



October 31, 2024

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young,

As the Biden administration develops its Fiscal Year 2026 budget request to Congress, we write on behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to convey the importance of significant and robust funding for scientific research and higher education investments that advance the health, security, and prosperity of our nation.

We commend the administration for its ongoing commitment to America's scientific research enterprise and to bolstering America's status as the world's leader in scientific research and innovation amidst increasing global competition. Just recently, OSTP Director Arati Prabhakar highlighted the [importance of public R&D](#) and how research universities are key partners in creating new technologies and life-changing results.

Further, we deeply appreciate the administration's support for doubling the maximum Pell Grant and commitment towards steady progress in furtherance of the goal. Such advances would substantially increase postsecondary accessibility and affordability for low-income students while furthering the competitiveness of the nation's workforce and the social mobility of its citizens.

We recognize that Congress has not yet completed the FY25 appropriations process and urge the administration's support to prevent deeply concerning proposed cuts to discretionary spending programs.

Innovating for the Future

We urge the administration to remember the bold goals set forth in the CHIPS and Science Act to significantly invest in our nation's scientific research and innovation enterprise. Research universities partner with the federal government and the private sector to create the technologies that drive the American economy. Additionally, our nation's research universities develop the world's best scientists, doctors, engineers, and entrepreneurs. While investments in domestic CHIP manufacturing, a vitally important industry sector, are ongoing, the nation has yet to make the needed investments in the key technologies highlighted in the "and Science" portion of the Act. Sustained growth in public research funding is needed to ensure that the United States retains its status as the global leader in innovative sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and advanced energy to address the needs of the entire nation.

We commend the administration's forward-looking approach to the responsible [development and deployment](#) of AI within the federal government. As the federal government seeks to advance trustworthy artificial intelligence technology, lead the world in maintaining global AI security and stability, and reduce barriers and inequities in AI, research universities are eager to partner with the administration in bringing about this future.

Against this backdrop, China is challenging U.S. leadership. The National Science Board [warned](#) that China has already overtaken the U.S. in "STEM talent production, research publications, patents, and knowledge- and technology-intensive manufacturing." China has also [overtaken](#) the U.S. in highly cited research, a widely recognized proxy for innovative science, and recently [boosted](#) government spending on research and development by 10 percent. Unfortunately, the U.S. simultaneously cut funding for nondefense R&D by almost 10 percent in FY24. The administration can take steps to cement the nation's status as the global leader in science and innovation and to strengthen our economic competitiveness and national security by proposing robust investment in research funding.

Consequently, we urge the administration's FY26 budget include strong investments in key federal science and research agencies, including:

- National Institutes of Health;
- 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
- U.S. Agency for International Development (particularly the Feed the Future Innovation Labs and Higher Education Programs.)

Building Broad-Based Economic Prosperity Through Higher Education

Additionally, we urge that the administration's FY26 budget include significant investments in student financial aid to help fully open the doors to college to more Americans and prepare the next-generation workforce. Specifically, we urge you to include another significant increase to the Pell Grant maximum award, consistent with President Biden's stated goal of doubling the award, and to substantially grow the Federal Work Study (FWS) and Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG) programs. FWS and SEOG provide critical support to low-income students and work together with the Pell Grant to keep students on the path to degree completion. In the FY25 budget, we were disappointed the administration did not request increases for these programs and we remain concerned about proposed

cuts in the House FY25 appropriations bill that would slash funding for these critical programs. We urge the administration to signal strong support for these vital student aid programs, which complement and work in conjunction with Pell Grants, by proposing appropriate increases.

We also urge greater investments in TRIO programs, GEAR UP programs, Title III and V programs that support HBCUs and MSIs, Title VI international education programs and other critical Department of Education student aid programs. These programs provide students access to high-quality higher education, facilitate pathways to success and degree completion, and help promote stronger domestic talent growth. The Title VI (domestic) and Fulbright-Hays (overseas) programs are the federal government's most comprehensive programs for developing national capacity in foreign language and area studies expertise. We also appreciate the administration's sustained focus on funding for student success and college completion and encourage the administration to continue supporting robust funding for Postsecondary Student Success Grants in its FY26 budget.

Further, we encourage the administration's FY26 budget to include robust funding levels 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 (GAANN) program, which assists talented students studying in areas such as STEM.

In closing, we thank you and the administration for your efforts to foster a successful government-university partnership and to make higher education more accessible and affordable. This is critical to keeping the United States at the forefront of cutting-edge research and innovation and to the education of a highly skilled workforce. If we can provide any additional information or assistance, please contact us or Craig Lindwarm (clindwarm@aplu.org) and Toby Smith (Toby_Smith@aau.edu).

Sincerely,



Mark Becker

President

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities



Barbara R. Snyder

President

Association of American Universities

cc: Lloyd J. Austin, Secretary, Department of Defense

Miguel Cardona, Secretary, Department of Education

Jennifer M. Granholm, Secretary, Department of Energy

Gina M. Raimondo, Secretary, Department of Commerce

Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture

Monica M. Bertagnolli, Director, National Institutes of Health

Laurie E. Locascio, Director, National Institutes of Standards and Technology

Shelly C. Lowe, Chair, National Endowment for the Humanities

Bill Nelson, Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director, National Science Foundation

Arati Prabhakar, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy

Samantha Power, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Richard W. Spinrad, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration