



February 14, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I urge you to lead Congress to complete the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations process with legislation that prioritizes funding for higher education and research, investments that yield strong economic and societal returns.

APLU greatly appreciates the work of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in the 114th Congress to approve all 12 annual appropriations bills. We are concerned, however, that when the current continuing resolution (CR) expires in April, Congress may pass a year-long CR to fund the remainder of FY 2017, instead of approving an omnibus appropriations bill. This would be a significant missed opportunity, as a year-long CR would cede any Congressionally proposed changes and updates for all of FY 2017, including needed funding increases and other modifications for research, student aid, and other important programs. Such an approach would fail to adequately address the priorities necessary to grow our economy, advance our national security, improve public health, and prevent an innovation deficit.

For example, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees proposed strong funding boosts for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for FY 2017, a necessary investment to further U.S. support of leading-edge medical research and discovery. APLU greatly appreciates the funding increase of \$2 billion for the NIH in the Senate bill, and the increase included in the House bill. Under a full year CR, however, appropriations for NIH would continue at the current FY 2016 funding level.

A year-long CR would also mean relinquishing the opportunity to bring back the year-round Pell Grant program in FY 2017. The year-round Pell program, which has strong bipartisan support, is included in the Senate's FY 2017 Labor-Health & Human Services-Education bill. Restoring the program would play an important role in helping students graduate more quickly with less debt. Year-round Pell also helps facilitate uninterrupted academic progress which research shows is crucial to boosting graduation rates. Although the House bill does not reinstate year-round Pell, appropriators in that chamber have acknowledged the possibility that a final negotiated measure with the Senate could include the program.

By completing the appropriations process with an omnibus bill for FY 2017, Congress could reinstate the year-round Pell Grant program. Under a CR, the status quo would continue.

Although there were some decisions made in the FY 2017 appropriations bills last Congress that we oppose – such as cuts to some research programs, significant cuts to the Pell appropriation in the House bill and the use of the Pell surplus for priorities outside of the Pell program in the Senate bill – we strongly believe that the FY 2017 funding process should be completed by April. We urge the 115th Congress to send the President a bipartisan omnibus appropriations bill that prioritizes funding for higher education and research before the current CR expires.

Thank you for considering our views and we look forward to working with you as the appropriations process continues.

Sincerely,



M. Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

cc: The Honorable John Cornyn, Senate Majority Whip
The Honorable Richard Durbin, Senate Minority Whip
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy House Majority Leader
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Minority Whip
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Patrick Leahy Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman, Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Nita Lowey Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee
Members of the House Appropriations Committee