

Breaking Tradition, More Colleges Go Directly to Congress for Funds

By **BURT SCHORR**

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — The nation's colleges and universities are learning how to get more federal money for new science and research buildings. But even though the funds may be badly needed, some people aren't pleased with this academic achievement.

Until recently, federal research and support grants were generally parceled out by the government on the basis of recommendations by panels of scientists appointed by the National Science Foundation and others. Now, however, a growing number of institutions are bypassing this so-called peer-review process and taking a more direct approach—lobbying Congress for special funding.

The University of New Hampshire, for example, got \$15 million for its space and marine sciences building last year after home-state Sen. Warren Rudman, a Republican, pushed for the federal money. Oregon Health Sciences University, with help from another Republican, Oregon's Sen. Mark Hatfield, got more than \$20 million for a medical library and information complex. Columbia University in New York and Catholic University in Washington won funds for new science facilities with help from a private lobbying firm.

Lobbying for Dollars

"Congress is in business to serve the public," says Kenneth Schlossberg, a Washington lobbyist. He and Gerald Cassidy, both former Senate staffers, run a firm that specializes in helping clients like Columbia and Catholic universities win federal dollars for new buildings. Mr. Schlossberg adds that if members of Congress can help "in a way that isn't obnoxious to them—and even serves the public interest—they're delighted to do it."

Many university and Reagan administration officials don't share the enthusiasm. The Association of American Universities, representing 51 schools with strong research programs, maintains that "political influence" will replace "objective and informed" recommendations from scientific-advisory panels.

The president of an AAU-member institution is even blunter. If using paid lobbyists "becomes the established mode of operation," he says in a letter to his school's supporters, "it will be a bloody free-for-all, and devil take the hindmost."

The AAU, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges

and the National Academy of Sciences, among others, have urged Congress to abide by the review-panel procedures. A resolution to that effect has been introduced by Rep. James Sensenbrenner Jr. of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the House energy development subcommittee. The White House science adviser, George Keyworth, has praised the proposal.

To some schools, however, peer review is a code for an old-boy system that since World War II has enabled only about 50 major research institutions to obtain most of the billions of dollars in federal research and support grants.

John Silber, president of Boston University, says he finds it "outrageously hypocritical" that Yale University and other major beneficiaries of such aid are insisting on peer review for have-nots like his school. Boston University, another Schlossberg-Cassidy client, appears to be in line for an initial payment on a \$20 million federal contribution for a planned \$80 million science and engineering complex. Federal money for general campus construction hasn't been available for nearly a decade, and U.S. colleges and universities are hungry for funds. Overall, they need more than \$40 billion of capital improvements, estimates Harvey Kaiser, a Syracuse University vice president and author of "Crumbling Academe," scheduled for publication this month.

How lobbying is being used to get money out of Congress to meet some of those needs is illustrated by Schlossberg-Cassidy & Associate's work for Columbia and Catholic universities.

Columbia's chemistry department is housed in 87-year-old Havemeyer Laboratory and 57-year-old Chandler Laboratory. Water is sometimes cut off because scale nearly blocks the four-inch water pipes, and heavy power demands sometimes cause explosive arcing in the power-distribution room. Moreover, stray current in the largely unshielded electrical system makes instruments perform erratically. "Nothing works right," says Nicholas Turro, the department's chairman.

Enter Ken Schlossberg as Columbia's consultant on how to win federal backing for a new \$32 million building. In an October 1982 memorandum Mr. Schlossberg advised his client to stress the "threat" to the U.S. chemical industry from Japan and other countries. What the university had been thinking of as its new chemistry building became, at Mr. Schlossberg's suggestion, the National Chemical Research Center.

Meanwhile, partner Jerry Cassidy was working with Catholic University to develop a similar approach to pry federal money for a fiber-optics-research laboratory.

An important part of their strategy fell into place when Mr. Schlossberg got a tip that President Reagan's fiscal 1984 budget would request initial Energy Department funds for a \$250 million National Center for Advanced Materials Research at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory on the University of California's Berkeley campus. "We could argue how unfair it would be if the West Coast got everything and the East Coast got nothing," Mr. Schlossberg recalls.

Advised by the lobbying firm, Columbia and Catholic built their own political-support networks. Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel, whose upper Manhattan district includes the Columbia campus, for example, was a willing point man for Columbia in the House. But, says a Rangel aide, "Schlossberg and Cassidy told us where things had to be done."

Useful Friends

Democratic Rep. Lindy Boggs of Louisiana, an old friend of Catholic University's board chairman, New Orleans Archbishop Philip Hanna, played a similar role for Catholic. The archbishop, once auxiliary bishop here, put in a good word with another useful acquaintance, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, a Catholic University official says. The Massachusetts Democrat played a part in getting a reluctant Democratic Rep. Don Fuqua of Florida to go along with floor amendments authorizing Energy Department funding for both projects.

When the voting was over, Columbia had won a \$5 million initial appropriation on what is expected to be a \$20 million federal grant. Catholic had snared \$5 million of the nearly \$14 million it expects.

Clients pay Schlossberg-Cassidy between "five figures and six figures" annually for their services. Mr. Schlossberg, who is 44, and Mr. Cassidy, who is 43, in turn pay themselves "more than \$100,000" a year, Mr. Cassidy says.

The two aren't talking about legislative plans for this year, but more clients are in line for federal money. Indiana University hopes Congress will supply \$20 million for its proposed Center for Excellence in Education. Atlanta University wants \$15 million for a contemplated materials-research and biotechnology center.

And Boston College is already down for a \$7.9 million contribution to its planned computerized library center—named for a famous alumnus, House Speaker O'Neill.

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