



March 22, 2013

Dr. Hunter R. Rawlings, III
President
Association of American Universities
1200 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 550
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Dr. Rawlings,

The goals of the AAU STEM Project are strongly aligned with the strategic plan generated by Texas A&M University in 2010. As a University we continue on a trajectory that creates an increasingly rich educational environment for our students while enhancing the impact of our scholarly efforts. In terms of our educational environment we will graduate highly-sought-after students each year with lower average debt. More specifically, we have targeted better managing our enrollment as well as improving graduation rates, time-to-degree, and student learning outcome achievements for each college or school. Recently the University has committed to a significant growth in our engineering enrollment, with no decrease in other STEM enrollments, and a much greater retention in all the STEM areas for meeting our undergraduate persistence and graduation expectations. A continuing challenge is convincing many faculty members, who are deeply passionate about their teaching, that they can achieve the same evidence-based excellence in their teaching as they see in their research.

We have put the leadership of the University—the Provost and Executive Vice President, and two Associate Provosts—at the front of the AAU project proposal because this Project represents the catalyst we need to move the campus culture in a significant way. We must see this shift, in a relatively short time, in all colleges and schools, but especially in the STEM fields. The strategies we have planned and are in many cases already pursuing are bold but not naive. As leaders we work continually with college and department administrators, as well as with a large fraction of our faculty, to gain momentum to ensure that our goals are met. I fully endorse, support, and will personally engage in the AAU Project we are proposing because it is essential to on our ongoing quest for excellence in education. Our selection as an AAU site will motivate many of our top scholars to lead in the necessary shifts of pedagogies and curricula, in acceptance that faculty scaffolding in these areas is a professional norm, and in shifting departmental cultures more heavily toward systematic faculty recognition and merit-based evaluations.

Finally, I am firmly convinced that Texas A&M University will be a valuable asset for the AAU in this project. We intend to be bold, to accelerate change, and to share frequently and widely our successes and failures. We can be an important model of excellence, impact, and institutionalization both for the AAU and for the nation's higher education community at large. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal. We look forward to working with all of the AAU sites and the project leaders as we aggressively implement this critical effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "R. Bowen Loftin".

R. Bowen Loftin
President

CC: Tobin Smith, Vice President for Policy
Emily Miller, Project Manager, AAU Stem Initiative

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