



August 6, 2019

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Acting Director Vought:

As presidents of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), we write on behalf of our associations' over 200 research university members to provide information, evidence, and support for increased federal higher education and scientific research investments in the administration's FY 2021 budget.

Our shared commitment to bettering lives through innovation is inherent in the historic partnership the federal government forged with American universities to perform research to advance our economy, strengthen national security, improve public health, and train the next generation of engineers, scholars, scientists, and leaders for our nation. To maintain this partnership, federal investment in competitively awarded, high quality research is paramount. Federal contributions to student financial aid and other higher education programs advance our nation's interests by ensuring access to, and affordability of, higher education are equally essential to individual and societal economic growth. Together, these investments strengthen our nation's innovation capacity, economy, and security.

Given increased global economic competition and our nation's security interests, we support bolstering our nation's domestic talent programs through increased investments in graduate education, foreign language education, and early research career programs. Our graduate education system is enriched by the research students conduct and fosters the development of the next generation of scientists and scholars. These investments are essential to our nation's ability to cultivate talent now and for decades to come.

The Task Force for American Innovation stated in its 2019 Benchmarks report, [\*Second Place America?: Increasing Challenges to U.S. Scientific Leadership\*](#), "Given that scientific research produces critical knowledge that spurs innovation, drives economic growth, enhances national security and increases global influence, the United States' declining investments relative to the rest of the developed world creates openings for other countries to set standards and to dominate future global technological markets." While the U.S. has effectively capped federal investments at flat levels China and other competitors have accelerated their growth in research & development dollars. This is especially evident in investments in our nation's STEM workforce. "It is time to redouble our commitment to science and technology, and to strengthen and reinvigorate the unique partnership that has made the U.S. a global innovation powerhouse."

To ensure that the U.S. remains the global innovation leader, we strongly urge that the administration's FY 2021 budget align with the call to action, [Innovation: An American Imperative](#) – endorsed by over 500 companies, chambers of commerce, universities, scientific societies, and other organizations – to provide annual real funding growth of at least four percent for basic research at key federal research agencies, including:

- National Institutes of Health
- National Science Foundation
- Department of Energy's Office of Science and Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy
- 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 the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and other agriculture research 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
- Agency for International Development – particularly Feed the Future Innovation Labs, Higher Education Solutions Network, and university partnerships program.

Additionally, we respectfully request the inclusion of strong investments in the Pell Grant, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study, and other critical Department of Education programs. These programs provide students access to high quality higher education and facilitate pathways of success and completion for students who are needed to fill high-skilled positions at American manufacturers, businesses, classrooms, laboratories, and hospitals. We also ask that the administration's budget include strong funding levels for graduate education across federal agencies including the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program, which assists talented students studying in areas such as the STEM fields. Similarly, we ask that the administration's FY 2021 budget strongly support Title VI and Fulbright-Hays international education programs. These programs support foreign language and cultural education programs critical to building the global capacities of all students. These programs are essential to maintaining a pipeline of language and international experts needed for global collaboration, competition, and national security.

In closing, please know we are grateful for your and other administration officials' efforts to help negotiate the recent budget agreement affecting FY 2021 and FY 2022.

Thank you for considering our views as you begin work on the FY 2021 budget.

Sincerely,



Mary Sue Coleman  
President  
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson  
President  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities