Plant center signals shift in research

Mexico facility to create jobs.

By Janese Heavin, Tuesday, April 27, 2010

MEXICO, Mo. — Conditions were too soggy yesterday to break ground on a new plant research center at the actual site, but rain didn’t dampen the enthusiasm of more than 200 people who gathered to celebrate the project.

Three years in the planning, the Missouri Plant Science Center is expected to open on a 10-acre site in southeast Mexico, Mo., next year. Missouri dignitaries held a ceremonial groundbreaking at the Audrain County 4-H Center yesterday.

“This is a day when the sun is shining inside and things are starting to grow outside,” Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo., said.

Plants won’t be the only things growing in Mexico. With construction of the 25,000-square-foot center, the area’s economy is likely to grow as well.

The center combines wet and dry laboratories, office space and manufacturing equipment, allowing tenants to not only conduct research but process soybeans and other plant materials into marketable products.

The center will be “benefiting the Show-Me State for decades to come as it merges cutting-edge plant research with manufacturing capabilities,” Gov. Jay Nixon said. “Literally in front of our eyes — the merging of research, companies and the future.”

Soy Labs LLC is the center’s first tenant, expected to relocate from Fairfield, Calif., to Mexico, initially bringing 20 jobs. The research company produces soy-based ingredients for the food and health industries.

The goal of the plant science center is to capitalize on Missouri’s $2.5 billion soybean industry while creating new careers in biotechnology. Those new jobs will be critical to replace lost jobs that aren’t coming back, Bond said.

Agricultural biotechnology, he said, also has the potential to cure diseases, create alternative fuels and make food healthier and more plentiful.

The Missouri Plant Science Center is a joint venture between the city of Mexico, the University of Missouri and the Missouri Technology Corp. The state contributed roughly $7.5
million for the project, the UM System and Missouri Technology Corp. each contributed $2.5 million, and Bond secured nearly $1 million in federal funds. Mexico residents Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker donated the land for the center.

AT&T also partnered with the project, agreeing to extend high-speed fiber infrastructure to the site at no charge.

The partnership between local, state and federal officials helped make the project a reality, even in a rough economy, project leaders said during the hourlong ceremony.

“Everyone in this city, ... you guys made such a compelling argument that this will work in Mexico,” Sen. Wes Shoemyer, D-Clarence, said, thanking Nixon for keeping state funds available for the project.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

ONLINE HEADLINE:
MU reactor to ditch weapons grade uranium

PRINT EDITION HEADLINE:
Uranium enrichment too high at Research Reactor

By Washington Gikunju
April 28, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The MU Research Reactor Center is laying the groundwork to switch from using weapons-grade uranium to a safer fuel as part of a national push to minimize security threats.

Civilian reactors such as the one at MU have become the focus of federal security strategists working to minimize the likelihood that terrorists could attack a reactor or steal highly enriched uranium that can be used to make atomic bombs.

MU is anticipating the switch to low-enriched uranium, and officials are keen on preserving its efficiency as a scientific research and pharmacy drug production facility after the fuel change.

In a three-step conversion process that is likely to be replicated in other civilian reactors in the U.S., the Idaho National Lab Advanced Test Reactor is leading federal efforts to test a lower grade fuel that can provide an alternative source of power for research reactors.
If test results are positive, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will certify the fuel for use by the five research reactors in the U.S., including the one at MU, that still use enriched, weapons-grade uranium.

The long-term goal is to convert all 130 civilian reactors around the globe to run on the safer fuel.

The office of Ralph Butler, director of the center, referred queries to the MU News Bureau.

"There have been some computer simulations done at MU, but all testing of the low-enriched uranium has been done at Idaho," MU spokesman Christian Basi said. "Once approved, we would begin the conversion process immediately."

The 44-year old MU reactor produces cancer treating isotopes and pharmacy drugs, and Basi said that maintaining the quality of their products after the fuel switch remains a concern.

President Barack Obama outlined his administration's vision for securing nuclear material in an address last year in Prague, where he announced "a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years."

David Moncton, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Nuclear Reactor Laboratory, said his university was hoping to meet the U.S. Department of Energy's deadline of making the conversion from highly enriched fuel by 2015. Basi said MU was working within the same timeline.

Obama has elevated the issue of nuclear security to a top domestic and foreign policy plank by signing a pledge that America will never use nuclear weapons on a non-nuclear state that has signed on to non-proliferation treaties. He also endorsed a bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia and assembling world leaders in a conference where pledges were made to enhance security of nuclear materials around the globe.

