

*The AAU Board of Directors approved the following statement in light of proposals to restore federal appropriations earmarks:*

For the last 70 years, one of the cornerstones of American innovation has been that federal funds for university-based research have been primarily awarded through a competitive peer-review process, which allocates funding based on informed judgments of the merit of individual proposals. AAU has long-supported the principle that merit-based competition – in which expert researchers determine which projects are most worthy – is the best method of ensuring the quality and cost-effectiveness of federally sponsored research. This principle has been at the heart of the unique partnership that emerged after World War II between the federal government and research universities that has resulted in leaps in technological innovation that have improved public health, created new industries, advanced the economy, and helped ensure our national security.

AAU has historically maintained that earmarking of federal research funds reduced the capacity of federal agencies to support the most promising research and thereby impaired the quality of their research programs. Recent suggestions by some to restore the practice of Congressional earmarking have renewed AAU's concerns. AAU respects the authority of Congress to set broad priorities for the investment of federal funds in different areas of research, as well as in other federal programs. However, within those priorities we maintain that specific research grants and awards are best determined by experts based upon merit. Should Congress restore earmarks, AAU respectfully urges competitive peer-review continue to be the primary method for allocating federal research funding.