

AAU PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TO: AAU Presidents and Chancellors
FROM: Hunter Rawlings
DATE: May 19, 2014

The House this week is expected to consider the FY15 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill, which funds both the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NASA. We deeply appreciate the fact that despite reduced overall funding in the FY15 bill, the House Appropriations Committee [gave priority](#) to both agencies by providing a three-percent increase for NSF and a one-percent increase for NASA. We have been working with our higher education, science policy, and business colleagues to encourage broad congressional support for sustaining these funding levels, and to discourage policy riders directed at specific research projects or disciplines funded by NSF, particularly in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences.

Also this week, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has scheduled markup of the FIRST Act (H.R. 4186), Committee Chairman Lamar Smith's (R-TX) bill to reauthorize NSF, the National Institutes of Standards and Technology, and STEM education programs. We will be working with your federal relations officers and our association colleagues to ensure that Members of Congress understand our continued, strong [opposition](#) to the bill.

Although the committee has made a few changes to the bill since it was introduced, the FIRST Act still fails to offer a vision for revitalizing the nation's innovation enterprise. Moreover, the measure would impose a variety of new regulatory and spending restrictions on NSF, slash authorized funding for the agency's Social,

Behavioral, and Economic Sciences, and Geosciences directorates, and extend to as much as two years or more the period before a published research article resulting from federally funded research would be freely available to the public.

We spent a significant amount of time at the April membership meeting discussing how to better understand, address, and prevent sexual assault on our campuses. One of the issues we discussed was our concern that the White House could end up mandating that every college and university conduct a campus climate survey developed by the federal government.

In response to that concern, I will soon convene a small group of AAU presidents and chancellors and appropriate campus staff to discuss the possibility of our hiring a non-university-affiliated survey company to design a campus climate survey for AAU members. Such a survey could be based on the suggested instruments provided in the White House report from April 29, but would have the advantage of being a reliable and valid survey instrument developed outside of the government. We want to get ahead of this issue before a federally designed survey is mandated for us. I will keep you posted on the timing of this effort.

We also are working closely with the American Council on Education on the broader aspects of this issue. As you know, Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) has sent an unprecedented online survey to more than 450 institutions to gather information about how colleges and universities are responding to sexual assault charges and complying with Title IX of the Higher Education Act. She and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) are considering legislation to strengthen federal laws and

enforcement mechanisms. Senator McCaskill is also holding a series of roundtables beginning today to discuss sexual assault on college campuses with a variety of stakeholder interests and organizations. At the same time, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has stepped up enforcement actions against colleges, including [releasing](#) a list of the 55 institutions under investigation for potentially mishandling sexual assault cases.

AMONG OURSELVES

Last week, as part of the AAU undergraduate STEM education initiative, we hosted a two-day workshop with teams from each of the eight AAU STEM project sites. The workshop provided an opportunity for the project sites to learn about each other's work and discuss effective strategies to meet common challenges in reforming undergraduate STEM teaching and learning. AAU thanks The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust for making this workshop possible through its financial support.

AAU looks forward to hosting an **AAU STEM Network Conference** in Washington, DC, which will begin the evening of Monday, July 21, and conclude mid-day on Wednesday, July 23. The conference will provide a forum for all AAU universities to showcase and exchange information and ideas about institutional efforts to reform STEM teaching and learning for undergraduate students. Please encourage your campus point of contact for the initiative to coordinate your campus representation at this important event.