Calling a nuclear attack "the single biggest threat to U.S. security," Obama told reporters at the summit that terrorists would not hesitate to launch an attack if they obtained nuclear weapons.
The summit was attended by 46 heads of state, making it the largest gathering of world leaders hosted by a U.S. president since the 1945 conference that founded the United Nations.

MU reactor officials attended the Nuclear Security Conference that took place a day after the Washington summit earlier this month, Basi said.

The 10-megawatt reactor is the largest of about 27 similar facilities located on university campuses in the U.S.

The federal government has committed to finance most, if not all, costs of the conversion, Basi said, leaving MU with the lesser headache of having to worry about disruption of normal production "for several weeks" to reconfigure its systems.

Moncton said the fuel conversion has become an important security element for research reactors, which have already undergone major security upgrades since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"The MIT reactor already has very robust security, but the important component now is to have low-enriched fuel," Moncton said.

He said the MIT reactor does not store any unused fuel that would pose security concerns. MU said its regulatory license limits the reactor to 5 kilograms of the highly enriched grade of fuel, which "is significantly below the amount required to make a weapon."

Nuclear experts have warned that multiple thefts could build up sufficient amounts to assemble a dirty bomb, and an April 2005 Congressional report said designers of current research reactors did not anticipate aircraft attack threats.

"Nuclear power plants were designed to withstand hurricanes, earthquakes and other extreme events, but attacks by large airliners loaded with fuel were not contemplated when design requirements were determined," read a section of the report.

Russia is known to have the bulk of research reactors that are powered by weapons-grade fuel. More than two dozen other countries including France, Japan, China, Britain, Germany, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Nigeria and Jamaica house similar facilities.
Commenting on the outcome of the recent Washington nuclear summit, nuclear physicist and security expert Thomas Cochran criticized participants for failing to forge a binding consensus on the elimination of use of weapons-grade fuel at all the 130 research reactors across the globe.

Cochran, a member of the nonprofit environmental advocacy group the Natural Resources Defense Council, said "the leaders appeared to put the convenience and economics of operating research reactors over the urgent need to minimize the risk of a catastrophic nuclear terrorist strike.

"What's needed now is a global ban on the production, use and possession of highly enriched uranium for civil use," Cochran said.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Nixon looks to tax credit reform to solve education funding crisis

By Trevor Eischen
April 27, 2010 | 10:14 p.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY — Gov. Jay Nixon held public teleconferences Tuesday to discuss his plan to revamp Missouri tax credits even though the General Assembly has less than three weeks to take action.

**MU Chancellor Brady Deaton opened the first conference call, applauding Nixon for his commitment to higher education and and saying it was critical to pass some sort of reform immediately.**

Last week, the governor met with public school teachers and leaders from elementary and secondary schools, as well as community and four-year colleges and universities, to discuss making a comprehensive plan for tax credit reform legislation.

Teleconference participants were mainly from higher education boards throughout the state, and most callers who posed questions supported Nixon’s initiative to reduce or eliminate certain tax credits.

During the teleconference, Nixon outlined three general ideas for tax credit reform: tax credit caps, accountability and transparency.

"The growth of entitlement tax credit programs in Missouri is simply unsustainable," Nixon said. "Over the last 10 years, the use of state tax credit has ballooned to $585 million a year. That's an 86 percent growth."

Nixon said Missouri has 60 tax credit programs. He singled out two programs, Missouri’s historic tax and low-income tax credits, as areas where the state could save between $150 million and $170 million in expenditures with his proposed reductions.
In 2008, Nixon said Missouri spent nearly $161 million on historic tax credits, and in 2009, the state expended the program by $186 million.

Referring to a report by State Auditor Susan Montee, Nixon said Missouri approved $176 million in low-income tax credits in 2007, the second highest of any state in the U.S. The governor said California, whose population is about six times the amount of Missouri's, spent half the amount Missouri did on low-income tax credits in 2007.

But there are only three weeks left in the legislative session, and the tax credit reduction bill would have to pass both the state House and Senate before appearing on the governor's desk to be passed into law. Nixon said he is optimistic that the General Assembly will act swiftly and with support for tax credit reduction.

"The vast majority of both the House and the Senate support the controlling, the accountability and the transparency of (reform)," Nixon said. "We just have massive special interests pushing on the other side."

