

December 15, 2008

The Honorable Jim Cooper
U.S. House Office of Representatives
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cooper:

As Congress considers the unresolved FY 2009 appropriations bills, I strongly encourage you to support increases to research funding and student financial aid at the highest levels possible. While Vanderbilt has been fortunate to see our share of the federal research budget steadily increase in recent years – reaching nearly \$500 million – to maintain this trend, it is critical that federal research agency budgets are increased substantially.

Therefore, I respectfully request the following funding levels, equal to those proposed in earlier FY 09 appropriations bills: \$30.4 billion for the National Institutes of Health; \$6.854 billion for the National Science Foundation; \$4.86 billion for the Department of Energy's Office of Science; and \$642 million for the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. I believe these funding levels are modest but healthy increases over the FY 2008 levels and are largely in line with the recommendations called for in the bi-partisan America COMPETES Act and the administration's FY 2009 budget recommendations.

The cutting-edge research conducted at institutions like Vanderbilt and supported by the NIH, the NSF, the Department of Energy's Office of Science, and the Department of Education helps drive America's research enterprise and is essential to maintaining our leadership in innovation. I believe that robustly funded research accounts can act as an economic stimulus, renewing our commitment to innovation and funding young researchers. As one of the largest employers in Tennessee and having an economic impact on our region topping \$4 billion, Vanderbilt looks forward to playing an integral role in our economic recovery, aided by federal investments in science funding.

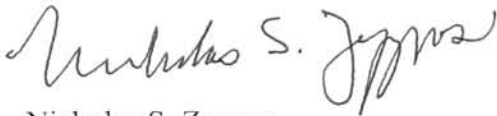
Due to the present economic struggles facing families, we have also seen an increased demand for financial aid. To ensure that our students with the greatest need continue to have access to higher education, I urge a funding level of \$17.335 billion for Pell Grants, as recommended by the House of Representatives. This would provide a maximum Pell Grant award of \$4,900.

Vanderbilt, like virtually every institution and business across the country, is currently facing new financial constraints. While these challenges are placing increased demands on our financial aid budget to meet the rapidly growing need among our students, we remain committed to our pledge to eliminate need-based loans and replace them with institutional grants for all undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need next year. In these trying economic times, we hope that this commitment will ease the minds of current and prospective students and their families and help break down the financial barriers that deter pursuing the American dream of obtaining a great college education. However, I also believe that the federal government has an important role to play in providing federal student aid through both grant and loan programs. I hope this commitment continues unabated.

I am under no illusions as to the extraordinary challenges the Congress and administration face. However, investments in students and scientific research now will yield a sizeable return in the years to come.

As always, thank you for continued support of federal investments in basic research and, in particular, in the Vanderbilt community. I remain hopeful that, with your strong voice, we can finally secure a sorely needed influx of federal support for research and student aid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas S. Zeppos".

Nicholas S. Zeppos
Chancellor

NSZ:lp