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,

Peter McPherson, President
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Hunter R. Rawlings III, President
Association of American Universities

Michael F. Adams, President
The University of Georgia

Lee C. Bollinger, President
Columbia University

Stan L. Albrecht, President
Utah State University

Al Bowman, President
Illinois State University

Paula Allen-Meares, Chancellor
University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)

Linda P. Brady, Chancellor
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

James H. Ammons, President
Florida A&M University

A. John Bramley, Interim President
University of Vermont

Guy Bailey, President
Texas Tech University

Dean L. Bresciani, President
North Dakota State University

Charles R. Bantz, Chancellor
Indiana University - Purdue University
Indianapolis

Richard H. Brodhead, President
Duke University

James F. Barker, President
Clemson University

M. Christopher Brown II, President
Alcorn State University

Eric J. Barron, President
The Florida State University

Thomas Buchanan, President
University of Wyoming

Mark Becker, President
Georgia State University

Eli Capilouto, President
University of Kentucky

Robert M. Berdahl, Interim President
University of Oregon

Robert L. Caret, President
University of Massachusetts

Ronald Berkman, President
Cleveland State University

Jean-Lou Chameau, President
California Institute of Technology

Robert J. Birgeneau, Chancellor
University of California, Berkeley

Jimmy G. Cheek, Chancellor
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Gene D. Block, Chancellor
University of California, Los Angeles

David L. Chicoine, President
South Dakota State University

James P. Clements, President
West Virginia University
Jared L. Cohon, President
Carnegie Mellon University

Mary Sue Coleman, President
University of Michigan

France Córdova, President
Purdue University

Robert A. Corrigan, President
San Francisco State University

Barbara Couture, President
New Mexico State University

Scott S. Cowen, President
Tulane University

Michael M. Crow, President
Arizona State University

Waded Cruzado, President
Montana State University

Ronald J. Daniels, President
The Johns Hopkins University

Brady J. Deaton, Chancellor
University of Missouri

Joseph A. DiPietro, President
University of Tennessee

Philip P. DiStefano, Chancellor
University of Colorado Boulder

Philip L. Dubois, Chancellor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

John M. Dunn, President
Western Michigan University

Don Elliman, Chancellor
University of Colorado Denver

Richard M. Englert, Acting President
Temple University

Royce C. Engstrom, President
The University of Montana

Rodney A. Erickson, President
The Pennsylvania State University

Drew Gilpin Faust, President
Harvard University

Paul W. Ferguson, President
The University of Maine

Elson S. Floyd, President
Washington State University

Anthony A. Frank, President
Colorado State University

Robert G. Frank, President
The University of New Mexico

Patrick K. Gamble, President
University of Alaska System

Carol Z. Garrison, President
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

G. David Gearhart, Chancellor
University of Arkansas

E. Gordon Gee, President
The Ohio State University

Thomas F. George, Chancellor
University of Missouri-St. Louis

Allan Gilmour, President
Wayne State University

Matthew Goldstein, Chancellor
The City University of New York

Bernadette Gray-Little, Chancellor
The University of Kansas

M.R.C. Greenwood, President
University of Hawaii System

Amy Gutmann, President
University of Pennsylvania

John Haeger, President
Northern Arizona University
David Hall, President
University of the Virgin Islands

V. Burns Hargis, President
Oklahoma State University

Patrick T. Harker, President
University of Delaware

Ann Weaver Hart, President
University of Arizona

Brian O. Hemphill, President
West Virginia State University

John L. Hennessy, President
Stanford University

Susan Herbst, President
University of Connecticut

Elliott Hirshman, President
San Diego State University

John Hitt, President
University of Central Florida

Mark W. Huddleston, President
University of New Hampshire

Lloyd A. Jacobs, MD, President
The University of Toledo

Calvin Johnson, Chancellor
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Marc A. Johnson, President
University of Nevada, Reno

Eric W. Kaler, President
University of Minnesota

Linda P. B. Katehi, Chancellor
University of California, Davis

Renu Khator, Chancellor,
University of Houston System, & President, University of Houston

William E. Kirwan, Chancellor
University System of Maryland

Robert W. Kustra, President
Boise State University

Frederick M. Lawrence, President
Brandeis University

Steven Leath, President
Iowa State University

David W. Leebron, President
Rice University

Richard C. Levin, President
Yale University

R. Bowen Loftin, President
Texas A&M University

Wallace Loh, President
University of Maryland

J. Bernard Machen, President
University of Florida

Carolyn R. Mahoney, President
Lincoln University

Ronald Mason, President
Southern University and College System

Sally Mason, President
The University of Iowa

Mary Ellen Mazey, President
Bowling Green State University

Richard L. McCormick, President
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Michael A. McRobbie, President
Indiana University

Gary L. Miller, Chancellor
University of North Carolina Wilmington

James B. Milliken, President
University of Nebraska

Leo E. Morton, Chancellor
University of Missouri - Kansas City
Glenn Mroz, President  
Michigan Tech University

Diana Natalicio, President  
The University of Texas at El Paso

M. Duane Nellis, President  
University of Idaho

C. L. Max Nikias, President  
University of Southern California

Mark A. Nordenberg, Chancellor  
University of Pittsburgh

Harris Pastides, President  
University of South Carolina

Christina Paxson, President  
Brown University

Harvey Perlman, Chancellor  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

G. P. "Bud" Peterson, President  
Georgia Institute of Technology

Glenn Poshard, President  
Southern Illinois University

William C. Powers, President  
The University of Texas at Austin

Luis M. Proenza, President  
The University of Akron

Mohammad Qayoumi, President  
San Jose State University

V. Lane Rawlins, President  
University of North Texas

Edward J. Ray, President  
Oregon State University

Charles B. Reed, Chancellor  
The California State University

L. Rafael Reif, President  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Kevin P. Reilly, President  
University of Wisconsin System

Brian Rogers, Chancellor  
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Mark B. Rosenberg, President  
Florida International University

Tom Ross, President  
University of North Carolina

Gary D. Russi, President  
Oakland University

E. Joseph Savoie, President  
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Cheryl B. Schrader, Chancellor  
Missouri University of Science and Technology

Kirk H. Schulz, President  
Kansas State University

Joel Seligman, President  
University of Rochester

Allen L. Sessoms, President  
University of the District of Columbia

John Sexton, President  
New York University

Mary E. Sias, President  
Kentucky State University

Lou Anna Simon, President  
Michigan State University

David J. Skorton, President  
Cornell University

Barbara R. Snyder, President  
Case Western Reserve University

James D. Spaniolo, President  
The University of Texas at Arlington

Samuel L. Stanley Jr., President  
Stony Brook University, The State University of New York
Charles W. Steger, President
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)

Harvey G. Stenger, President
Binghamton University, The State University of New York

Kumble R. Subbaswamy, Chancellor
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Teresa Sullivan, President
University of Virginia

H. Holden Thorp, Chancellor
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Shirley M. Tilghman, President
Princeton University

Satish K. Tripathi, President
University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

James W. Wagner, President
Emory University

David Ward, Interim Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Madison

John D. Welty, President
California State University, Fresno

Robert A. Wharton, President
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology

Wim Wiewel, President
Portland State University

Gregory H. Williams, President
University of Cincinnati

Harry L. Williams, President
Delaware State University

Phyllis M. Wise, Chancellor
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Timothy J. Wolfe, President
University of Missouri System