
Congress Votes \$19 Million for Boston University

Boston University has joined the ranks of academic institutions that have found direct appeals to the U.S. Congress to be a successful way to raise funds. In early August, it secured \$19 million for a new engineering center, thanks to an amendment proposed on the floor of the Senate by Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). The somewhat unlikely source of the funds will be a program in the Department of Commerce aimed at revitalizing economically depressed areas.

This fund-raising feat was put together in part by Schlossberg-Cassidy and Associates, the Washington-based consulting firm that gained notoriety last year by securing funds for several academic facilities through similar pork barrel amendments (*Science*, 16 December, p. 1211).

Schlossberg-Cassidy, which has Boston University among its academic clients, narrowly missed getting congressional approval for a \$21-million grant from the Department of Education for the engineering center last year. This year, a winning political coalition was put together, a different funding source was found, and Kennedy's amendment breezed through Congress in just 3 days.

The center is an ambitious \$87.5-million project under construction in Kenmore Square, on the edge of Boston University's campus. The center will house a variety of physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering laboratories and classrooms and will eventually enroll 2000 engineering students. So far, the university has spent \$53 million refurbishing existing buildings and has received corporate donations amounting to \$8.8 million—\$4.5 million from the John Hancock company alone. The \$19-million federal grant thus brings the funding to within \$7 million of the total required.

Kennedy's amendment was inserted in a catchall funding bill providing additional appropriations for a variety of federal programs for the current fiscal year, which ends on 30 September. The bill was approved by Congress in the waning hours before the August recess, when legislators were anxious to get out of Washington.

The amendment's chances of passage were considerably enhanced by an agreement between Kennedy and Senator John Stennis (D-Miss.), the ranking minority member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Stennis was keen to provide some federal funding for the Mississippi Institute for Technology Development, a project involving the state's universities, private industry, and the state government aimed at stimulating high-tech development. The amendment included \$7 million for the institute and \$19 million for Boston University.

Kennedy offered the amendment when the bill reached the Senate floor on 8 August. In explaining why the funds should come from the Commerce Department's Economic Development Assistance Program, Kennedy noted that Kenmore Square is an urban development area. He also argued that the center would be a major source of scientific and technical training for young people in Boston and that the large output of engineering graduates would stimulate high-technology development in the region.

The amendment was approved by the Senate without debate. It was accepted the following day by a House-Senate conference committee, and the final version of the bill was cleared by Congress on 10 August.

Last year's flurry of academic pork-barreling promoted resolutions from virtually every higher education organization in the nation condemning the practice. This year, however, it seems to be just as prevalent, and just as successful.—**COLIN NORMAN**

Scientists Offer to Be "Good-Faith Witnesses"

Western scientists active on human rights and scientific responsibility issues have been searching for new strategies in their efforts to persuade Soviet authorities to relent in their recent harsh treatment of physicist Andrei Sakharov and his wife Elena Bonner. In a novel initiative, an international array of prominent scientists have offered to go in relays to the Soviet Union in exchange for Soviet permission for Bonner to leave the country to undergo medical treatment and visit family members. The offer

was conveyed in a cable to Soviet President Konstantin U. Chernenko sent on 31 July.

Those involved discourage use of the term "hostage," but do not convey a clear sense of how they see the role of those who might go to the Soviet Union. A suggestion that they lecture in their scientific disciplines apparently has been discussed but no decision taken.

The proposal was made by the International Coalition of Scientists for Sakharov, which is described as an ad hoc group organized in response to the 2 May announcement that Sakharov had undertaken a hunger strike. Subsequent uncertainty about Sakharov's whereabouts and physical condition and news that Bonner had been formally charged with anti-Soviet activities has stirred an upsurge of concern among Western scientists.

According to organizers of the coalition, the proposal grew out of experience in late May when members of the group made contact with Soviet officials in a number of countries to express concern about the Sakharovs. One of the reasons given for denial of permission for Bonner to leave the country for medical treatment was that she would engage in political activity and attack the Soviet state. In the cable to Chernenko the signers say "We are ready to bear personal witness to the integrity of Dr. Bonner's and Dr. Sakharov's assertions that the journey would only be for medical purposes and a family visit."

Under the arrangement proposed, a pair of scientists would travel to the Soviet Union at their own expense and spend 1 week there, being successively relieved by other pairs for the duration of Bonner's stay abroad. In the cable, the group expressed a hope that "the presence of these personal witnesses would make possible further exploration of additional steps to improve relations between the Soviet scientific community and its scientific colleagues around the world."

No reply from Soviet authorities had been received by the time *Science* went to press. Some observers here say that the existence of formal charges against Bonner make it probable that a trial will be held. She is suffering from both eye and heart ailments and is thought to need a heart bypass operation of a type for which