In 2007, Missouri spent $470 million on tax credits, and State Budget Director Linda Luebbering said tax credits for fiscal year 2011 have been projected to reach $670 million.

"At the same time that we've had to make some serious reductions in basically every area of state government, tax credits have continued to climb," Luebbering said.

Nixon has restricted nearly $1.2 billion in budget spending since becoming governor and $900 million this year alone. He has recommended the House and Senate trim an additional $500 million from the fiscal year 2011 budget to maintain a balance budget for the following fiscal year.
Missouri Senate approves joint resolution detailing board's members, powers

By Trevor Eischen
April 27, 2010 | 6:06 p.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY — After several weeks of debate, the Senate cast a final vote consolidating Missouri's two education departments into one all-inclusive department.

The move would eliminate the Higher Education Department and combine it with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, creating a single entity under the authority of a six-member education board.

Last week, the Senate voted to pass a joint resolution to dissolve the higher education board and combine the departments. A second joint resolution, which details the number of board members and the power given to the new board, created some contentious debate among senators.

Senate President Pro Tem Charlie Shields, the bill's sponsor, said the two resolutions rely upon each other, and passing one without the other would complicate the consolidation.

The Senate voted 30-2 to pass the second joint resolution, with Sens. Frank Barnitz, D-Spring Lake, and Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, voting against the joint resolution.

Barnitz said he voted against the bill because he thinks it does not adequately explain the powers of what he called the "superboard."
"We are moving too quickly," Barnitz said. "I haven't had time to understand all the powers that we're going to be giving the superboard. How do I go out then and talk to my constituents about the action of the joint resolutions?"

The joint resolution says that the new education board would function "with all powers and duties as may be prescribed by law."

Barnitz said it doesn't make sense to have the Missouri people vote for the resolution until after those laws have been established.

Barnitz's district includes Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla and Linn State Technical College.

He said administrators at higher education institutions in his district support Shields' merger plan, but students attending those higher education institutions have shown opposition to the creation of one overarching board.

Without any statutory provisions detailing the authority of the board, Barnitz said his student constituents have expressed concern that the board might attempt to intervene in the regional board authority and possibly strip program funding and consolidate institutions.

Shields, R-St. Joseph, said the main priority of his joint resolution is to create a seamless connection between public schools and higher education institutions and that the state could save anywhere between $1 and $3 million from services and administrative positions.

"I think you can create a better system of education in the state," Shields said. "If you can get the higher education people working with the K-12 people, I think we can do better, and in the end, we'll end up with a more educated citizenry in Missouri."

Both joint resolutions will head to the House for further debate. Because the merger requires changing language in the Missouri Constitution, voters would get the final say when they vote on the consolidation in the November election.

With fewer than three weeks left in the session, getting the measures on the ballot will require quick action by the House.
MU gets B-minus in sustainability on group’s national report card

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

The University of Missouri has boosted its score on the annual College Sustainability Report Card.

MU this year received a B-minus, one grade better than last year. The report card, an initiative of the Sustainable Endowments Institute in Cambridge, Mass., evaluates universities' energy use, facilities, recycling programs, and administrative and student support.

“We were thrilled to bring our grade up by one whole letter grade,” said Karlan Seville, spokeswoman for MU Campus Facilities.

Seville thinks the improvement reflected better reporting efforts, now handled through MU’s year-old Office of Sustainability. Specifically, the university received high marks for reducing greenhouse emissions by 11 percent since 1990 and for increasing recycling efforts. The report also gave the university an A for student involvement, noting the Mizzou Dashboard program that helps track energy use in certain residential halls.

“I think our student groups have done a fabulous job,” said Tina Casagrand, president of Sustain Mizzou.

In addition to her own group, Casagrand said more environmental groups have been created on campus over the past year. The student senate, she said, has done a good job “putting sustainability in the forefront.”

MU received its only F in shareholder engagement, which considers how a school handles proxy voting on environmental issues. The UM System, not the campus, oversees university investments.

Casagrand said she thinks the report card is an accurate reflection. “We can definitely do better, and I’m hopeful in the future we will work toward that,” she said.

Paul Rolfe of Coal Free Mizzou said he’s seen an improvement in attitudes toward sustainability but said he’d like to see more physical improvements. “I think if they could find some way to put even a little solar power into the mix, that would show that they’re working towards it,” he said.
MU is in the process of bringing a biomass boiler online, and administrators are working on a climate action plan, Seville said.

