November 5, 2004

The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Chairman  
Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

FACSIMILE SENT: 202-224-4952

Dear Senator Gregg:

I am writing on behalf of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), a non-profit consortium of 68 research universities dedicated to the advancement of the atmospheric sciences. As I believe you are aware, UCAR manages the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), a world-class laboratory providing research results for this country in areas such as solar-terrestrial interactions, weather, and climate patterns and change.

As you and your colleagues enter into conference proceedings relating to the FY05 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations final bill, I urge you to fund the Senate’s recommendations for the programs and offices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). While I understand that members of the House subcommittee were dealing with tremendous budget restrictions when they deliberated this bill, their recommendations are so low that they would weaken considerably NOAA’s and the nation’s research and operations capabilities. In order to strengthen the agency and the critical services it provides this nation, I ask that you fund the Senate’s provisions of $479.3 million for the Office of Atmospheric and Oceanic Research (OAR), $807.3 million for the National Weather Service, and $912.8 million for NOAA Satellites and Data/National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS). Within OAR and NWS, Climate Research, the U.S. Weather Research Program, and THORPEX are of particular interest to UCAR and the research community because of their importance within the atmospheric sciences enterprise. I call on the conferees to accord these programs priority support.

The Senate has included language in the draft bill that I believe should remain in the final bill to send a message about the importance of NOAA’s ability to partner with institutions that can strengthen, through collaboration, the agency’s research and operations functions. I ask that the conferees retain the following language in the final bill:

The Committee has included bill language allowing the same flexibilities accorded to NASA in the promotion of its space programs to be extended to NOAA in the promotion of its oceanic, atmospheric, and space programs. The Commerce Department's Office of General Counsel regularly contests
NOAA's ability to partner with industry and educational groups in the same manner as NASA does as a standard means of doing business. The Committee recommendation should allow NOAA programs to be treated in a similar and fair manner.

I am pleased to see that the Senate is supportive of the recommendations of the U.S. Ocean Commission, particularly those concerning integrated coastal and ocean observations. Given the inextricable relationship between the oceans and the atmosphere of our planet, the data gathered by such a system will contribute much to Earth systems research as a whole and should improve the study of climate and weather phenomena as well as offer opportunity for enhanced interdisciplinary research.

I would like to thank you for your attention to these requests and for your leadership on research funding issues that are of critical importance to this nation.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Anthes

C: Scott Gudes
   Shannon O’Keefe