

WOOD AND FIBER SCIENCE

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OPPORTUNITIES

The federal budget for fiscal year 1985 (as of 12/1/84) includes two unique opportunities for wood science and technology in the form of grant programs. The first is a special grant to specific university wood science and technology programs. This particular program had been identified by a report to Congress by the Office of Technology Assessment. This report was the subject of at least two presentations at recent FPRS meetings. The program has been considered as an "end run" by some members of the wood science community. Coach Lombardi made his reputation on "student body left or right end runs." As with this program, the players remained "in bounds" as they gained ground. While not all schools or departments of wood science could play on this field because of restrictions placed on them by university policies related to Congressional contact, those that received the special grants obviously could provide information to influential members of Congress who reacted to the OTA report. If this program is permitted to mature, plans are to create competitive grants within the special grant framework. While these plans are not yet in place, the opportunity exists to broaden the population of recipients.

The second opportunity was created through the U.S. Forest Service budget in which a competitive grant program has been established. Initial plans allocate about fifty percent of the funds to fundamental studies in wood chemistry and physical and mechanical properties of wood. Again the opportunity exists to continue these funds, provided that wood scientists demonstrate the abilities to a) compete at a fundamental science level, and b) provide the appropriate political advocates with sufficient information to demonstrate to their colleagues and the larger scientific community that these initial investments are sound.

Both these windfalls of money will result in the "haves" and the "have nots." We must ensure that the "haves" are accountable to their science, to their counterpart "have nots," and to their political advocates. Those of us outside of the process at present must provide the scientific integrity and political acumen to permit the programs to mature. The opportunities exist to further the wood science and technology community through the special grant and competitive grant processes. These opportunities could be short-lived. If they are to mature to the benefit of wood science and the forestry community, each of us must respond positively to the current effort.

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Editor