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Health literacy will help teens make better choices

Overall, teenagers are extremely healthy people. But as the saying goes, is this excellent health being wasted on the young? Or more to the point, are young people playing Russian roulette with their own health, at high human costs and with great financial burdens for society?

It’s a harsh assessment, one supported by the so-called health paradox of adolescence. The teenage years are a time of peak physical health. All this vitality virtually glows from the pores of youth and young adults, but without benefit of a user’s manual.

And what good is a user’s manual if you can’t understand the instructions? Health information isn’t worth much without health literacy, the skill set necessary to understanding health information and making smart decisions, not often thought of as a trait of teenagers. Anyone who knows a teenager, or remembers being a teenager, knows the many needless risks they take with their health. Those risks have consequences, financial, societal and personal. Improved health literacy among adolescents will lead to a better understanding of the consequences of their dozens of daily choices related to staying healthy and staying safe.

A health risk is not always as straightforward as driving too fast or drinking too much, as horrific as these dramatic threats are. Think about the typical teenage diet. In America, the most commonly consumed vegetable is the French fry, and soft drinks account for up to 10 percent of the day’s calories. Dietary and other health habits formed in childhood and adolescence have huge consequences. Rising rates of adolescent obesity foreshadow lifelong health-care costs related to preventable illness such as Type II diabetes and heart disease, as well as less evident risks such as cancer.

Rachel Young is a Ph.D. student in health communication at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Glen Cameron is the Maxine Wilson Gregory Chair in Journalism Research, University of Missouri School of Journalism.
Ellis Fischel funding survives

House dashes attempt to cut hospital money.

By Terry Ganey

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

JEFFERSON CITY — State funding for the construction of a new Ellis Fischel Cancer Center on the University of Missouri campus survived a vote in the House last night.

Rep. Ward Franz, R-West Plains, attempted to cut a $31 million appropriation for the cancer center from a House capital improvements bill. The center would occupy two floors of a new medical tower on the MU campus.

Franz challenged the funding source for the project. He said federal stimulus funds designed to reimburse the state for highway repairs should not be diverted to hospital construction.

Franz said he didn’t have anything against the cancer hospital and had family members who had suffered from cancer in the past. But he added that he did not believe that in this tough economy federal stimulus money should go for the project.

“I think we are setting a precedent in taking road money and using it any way we see fit,” Franz said. “The hospital does good work, but it’s a dangerous approach to fund it this way.”

Franz’s amendment lost 119-38. Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia and a member of the House Appropriations Committee, said there were legitimate questions about how the federal money can be used. But, Kelly said, he had obtained legal opinions from several sources showing the funds can be used for Ellis Fischel.

“I’ve read federal and state laws, and there is no prohibition for using the money for general purposes,” Kelly said. He added that he expected the administration of Gov. Jay Nixon to oppose paying for the cancer center with the federal stimulus funds. The legislature approved Ellis Fischel funding last year, but Nixon would not release the money because of the state’s budget problems.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

TAP DAY LIST: The newest members of MU's honor societies

By Ally Anderson
April 27, 2010 | 5:52 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Last Friday, **MU revealed the new members of six honors societies.**

The members include "honor taps," faculty, staff or alumni who were chosen for influencing students in a positive way.

The initiates are:

**QEBH**

- Joshua Travis, a political science major from Manchester
- Kelli Hagan, a human development and family studies major from Mexico, Mo
- Logan Hampton, a pharmacy major from Sikeston
- Megan Ogar, a magazine journalism and Spanish major from St. Louis
- Anna Osterlind, an economics and political science major from Columbia
- Jarrett Sutton, a business marketing major from Kansas City
- Shannon Whitney, a convergence journalism major from St. Louis
- John Bennett, an honor tap from Columbia
- Joe Hayes, an honor tap from Columbia
- Donald Johnson, an honor tap from Columbia

**Mystical Seven**

- Kari Adam, a speech pathology major from Overland Park, Kan.
- Tina Casagrand, a journalism and anthropology major from Lebanon, Mo.
- Chebem Chukwu, a business marketing major from Lagos, Nigeria
• Becky Dale, an international studies major from St. Louis
• Andrew Lorenz, a business accounting major from Jackson
• Kha Ly, a hotel and restaurant management major and business minor from Saigon, Vietnam
• Kelsey Mirando, a magazine journalism major and English and sociology minors from Tulsa, Okla.
• Miriam Golomb, an honor tap
• Adam Duncan, an honor tap
• Kim Martin, an honor tap

