MIT least ready for copy law

NSF peer review under attack

By Mike McNamee

Congress and the leadership of the National Science Foundation have introduced legislation to correct what they call a "consistent pattern of bias" in the Foundation's funding of research.

Rep. John J. Conlan, D-N.Y., and Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., have introduced identical bills which would modify and regulate the system of peer review used to pass on research proposals.

The proposed legislation would require the Foundation to establish a standard procedure for picking reviewers for proposals, to make copies of all documents and opinions expressed by reviewers available to grant applicants, Congress, and the public, and to establish a formal appeals procedures for applicants whose proposals have been rejected.

These measures, if made law, would have a significant effect on the informal and largely anonymous peer review procedures which are now the basis of the system open - to make reasonable changes in course offerings, for example, or to cut costs in some areas.

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