



November 8, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Acting Director Young,

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), we urge your continued robust support for higher education and scientific research investments that are crucial to the health, security, prosperity, and future of our nation as you prepare the administration's FY 2023 budget request.

We are mindful of and thankful for the critical funding the American Rescue Plan Act provided to our students and member universities to support student financial needs, sustain operations, protect campus health, and stand up and sustain campus and virtual operations in the pandemic. ARP funds have and continue to be vital to our ability to serve students and recover from harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our member universities have been on the front lines of beating the pandemic. The work done by researchers, frontline workers, and others at our member universities has been critical to our national response. They worked closely with federal, state and local governments, and private industry to quickly identify the virus and develop the critical tests, treatments, and vaccines that our nation – and the world – needed. Our universities are also vital to our economy, both nationally and locally, and serve as key drivers of innovation and job creation. Tens of thousands of small businesses are dependent on our members, and many of our universities are the largest employers in their hometowns and states.

For the last seven decades, research universities have partnered with the federal government and the private sector to create the technologies that have driven the American economy and to train the world's best scientists, doctors, engineers, and entrepreneurs. COVID-19 made clearer than ever before the vital role that our institutions have long held in protecting public health, providing high-quality healthcare to Americans from all walks of life, and preparing us for the future. It was the work of university scientists over decades that set the stage for the rapid creation of effective mRNA vaccine technology, and it was our institutions and the doctors, nurses, and scientists they trained that tested those vaccines.

As we write today, Congress has not completed FY 2022 appropriations bills or the Build Back Better Act reconciliation bill. Both are opportunities to put a significant down payment on our nation's future after a decade of discretionary spending caps that hampered federal investments in the government-university partnership and America's position as the global innovation leader and destination for higher education. We continue to work with Congress on the completion of these measures even as we look ahead to the next fiscal year. The Administration's FY 2023 budget represents the next significant step toward building back better – sustaining investment growth in these areas so that our nation does not backslide as other countries double-down to strengthen their innovation capacity and economic competitiveness.

The Administration recently outlined its R&D priorities for the FY 2023 budget in your and OSTP Director Eric Lander's [memo of August 27, 2021](#). We agree that federal research investments are essential to maximize the benefits of science and technology to tackle the climate crisis and advance health, prosperity, security, environmental quality, equity, and justice for all Americans. Scientific innovation is particularly important now as our nation and the world rebound from COVID-19. U.S. investment in science and engineering research has produced innovations that have led to countless medical advancements, addressing not only the pandemic but also enhancing our nation's overall research capabilities and competitiveness for years to come. In support of your agenda, we urge that the Administration's FY 2023 budget make strong investments in key federal science and research agencies, including:

- National Institutes of Health and the proposed ARPA-H;
- National Science Foundation;
- Department of Energy's Office of Science and ARPA-E;
- 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 the Feed the Future Innovation Labs and Higher Education Programs.

Additionally, we urge that the Administration's FY 2023 budget include significant investments in student financial aid to help fully open the doors to college for individuals from low- and middle-income families and prepare the next-generation workforce. Specifically, we urge you to include another significant increase to the Pell Grant maximum, taking another step toward doubling Pell consistent with President Biden's stated goal. Doubling the Pell Grant maximum award to \$13,000 would make college more accessible and affordable for many more low- and middle- income families. Doubling the Pell Grant is also overwhelmingly supported by the American people. An AAU poll from September 2021 discovered more than two-thirds of Americans support both doubling the Pell Grant as well as expanding eligibility to include students from middle-income families.

We also urge greater investments in the Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study, TRIO programs, GEAR UP programs, and other critical Department of Education programs. These programs provide students access to high quality higher education, facilitate pathways of success and completion for students, and help promote greater equity and inclusion. We appreciated the FY 2022 budget proposal for a new college completion fund, and we encourage the Administration to include sustained support for colleges' efforts to boost student retention and completion.

Further, we ask that the Administration's budget include robust funding levels for graduate education and the Department of Education's Title VI international education programs. For graduate education, we urge increased investment across federal agencies with graduate fellowship and traineeship programs, including the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program at the Department of Education, which assists talented students studying in areas such as the STEM fields. For international education, the Title VI programs continue to be the primary federal support of foreign language and cultural education at U.S. universities. These programs are important to our nation's competitiveness as they help increase the global capacity of students in government, business, medicine, and more. Having a strong pipeline of language and international experts is essential for our nation's global collaborations, competition, health, and security.

Finally, we thank you and the Administration for your efforts to foster a successful government-university partnership. This is critical to keeping the United States at the forefront of cutting-edge research and innovation and to the education of the next highly skilled workforce. As we emerge from the pandemic, reinvigorating the longstanding and successful government-university partnership is vital to our nation's strength and resilience and our capacity to address challenges to our economy, climate, and security for decades to come. 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,



Barbara R. Snyder
President
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

cc: Lloyd J. Austin, Secretary, Department of Defense
Miguel Cardona, Secretary, Department of Education
Francis S. Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health
Jennifer M. Granholm, Secretary, Department of Energy
Eric S. Lander, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
Bill Nelson, Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
James Olthoff, Director, National Institutes of Standards and Technology
Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director, National Science Foundation
Richard W. Spinrad, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture
Adam Wolfson, Acting Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities