story from the University of Southern California titled, "[USC Researcher Uses Novel Technique to Battle Cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's.](#)"

## The Government-University Partnership Campaign

In November, AAU launched a new [Government-University Partnership webpage](#) to highlight university research, related news articles, AAU President blogs, and a new video to expound on the partnership's value. In just shy of two months of being live, the video has been viewed nearly 17,000 times by our target audience.

## Social Media

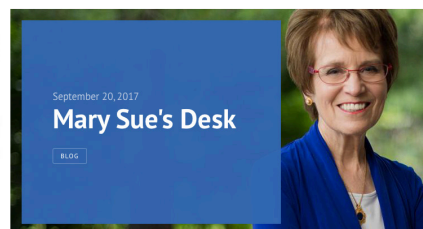
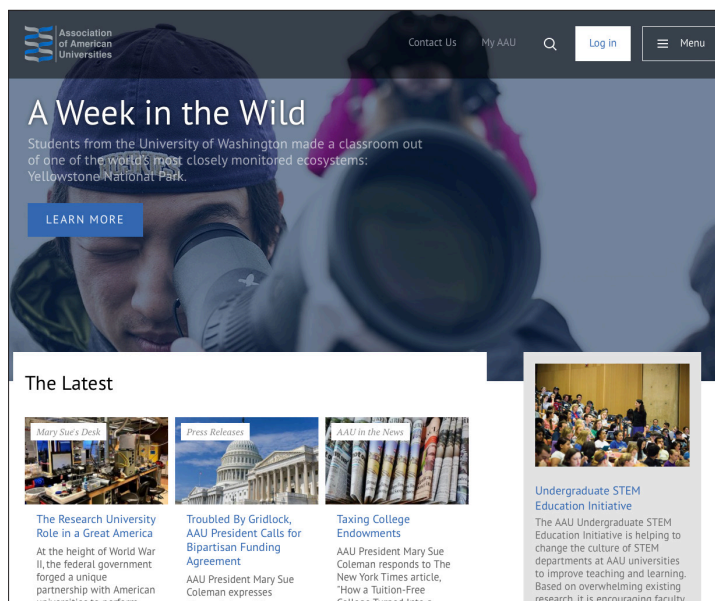
AAU substantially improved its social media presence in 2017, including realizing a Twitter milestone by reaching 10,000 followers, up 25 percent from 2016. Both of AAU's most popular 2017 tweets were related to its immigration efforts (on [DACA](#) and the [travel ban](#)). AAU's Facebook following increased, up 185 percent from 2016.

## Mary Sue's Desk

In mid-2017, AAU launched its first AAU President blog, [Mary Sue's Desk](#). This platform allows President Coleman to discuss current issues that affect higher education and the scientific enterprise. The year's most-viewed post is [Promises of Pro-growth Tax Reform Fall Flat](#).

## SRO Media Roundtable

AAU and The Science Coalition on July 12 hosted the eighth annual media roundtable for senior research officers (SROs), [The State of American Science](#). Eleven SROs participated, along with 11 reporters from national and trade media. Both hosting organizations and individual universities amplified the event using social media.



# Federal Relations

## Budget and Appropriations

The administration's proposed FY18 budget would have cut nondefense discretionary spending by \$54 billion to provide a commensurate defense spending boost. Despite Congress' failure in 2017 to enact a FY18 bipartisan budget deal and complete the appropriations process, AAU and other higher education and scientific organizations successfully encouraged Congress to dismiss the proposed nondefense cuts and instead propose increased science funding at NIH, NSF, and NASA. Our collective efforts were also vital to staving off the administration's proposal to eliminate the National Endowment for the Humanities.

When the FY18 appropriations process fell apart in late 2017, Congress funded federal programs at current levels by implementing a series of continuing resolutions through February. Throughout the year, we issued [statements and letters](#) to encourage a regular appropriations process, and to call for a budget caps deal that permitted increased research and higher education investments. When able, we applauded members of Congress and when necessary, we admonished poor policy decisions via statements, letters, social media, and Mary Sue's Desk.

## Risk-Based Accreditation

Due in part to AAU's accreditation reform efforts, the House HEA bill (PROSPER Act) would establish in law that an accrediting agency can use risk-based accreditation review processes for institutions historically demonstrating exceptional performance. AAU has long-advocated that this approach will allow accreditors to focus on institutions that present the greatest potential risk, thereby addressing and ameliorating real risks to educational quality.

## Higher Education Act Reauthorization

AAU worked late last year with national scientific and student advocacy groups to deliver our collective message that the House HEA reauthorization bill, the *Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity Through Education Reform (PROSPER) Act*, is bad for all students, but especially harmful to graduate students, who would share the increased cost of undergraduate education and lose important student aid benefits. As the reauthorization process continues in 2018, AAU is leading advocacy efforts as it pertains to the House bill's harmful impact on graduate students and simultaneously working with the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee as it crafts its bill, expected as early as April 2018.

