

Bonding bill approved for new CSI campus

ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Construction of a Willowbrook campus for the College of Staten Island (CSI) via an estimated \$220 million in State Dormitory Authority bonds now appears to be headed down a highway without a roadblock in sight.

The way was cleared Monday when the state Senate unanimously approved the authority's right to sell \$1.325 billion in bonds for the City University of New York (CUNY). The bill already was passed in the Assembly, so once Gov. Mario M. Cuomo signs it, as expected, construction of the new CSI campus could begin by early next summer.

The passage of the bill is "a high water mark" for higher education, Sen. John J. Marchi, R-Staten Island, the Finance Committee chairman, said yesterday. "We're getting a consolidated campus. They're going to begin work, pick and shovel, brick and mortar, and the rest of it."

CSI officials were "breathing

down my neck. It's not a moment too early now," he added.

Cuomo originally submitted the bonding legislation as a program bill, so he is expected to sign the legislation without delay, said Gerald McLaughlin, Marchi's press secretary.

"I'm very pleased, obviously," Dr. Edmond L. Volpe, president of CSI, said yesterday. "We've been hoping this would be done over the year. We now can move forward with the bond sale for the money necessary for design."

Construction could begin by early next summer, provided no snags develop, he said.

A delay could arise over the environmental impact statement for the project, Volpe said, because public hearings must be held and the plans must be approved. But, Volpe seemed optimistic that this hurdle will be passed without any problem. "It's

a matter of time now, so far as I can tell," he said.

CSI and CUNY officials will divide the construction work among a master architect and other architects who will be hired this summer, provided the money is available, Volpe said. "We will be moving on that very quickly," Volpe said. CSI also will hire an engineering firm.

For the past year, the state Dormitory Authority has been unable to fund CUNY capital construction projects because of restrictions in the current bonding structure. This has held up about a dozen projects, including the consolidation of CSI on the soon-to-be-closed Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

The state Legislature has been working on a new bonding structure for about a year and until a few weeks ago, the Senate and Assembly disagreed on how much money they would permit the Dormitory Authority to borrow to raise money for CUNY construction.

So far, the state has allocated \$20 million for the design of the campus but until the bonds are sold, CSI does not have access to the funds. Originally, CSI officials had said they hoped to have construction completed by 1991; now the target year is 1992.