



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC AND
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES



October 21, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Harkin and Rehberg and Ranking Members Shelby and DeLauro:

On behalf of our combined memberships, which include most of the nation's major public and private research universities, we write to thank you for your past support of student aid and biomedical research programs, both of which have yielded overwhelmingly rich dividends for our country, and to urge your continued support for these key priorities as you work to complete the FY12 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education bill.

We appreciate the funding provided in both the Senate bill (S. 1599) and the House Chairman's draft measure to sustain the Pell Grant program. As you are aware, the Pell Grant program is the foundation upon which the entire student financial aid system is built. We support funding the remaining Pell Grant shortfall this year and maintaining the maximum grant of \$5,550. At a time when more students are pursuing higher education, we are grateful that both bills uphold the current maximum grant. In addition, considering the tight budget situation, we appreciate the level funding for other vital higher education programs in the respective bills, such as the Federal Work Study, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG), and TRIO programs.

We remain committed to addressing the growing costs of the Pell Grant program in order to place it on a more sustainable funding path in future years. We are concerned, however, about several proposed changes to student aid which appear to make more cuts than are necessary to maintain the maximum Pell Grant in FY12. In addition, we are concerned about proposed cuts in the House Chairman's draft legislation to graduate education and Title VI overseas international education programs funded by the Department of Education. We hope that the final legislation will level-fund these programs, which help our nation maintain its global competitive edge. We are also concerned about the proposal in the House Chairman's draft legislation for cuts of approximately 41 percent to programs that support minority-serving institutions (MSIs), which serve some of the neediest student populations. These proposed cuts are counterproductive to the broadly shared goal of producing as many college graduates as possible.

AAU and APLU remain very appreciative of your dedication to the world's premier biomedical research agency, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and urge you to continue your leadership roles in maintaining the strength of our nation's biomedical research enterprise. The basic research funded by the NIH undergirds nearly all of the recent life-saving innovations in medicine and health care. Furthermore, research funded by NIH at research institutions across the nation generates significant economic activity, estimated at \$69 billion in 2010 alone. Even in this difficult budgetary environment, we respectfully request that you not cut funding for NIH, and rather continue to support the agency as generously as possible so that the U.S. can remain the world leader in the life sciences.

While we are enthusiastic about the funding level for NIH in the House Chairman's draft, there are certain provisions in the draft which concern us. One is the requirement for a specific minimum number of new and competing research project grants, which we believe unduly restricts the NIH's ability to distribute funding effectively based on the best science and most pressing public health needs. Earlier this year, we both joined in a letter to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to underscore our opposition to a similar mandate included in H.R. 1.

Additionally we urge that the final bill maintain the salary cap imposed on extramural NIH researchers at the current Level I of the Executive pay scale. The current cap allows our institutions to compete for, attract, and retain top scientists. Reducing the cap would disproportionately affect physician scientists, who are critical to advancing breakthrough discoveries into the next generation of medical advancements.

Finally, we also believe it would be most productive for the final FY12 Labor-HHS-Education bill to include, as the Senate bill does, language that allows NIH to move forward with its restructuring plan, including the creation of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences and the termination of the National Center for Research Resources. Not doing so would create harmful uncertainty for several critical programs over the next year and impede the best use of research resources.

We thank you for your consideration of our views as you continue your difficult task.

Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public & Land-grant Universities

cc: Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Thad Cochran
Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Norman D. Dicks
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education