

tists is also coming from the Ministry of Defense. Last month, the ministry announced that it was increasing from \$14 million to \$21 million the support that it provides to university research groups under a new collaborative research grants scheme set up with the research councils.

Norman Lamont, the minister of state

for defense procurement, said that the government's desire to encourage closer links between universities and the defense establishment arose from the fact that "in many fields the same basic research is needed to underpin both defense and civil technology."

The new budget figures suggest to British research workers that, after sev-

eral years of hard lobbying—most recently rewarded by growing criticism of the government's policies for science from several prominent back-bench Conservative members of Parliament—the scientists' arguments have at last begun to get through to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her financial advisers.—**DAVID DICKSON**

Pork Barrel Issues Simmer

The Senate has approved \$22.1 million for four university construction projects related to science. But two major academic associations say that the projects have not undergone proper peer review and have urged members of the House to block final approval when the proposal goes to conference this month.

The groups, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and, in particular, the Association of American Universities, have been active in trying to plug the spurt of pork barreling involving academic research funds during the past two years. As federal money has dried up, schools are bypassing normal channels to obtain funding and are hiring Washington lobbyists to represent them.

The four grants represent some of the most recent examples in which schools have directly appealed to legislators for funding. Even though the grants are for construction, not research per se, the associations are concerned, says Robert Rosenzweig, president of the Association of American Universities.

The grants are part of a \$12 billion appropriations package put together by the Senate subcommittee on commerce, justice, state, and the judiciary. In the largest project among the four, Northeastern University in Boston would be awarded \$13.5 million. The money, in addition to another \$30 million put up by the university and state and local funds, would be used to revitalize an economically depressed area of the city. The plans include the construction of a science library and an office building to house new high technology companies that school and government authorities hope to attract. The federal appropriation was made at the request of Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

The bill also apportions \$11 million for the Rochester Institute of Technology to build a center devoted to micro-electronic engineering and imaging sciences; \$4 million for a fiber optics research center to be used by the University of South Carolina; and \$3.5 million for an engineering facility at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. The funds for the schools were individually requested by Senator Alfonse d'Amato (R-N.Y.), who recently won \$12 million for computer science research at Syracuse University, a proposal that bypassed peer review; Senator Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), who is ranking minority member of the subcommittee; and Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.), who is subcommittee chairman.

This is the second time that the bill's economic aid program has been a vehicle for science-related funding. Last year, Boston University obtained about \$20 million for the engineering school under the provision.

Rosenzweig does not object to schools obtaining money under the program, but contends that the schools should compete openly with others and undergo some form of peer review before Congress funds them. "I'm more concerned that this be dealt with in a regular way and not on an ad hoc basis," he said.

But because this money would be used for construction of science-related facilities, rather than research, Rosenzweig says the need for peer review in this instance is less compelling than in other circumstances. The Syracuse computer science project "is clearly research. There is no doubt that it ought to be professionally reviewed." The need for review for the other four projects is "less clear-cut," but it is still important for a peer review group to

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determine whether the science to be conducted at these facilities "is high quality." Awarding grants without the benefit of peer review—even for construction—whittles away at a system that has evolved to ensure high quality research, Rosenzweig argues.

Nonetheless, "We're not going to war over this one," he said. The two academic associations have sent letters to members of the House and Senate not to approve the grants, but are leaving further lobbying to their individual members.

Charles Coffin, director of government relations at Northeastern, said that his school's project has "nothing to do with research. It does not take away money from other educational programs." Coffin said, "To quote John Silber of Boston University, 'one man's pork is another's old boy network.' This holier-than-thou attitude about peer review is disingenuous."

An aide to Kennedy said that the federal funding requested is for an economic project, not only an educational one. "It's justified," the aide said. "You look for the most appropriate [legislative] vehicle" and this bill is it.

In the past couple of years, Congress has appropriated more than \$100 million for projects that have not undergone peer review, at schools including Northwestern, Georgetown, Columbia, and Catholic universities.

—**MARJORIE SUN**