## Immigration

AAU and the higher education community were and will continue to be at the forefront of promoting immigration policies that welcome international students, scholars, and researchers, reinforcing our goal of attracting and retaining the best and brightest international talent. Through Mary Sue's Desk, op-eds, letters, statements, and social media, AAU and its members advocated forcefully for a permanent legal solution for those affected by DACA's rescission.

- **Travel Ban.** In September, AAU and 29 other higher education organizations filed [an amicus brief](#) with the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the administration's travel ban. The brief built upon much of what AAU President Mary Sue Coleman and Rice University President David Leebron wrote in a February op-ed titled "[U.S. Role as Global Intellectual Beacon is Under Threat](#)."

## Proposed Cap on University Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs at NIH

Working closely with other higher education and research organizations, scientific societies, and universities, we were able to defeat the administration's proposed 10 percent cap on NIH grants. This threat could re-emerge in 2018. AAU will continue to inform Congress and the administration about the government-university research partnership and the current system for reimbursing F&A costs.

## Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R. 1)

President Trump signed into law a tax bill containing numerous provisions affecting higher education. AAU's efforts, in partnership with many others in the community, resulted in several important victories – signally, the defeat of a House proposal to repeal key students benefits, including the Section 117(d) exemption of tuition waivers from taxable income, the Student Loan Interest Deduction, and Section 127 employer-provided educational assistance. Unfortunately, the law contains numerous provisions expected to negatively impact higher education, including an unprecedented tax on some private university endowments; potentially onerous changes to the way that unrelated business income tax (UBIT) is computed; elimination of advance refunding bonds; and a state and local tax (SALT) deduction cap, which could result in decreased state funding for higher education. The bill also increases the standard deduction, which experts predict will have negative consequences for charitable giving.



# Institutional Policy

## AAU Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative

In October, AAU released a five-year status report, [Progress Toward Achieving Systemic Change](#), documenting the approach, initial outcomes, and sustainability plans for the association's initiative to improve the quality and effectiveness of undergraduate introductory science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses. Earlier in the year, with support provided by Northrop Grumman Corp., AAU selected 12-member campuses to receive small grants – or “mini-grants” – to existing efforts to further improve undergraduate STEM education.

## AAU PhD Education Initiative

To prioritize the educational experience of doctoral students and in recognition of the diverse career pathways available to PhD graduates, AAU began to frame an initiative in collaboration with member universities aimed at changing the established culture surrounding doctoral education at AAU institutions. The overall objective of this new effort will be: *to influence the culture at AAU universities so that PhD education shifts to be more student-centric and the broad array of future career pathways available to PhD graduates are encouraged by faculty advisors, departments, and university-wide offices.*

## Campus Activities Report: Combating Sexual Assault and Misconduct

AAU in April released the [Campus Activities Report: Combating Sexual Assault and Misconduct](#) to cite actions taken by member universities to address this important issue. In winter 2017, AAU announced it will conduct a second campus climate survey on sexual assault and misconduct. This follow-up to the [2015 landmark study](#) will provide valuable information concerning whether student experiences on campus and perceptions of

assistance available to them have changed since the first survey. Twenty-eight institutions have already committed to participate in the study, which will go into the field in 2019.

- **The 2015 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct** continues to be one of AAU's most popular webpages with over 150,000 page views since its release.

## AAU-APLU Public Access Working Group

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) convened a working group of provosts, senior research officers, library leadership and other university officials to explore issues faced by research universities in support of the federal public access mandate. In November, the Public Access Working Group released a [report](#) outlining recommendations for actions to be taken by federal agencies, within universities, and collectively across research institutions. AAU and APLU have developed and are now seeking funding for a workshop proposal aimed at accelerating public access to scientific data.

## TOME - Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem

In March, AAU, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and Association of University Presses (AUPresses) implemented a new digital monographs initiative, “Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem.” TOME's objective is to advance the wide dissemination of humanities and social science scholarship through the publication of university grant-funded free, open access, digital editions of peer-reviewed and professionally edited monographs. An additional goal is to increase public access and exposure to important scholarship by employing digital features such as embedded graphics and video clips. The first digital monographs are expected to be published in early 2018.

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## Operations & Finance

### AAU enjoys a strong financial position that allows the association to aggressively pursue its goals in accordance with its mission.

In FY17, (Oct. 1, 2016-Sept. 30, 2017), AAU's revenues included membership dues of \$6,503,750, in addition to federal and private grants of \$437,316 to support the [Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative](#). In FY17, this initiative was funded through the [National Science Foundation](#), [Helmsley Charitable Trust](#), and the [Northrop Grumman Foundation](#). Operating expenses for FY17 totaled \$7,716,000 and included a budget-approved expenditure using carry over funds from FY16. To strengthen financial oversight, a four-person Audit and Finance Committee, made up of Board members was created to review the association's financial statements and budget performance and report findings to the Board of Directors.