



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC AND
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES



July 11, 2012

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leaders:

We write to urge your bipartisan leadership in forging a major, balanced long-term deficit-reduction agreement that will reduce budget deficits, rein in the nation's debt, and create economic and job growth to ensure our nation's long-term fiscal health and to prevent the indiscriminate cuts of sequestration.

Sequestration is an undiscerning and blunt budget tool that would substantially harm our nation's future by blindly slashing valuable investments in education and scientific research, as well as other important discretionary programs that provide health, economic, and national security. There is much public discussion about the impact of sequestration on the defense budget but little about the proposed indiscriminate cuts to the non-defense discretionary budget. Deficit reduction until now has concentrated almost entirely on non-defense discretionary expenditures, which are only about one-sixth of the budget. Spending on these programs is not the primary cause of our rising debt. Wholesale additional reductions in these and other programs that educate and train the next generation risk undermining our nation's human capital, infrastructure, technological, and scientific needs.

A prudent and effective deficit reduction agreement should seriously and thoughtfully address a primary source of long-term spending growth: entitlement programs. Entitlement programs account for a large percentage of the budget, and they are projected to take an increasing share of federal spending in the coming decade. However, the sizable deficit reduction required cannot be achieved solely through decreasing expenditures. Substantial tax reform that is designed both to encourage economic growth and to raise revenues needed to reduce the deficit should also be part of the package.

The federal government has played and must continue to play a critical role in fostering U.S. economic competitiveness and economic growth, and therefore, even as the overall budget may be constrained, certain investments for the future must be a top priority. Americans know that investments in education and scientific research pay long-term dividends. Federal support for scientific research and student financial aid laid the foundation for the dramatic expansion of the 20th century U.S. economy and can do the same in the 21st. These investments produce the people and the ideas that lead to new products, new businesses, and entire new industries, as well as the jobs that go with them.

Members of both political parties believe that a long-term deficit reduction agreement should specifically incorporate such investments. For example, the majority report of the bipartisan Bowles-Simpson Commission stated, "we must invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value research and development to help our economy grow, keep us globally competitive, and make it easier for businesses to create jobs."

As national leaders in higher education, we urge you to show America and the world that our country's political system is capable of solving serious problems. The choices will not be easy, but throughout our nation's history, American leaders have overcome great challenges with difficult decisions and sensible compromises. Please do so again and do so now.

Sincerely,

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