Academy of Sciences. Scientists' major concerns, he said, is that the proposed expansion of the scope of classified information could force some basic research not directly tied to national security out of universities that avoid classified work. "We should consider how much our security is harmed by denying government access to many of the nation's most brilliant scientists and engineers who work on university campuses," he said. He also noted that the Academy is gearing up to perform a study on the relationship between university research and national security in light of the growing concern over technology transfer.—***William J. Broad***

University Researchers Lobby for Space Science

Alarmed at cuts in many university-based space science programs, nearly 50 scientists, congressional staff members, and university officials met in Washington in February to organize the Space Science Working Group—in effect, although the name does not imply it, a lobbying outfit.

"The downgrading of space science is preferentially hurting the universities," says University of Chicago astrophysicist John A. Simpson, who was the prime mover behind the group. Funding for space science in the universities comes primarily from NASA's research and analysis budget, which has been particularly hard hit in recent years. The Reagan Administration's fiscal year (FY) 1983 budget request for research and analysis in planetary science, for example, represents a 50 percent cut from FY 1981 levels in real terms.

"These budget cuts were buried pretty deeply in the woodwork," says Peter B. Boyce, executive director of the American Astronomical Society. "We plan to bring their effects to people's attention."

The Space Science Working Group will have a full-time staff person in Washington under the aegis of the Association of American Universities. Individual members of the group have been assigned to contact Congress, NASA, the Department of Defense, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. In addition, scientists in the universities will be urged to contact their own members of Congress.

Scientists have traditionally been slow to take such action, notes Boyce. "The long-term benefit in this crisis may be in getting a lot more people aware that they *can* go to their congressman."—***M. Mitchell Waldrop***

New England Education's Competitive Edge Dulled

In New England's days of industrial decline its only growth industry seemed to be higher education. Recently, the region has rallied economically through a buildup of high-technology industry and sophisticated services. But higher education, which did much to make the economic comeback possible, is itself now showing signs of trouble.

The New England Board of Education's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy of New England has recently published a report with the title "A Threat to Excellence," which sums up its message. Increasing competition, particularly from the energy-rich states of the Sunbelt, will make it difficult for New England colleges and universities to keep their lead in educating recruits for knowledge-intensive industry.

The report cites three main problems: (i) A weakening of the region's public school system. (ii) A comparative decline in ability to finance higher education. (iii) A perception that New England is no longer the region of greatest opportunity.

The commission reports a measurable deterioration in the region's secondary schools, noting with particular alarm a decline in inferential comprehension which denotes critical thinking ability. Scores in this category declined nationally in the 1970's, but the decrease was greatest in the Northeast, which dropped from first to third among four regions in the decade.

In financing higher education, New England retains a rapidly diminishing and now marginal lead in per capita expenditures. The rate of expenditure on higher education by oil and gas states has been increasing 40 percent faster in recent years than has New England's. New England in 1979 spent $81 per capita on publicly supported higher education compared to $177 spent by the oil and gas states.

The national average for allocation of tax revenues to public higher education was 11.3 percent. Allocations by all six New England states fell well below that figure; Massachusetts at 4.9 percent ranked 51st and New Hampshire at 5.6 percent ranked 50th among the states and District of Columbia.

Perception of New England as lagging in offering economic opportunity

Joe Di Dio/NEA

Problems in the schoolhouse

is partly subjective, of course, and it is possible to point to the countervailing evidence of the growth of high-technology industry and revitalized mill towns. But migration figures show that the Northeast is no longer as attractive to business leaders as it was a generation ago. And disparities between regional living costs and local tax burdens currently heavily favor the Sunbelt states.

The commission's report is described as "preliminary" and its recommendations are general and reflect the regional basis of its membership. Specifics will have to be thrashed out, but meanwhile the commission urges closer cooperation of industry with schools and higher education, better planning and regional cooperation, pooling of resources by private and public institutions, and more creative use of the tax system to strengthen the educational system. As for improving perceptions of New England as a region of opportunity, the commission insists that the Northeast has genuine advantages as a place to study, work, and live and New Englanders should overcome their native reserve and, in effect, do a better job of blowing their own horn.

—***John Walsh***