Association of American Universities Recommendations:
The National Institutes of Health (NIH)

NIH Funding: Scientists and research universities need sustained, stable NIH funding to perform the biomedical research that assures health care advances, economic competitiveness and national security for years to come.

- *Although the number of individuals qualified to compete for NIH funding has doubled in the last decade, flat funding for the past six years has meant a real reduction of 17.6% in NIH's capacity to support research. Only one in ten competitively-selected proposals receives funding today (down from one in four just five years ago).*
- *Young scientists who have spent more than a decade preparing for research careers are being driven from the field.*
- *The new Administration and Congress should develop and implement a multi-year funding plan for NIH that enables the NIH, scientists and research institutions to plan and carry out sustained programs of research.*
- *The President-elect's pledge to double basic research funding would return NIH to its historical rate of funding growth and should be a national goal.*

Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Current restrictions on the federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research hinder our scientists in understanding human development and disease, and in discovering new therapies and cures. Such restrictions also compromise our ability to compete scientifically with other countries.

- *The President should revoke the current prohibition on providing federal funding for research using human embryonic stem cell lines derived after August 9, 2001.*
- *The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Director of the NIH, not later than 90 days after revocation of the current policy, should develop scientific and ethical guidelines for the federal funding for research involving human embryonic stem cells to replace any existing guidelines. The Secretary, in consultation with the Director of NIH, shall review the guidelines periodically and update them as necessary.*
- *Revoke any other existing Executive Order or presidential policy which restricts federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.*

Financial Conflicts of Interest in Clinical Research: Financial conflicts of interest threaten the integrity of NIH-funded science, the safety of patients, and the public trust.

- *The next NIH Director and the Secretary of Health and Human Services should move deliberately and swiftly to develop and issue new federal regulations governing the identification, management and elimination of financial conflicts for NIH-funded extramural investigators.*
- *An Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on financial conflicts of interest is currently pending at the Office of Management and Budget. This ANPRM allows 60 days for public comment on the need for new regulation.*
- *On February 28, 2008, the Association of American Medical Colleges and AAU issued new recommendations for universities in managing individual and institutional financial conflicts of interest. (http://www.aau.edu/policy/conflicts_of_interest_2.aspx?id=6850)*
- *The research university community stands ready to work with the new administration in assuring transparency and accountability in addressing financial conflicts of interest in research.*

NIH Economic Stimulus Options:

Contact: Robert M. Berdahl, robert_berdahl@aau.edu
Patrick White, pat_white@aau.edu

$1.2 Billion for New Research Project Grants

- *In November 13 testimony before the House Health Subcommittee, Acting NIH Director Raynard S. Kington stated that each NIH grant creates or sustains seven high-skilled and high-paying jobs and that each $500 million provided to NIH would allow it to fund 1400 such grants* ***in just four to six weeks****.*
- *AAU joins the NIH advocacy community in requesting $1.2 billion for NIH in any economic stimulus package to fund as many as 3,200 research project grants.*
- *The Acting NIH Director should be given clear guidance about the portion of this funding that will be included in the FY10 base and the flexibility to manage any such new funding accordingly.*

$910 Million for NIH Pathway to Independence Awards

- *The current economic downturn has slowed the turnover of senior faculty and, thereby, reduced the likelihood that research universities will have the means to hire young scientists. To avoid the danger of losing several cohorts of young scientists and engineers and the contributions they are able to make to the nation's capacity for innovation, it is essential that we find the means to assure their access to tenure-track faculty appointments.*
- *$910 million would allow NIH to double the number of promising new investigators supported through the Pathway to Independence Award.*

$300 Million for the NIH National Center for Research Resources Extramural Research Facilities Improvement Program

- *Since 1993, the NIH has had authority to issue "grants to public and nonprofit private entities to expand, remodel, renovate, or alter existing research facilities or construct new research facilities..."*
- *Despite a significant and well-documented backlog of research facility projects, many of which are "shovel-ready," no funding has been provided for this activity for years.*
- *U.S. credit markets are frozen, and thousands of construction jobs are at risk.*
- *NCRR construction grants would be awarded competitively, after rigorous peer review and within the next year.*
- *Reinvigoration of a competitive facilities construction program might ease the pressure for congressionally-earmarked projects.*

$200 Million for NIH Major and Shared Instrumentation Grants

- *Shared Instrumentation Grants at the National Center for Research Resources peaked at $98.3 million in FY07 and received $63.5 million in FY08.*
- *Other Institutes, Centers and Divisions also make grants for shared and major instrumentation, and NIH estimates that, including NCRR funding, it spends $100 million a year on such grants.*
- *A doubling of this commitment over the cycle of the economic recovery package would generate sales and jobs among instrumentation manufacturers hurt by the downturn in biotech and pharmaceutical investment, provide upgrades or replacement of nationally and regionally shared equipment, and contribute to the capacity of our research enterprise to remain globally competitive.*

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