LSV

• Yantezia Patrick, a journalism major from Evansville, Ind.
• Alyssa Ruth, a social work and psychology major from Lee's Summit
• Dolores Obregon, a journalism major from San Antonio, Texas.
• Holly Hanover, a social work and Spanish major from Raymore
• Suzy Day, an honor tap from Strasburg
• Sylvia Jauregui, an honor tap

Mortar Board

• Cassandra Batchelder, a journalism and political science major from Lakeville, Minn.
• Kelly Brophy, a business accounting major from Houston, Texas
• Jack Campbell, a biology and Spanish major from Columbia
• Katelyn Chizek, a strategic communications major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa
• Nuzhat Chowdhury, a political science and communications major from Columbia
• Daniel Cook, a biological sciences and chemistry major from Belton
• Nicholas Gerth, a political science and history major from Florissant
• Elise Hammond, a middle school math education major from Florissant
• Kaitlyn Hemmann, a physical therapy major from St. Louis
• Erin Junkel, a strategic communications journalism major from O'Fallon
• Andrew Kiehl, a business accounting major from St. Louis
• Kelsey Kotur, an industrial and manufacturing systems engineering major from Manchester
• Emily Marx, a music education major from St. Louis
• Kristin Morrison, a biological sciences major from St. Louis
• Ryan Neff, a biological sciences major from Columbia
• Megan Ogar, a magazine journalism and Spanish major, from St. Louis
• Deepika Parmar, a biological sciences and psychology major from Lee’s Summit
• Scott Scheese, an English major from Houstonia
• Jim Stites, a business marketing and religious studies major from Chesterfield
• Rachel Ternik, a business finance and mathematics major, from Fishers, Ind.
• Barbara Hammer, an honor tap
• John Faaborg, an honor tap
• Gayle Kingery, an honor tap

Omicron Delta Kappa

• Natalie Brandt, a health science pre-physical therapy major from Overland Park, Kan.
• Melanie Brown, a business accountancy major and music minor from Hannibal
• Ashley Davidson, a biochemistry and nutritional sciences major from Joplin
• Peter Dubrowski, a journalism and political science major from Lake St. Louis
• Michelle Flandreau, a journalism major from Coppell, Texas
• Elizabeth Fracica, a biological sciences major from St. Joseph
• Josh Frydman, a journalism major from Buffalo Grove, Ill.
• Lauren Hammond, a sociology major from Weldon Springs
• Jordan Hawley, a business major from Plano, Texas
• Kassie Hyde, a biological sciences and Spanish major from Marshfield
• Brian Kim, a Theatre, Spanish and psychology major from St. Louis
• Amanda Klohmann, a journalism major from Chesterfield
• Anne Kroeger, a chemistry major and biology minor from St. Louis
• Mark Levitt, a journalism major from Buffalo Grove, Ill.
• Kelsey McKinnis, a communication science and disorders major from Harrisonville
• Thomas Mershon, an agricultural journalism major from Lee’s Summit
• Adrienne Pedersen, a journalism major from Naperville, Ill.
• Kyle Schettler, a journalism major from Aurora, Colo.
• Courtney Scott, a communication and business major from Overland Park, Kan.
• Katrina Steffensen, a journalism and Spanish major from Houston, Texas
• Allie Steiner, a journalism major, from St. Charles
• Katie Steis, an elementary education major from Wildwood
• Tarik Yameen, a mechanical engineering major and French minor from Liberty
• Laura Young, a biology and political science major from Southlake, Texas
• Lee Zucker, a journalism major and business minor from Buffalo Grove, Ill.
• Etti Naveh-Benjamin, an honor tap
• Angela Speck, an honor tap

Rollins Society

• Angela Aubuchon, a psychology Ph.D. student from Dexter
• Emily Doucette, a medicine student from Kansas City, Mo.
• James Gann, education graduate student from Boonville
• Roland Holou, a plant science Ph.D. student from Cotonou, Benin
• Jennifer Keller Jensen, a public affairs graduate student from Gig Harbor, Wash.
• Megan Rau, a public health and school of medicine student from Washington, Mo.
• Sarah Symonds, a communications Ph.D. student from Sneads Ferry, N.C.
• Amy Williams, a first-year law student, from Columbia
• Jeni Hart, an honor tap
• Karen Gruen, an honor tap