April 28, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, Chairman Wolf and Ranking Members Shelby, Lowey, and Fattah:

We write to you as research universities who value our longstanding, collaborative relationship with NASA. As you work to finalize the FY 2015 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bills, we strongly encourage you to support university-based research and education. Specific priorities include at least $5.254 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD), $577 million for the Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate (ARMD), $706 million for the Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD), and $40 million for the Space Grant program. These levels would allow the SMD, ARMD and STMD to maintain critical efforts, including university and small business partnerships, and allow the Space Grant program to continue inspiring young people across the country to engage in space-related research and education.

NASA's SMD supports efforts at universities to explore the planetary bodies of our solar system, scan the universe for Earth-like planets, study the sun and its influence throughout the solar system, and improve weather prediction, natural hazard mitigation, and climate modeling. SMD's planetary science, astrophysics, heliophysics, and earth science divisions support over 90 NASA missions and 10,000 scientists across the country, over 3,000 of which work on competitive projects at universities, industry, and government labs. Within SMD, we encourage a continued emphasis on a balanced portfolio of small, medium, and flagship missions, and robust support for Research and Analysis grants.

NASA's STMD is funding new partnerships between universities, industry, and the federal government to create the capabilities required for NASA's future science and exploration missions, enabling a vibrant and competitive U.S. space industry. Over 200 graduate students across our nation's universities serve as NASA Space Technology Research Fellows, performing innovative, space-technology research, while building the skills necessary to become future technological leaders. University-conducted research supported by NASA's ARMD four research programs has resulted in advances in safety, capacity, and efficiency in air transportation that we all use on a daily basis. Finally, the Space Grant Program has enabled over 24,000 undergraduate and graduate students from all 50 states to receive scholarships, fellowships, and internships in the space arena.

As the U.S. space enterprise recalibrates towards 21st century priorities, research universities remain a fragile–yet critical–element of the government, industry, academia compact for space exploration. NASA relies on its university partnerships to provide innovative approaches in basic research and early stage technology development and serve as the training grounds for the next generation of space scientists, engineers, and managers. Universities also have a long-standing ability to collaborate with NASA centers and industry partners in a wide range of areas. The education and public outreach activities conducted by universities inspire the next generation workforce at all levels of education, from K-12 to graduate school.

We recognize the need to make difficult choices in this challenging fiscal environment. Without continued robust support for university-based activities at NASA, however, the country risks nothing less than missing the next frontier of human innovation and sacrificing the next generation space workforce. Robust support for NASA's SMD, ARMD, STMD, and the Space Grant Program will allow universities to continue bring innovation, creativity, and cost-effectiveness to NASA and the nation. Thank you for your leadership in supporting this important work. We stand ready to assist you throughout the appropriations process.

Sincerely,

Arizona State University
Boston University
California Institute of Technology
Case Western Reserve University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Duke University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Harvard University
Johns Hopkins University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Michigan State University

New Mexico State University
North Carolina State University
Penn State University
Portland State University
Stanford University
Stony Brook University
The Ohio State University
University of Arizona
University of California Berkeley
University of California Irvine
University of California Riverside
University of California Santa Cruz
University of California System
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Illinois
University of Maryland
University of Michigan
University of Virginia
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Vanderbilt University
Washington University in St. Louis