July 16, 2012

Chairman Dennis Rehberg  
Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro  
Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you and your colleagues consider FY 2013 funding levels for programs at the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) urges you and your colleagues to adequately invest in programs that help the most at-risk undergraduate students: the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, the Pell Grant program and the Federal Work Study program.

The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program weathered a $10 million rescission in FY2012 and CUR requests this program receive an increase in FY2013 to balance this devastating cut to a program that is so important to the disadvantaged students that need the most help. The program is one of the eight TRIO programs and provides disadvantaged students the opportunity to participate in undergraduate research experiences, which have been demonstrated to increase student retention, graduation, and professional success. The ultimate goal of this program is to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society, and undergraduate research experiences provide a pathway to such an academic pursuit.

In addition, increased college-going and graduation rates are important to the country and its future and CUR urges you and your colleagues to preserve the integrity and goals of the Pell Grant program. The importance of ensuring access to postsecondary education for thousands of low- and middle-income students nationwide cannot be overstated. In addition, the student-centered Federal Work Study program should be level funded. Programs like Pell Grants and the Federal Work Study program are instrumental in bringing a broad range of students to the country’s college campuses to obtain a higher education and experience powerful learning practices such as undergraduate research.

The more than 650 institutions and over 8,000 individuals who belong to CUR believe that the best way to capture student interest and create enthusiasm for a discipline is through research in close collaboration with faculty members. These programs are crucial to the endeavor of providing high-quality research opportunities at the undergraduate level.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202.783.4180 or eambos@cur.org, if you or your staff have any questions. Thank you for your attention to these views.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ambos  
Executive Officer

cc: Members of the House Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee