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AAU Public Affairs

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AAU Board Endorses FAIR Model for Covering Real Costs of Research

The following is a statement from the Association of American Universities (AAU) Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors of the Association of American Universities (AAU) endorses the new [Financial Accountability in Research \(FAIR\) model](#) proposed by the Joint Associations Group. AAU has long advocated for appropriate funding of the costs – including [support for compliance and infrastructure costs](#) – needed to conduct research on behalf of the American people. Every day, America's leading research universities conduct cutting-edge research that advances the frontiers of scientific knowledge and leads to new cures and innovations that improve our lives and drive our economy. Producing that research requires a wide range of facilities and other infrastructure services, including high-tech laboratories and equipment, access to internet and data storage tools, and a host of other resources and the support staff who ensure research is conducted safely, securely, ethically, and in accordance with existing federal and state laws and regulations.

AAU members and other research universities contribute billions of their own dollars every year to fill the gap where some of these necessary "indirect" research costs go unreimbursed by their federal research partners. At the same time, American taxpayers and federal officials deserve transparency and accountability for all government funding that supports research. This is why AAU has helped organize and lead the Joint Associations Group and now officially endorses the group's new [Financial Accountability in Research \(FAIR\)](#) model.

This model represents a sound, common-sense approach to ensuring that the essential costs of conducting research are supported. It also provides trackable costing categories which enhance transparency and accountability and make more explicit to researchers, institutions, and taxpayers the true costs of conducting cutting-edge, groundbreaking scientific research. FAIR better aligns costs with the actual project needs of a specific grant and meets the needs of research institutions of all sizes.

We know that a transition to the FAIR model cannot happen overnight. Accordingly, subject-matter experts from AAU and non-AAU member institutions and other research organizations have proposed a two-year implementation period to allow for institutions and federal agencies to make the necessary policy and budgeting changes to accommodate a new structure. Additional refinements and insights from the research community will be needed as implementation is discussed with lawmakers and federal agency officials.

We urge Congress and the administration to support the Joint Associations Group's effort and the FAIR model as they work to determine how to appropriately support critical research performed at our universities for the federal government and on behalf of the American people.

Founded in 1900, the Association of American Universities is composed of America's leading research universities. AAU's 71 research universities transform lives through education, research, and innovation.

Our member universities earn the majority of competitively awarded federal funding for research that improves public health, seeks to address national challenges, and contributes significantly to our economic strength, while educating and training tomorrow's visionary leaders and innovators.

AAU member universities collectively help shape policy for higher education, science, and innovation; promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education; and strengthen the contributions of leading research universities to American society.