More Pork Barrel in DOD Research Initiative

An effort by the Defense Department to fund new academic research is attracting enormous enthusiasm, both on Capitol Hill and on university campuses. The effort, known as the University Research Initiative, was conceived by the Pentagon early this year to fund research and training in areas of military interest (*Science*, 19 April, p.303). Congress has not yet fixed a precise budget for the program, but it will likely be substantial. Recently, the House of Representatives approved an expenditure of $25 million, and the Senate Appropriations Committee approved an expenditure of $100 million.

So determined are some institutions to grab a portion of this largesse that they have arranged to forgo the inconvenience of the peer review process. Oklahoma State University, for example, will probably be the beneficiary of $1 million from the new program, courtesy of Representative Wes Watkins (D–Okla.), a 1960 graduate of Oklahoma State and a former assistant director of admissions there. His amendment to the program's budget, requiring the grant, has been approved by the House.

Similarly, Syracuse University will probably be the beneficiary of a $12-million grant for computer science, which may or may not be drawn from the new program. Senator Alfonse d'Amato (D–N.Y.) initially sought $29.5 million for his alma mater from the research initiative, more than the total amount requested by the Reagan Administration for all schools. But vigorous protests from the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges spurred several Senators to question the allocation, and the amount was reduced to $12 million. In addition, the Pentagon was allowed to determine which of its programs will pay the tab.

Somewhat more subtle is a demand in the Pentagon's appropriations bill for a $1-million pilot program in advanced semiconductor research at "a private nonprofit institution which possesses established expertise in research in advanced semiconductor materials and devices, and which is empowered to grant graduate level degrees." The request, inserted by Representative Les AuCoin (D–Ore.), is intended to benefit the Oregon Graduate Center, just west of Portland, according to AuCoin's staff. But the provision was worded so that other schools may apply, and considerable competition may ensue. The amendment specifically directs the Pentagon to establish the program by next April and to provide funding for it in the future.

The difficulty, says Leo Young, the Pentagon's director for basic research and laboratory management, "is that we are already doing this in spades." Fourteen universities are already participating in the Joint Service Electronics Program, which funds a broad range of research on electronic devices and circuits. The grant for Oklahoma State is relatively small, he adds, "but we believe in peer review and the risk is that if everybody started to ask for special favors, this could easily get out of hand and we wouldn't have a coherent program anymore."

Jack Crowley, the AAU legislative director, is more blunt. "We clearly intend to ask the conferees to delete funds for both Oklahoma State and Syracuse," he says. "This program must be kept free of earmarking and based on merit." The next vote, scheduled for 18 November, will be on the Senate floor, and after that a conference committee will resolve any remaining disputes.

—R. JEFFREY SMITH

European Nations Agree on Eureka Charter

Paris. French ambitions to create a "technological Europe" advanced a step further last week with the endorsement by research and foreign ministers of 18 separate European countries of detailed plans for a new organization responsible for encouraging greater collaboration among governments, private companies, and scientific institutions in a range of high technology research and development fields.

The French proposal—known as Eureka, which stands loosely for European Research Coordination Agency—was first put forward in April as a way of helping European industry to meet increasing competition from the United States and Japan, and was seen by many as a direct response to the U.S. invitation to collaborate in the Strategic Defense Initiative (*Science*, 12 July 1985, p. 141).

Meeting in the West German city of Hanover, the representatives of the 18 nations who have so far agreed to support Eureka, including in particular all 12 members of the European Economic Community, approved a charter outlining the principles governing its operation. For example, countries will be free to sign up for only those projects they are directly interested in.

A preliminary list of ten research projects was also approved, ranging from a French-Danish collaboration on the development of filtration membranes to a German proposal for the creation of a Europe-wide computer-based information network linking scientists in universities and other research institutions.

A permanent secretariat will be established in a location yet to be decided—Strasbourg is a likely choice—to keep track of the various R&D projects that are eventually accepted for inclusion under the Eureka umbrella.

Finally, although France and the Netherlands are the only countries to have committed themselves to providing government funds specifically for Eureka projects, both West Germany and the United Kingdom have agreed in principle to make modest amounts of money available—even though both countries continue to maintain their belief that the bulk of the funding must come from private sources.

—DAVID DICKSON

Outside Review Urged for Waste Site Study

The National Research Council has given a qualified endorsement to the Department of Energy's methodology for selecting the nation's first high-level waste disposal site. But the arm of the National Academy of Sciences also wants the department to slow down its program schedule to allow for thorough study. And it says an independent panel of experts ought to review site-performance evaluations done by the department.