

Debate over MU's nuclear plan persists

Reputation will suffer, some say.

By JANESE SILVEY

Monday, April 23, 2012

Some in the nuclear engineering community fear the University of Missouri's failed attempt last month to shut down its Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute will hurt the state's chances when competing for federal dollars.

But MU administrators say the goal to expand and strengthen nuclear programs on campus should be seen as a plus.

At stake is \$452 million in federal funding the U.S. Department of Energy is offering to develop small modular nuclear reactors. Last week, Westinghouse Electric Co. and Ameren Missouri announced they would seek that funding.

Those involved in the alliance felt the research and teaching strength at MU and UM's Rolla campus is one of the key components in the application, Sam Murphey, a spokesman for Gov. Jay Nixon, said in an email.

But Ryan Meyer, an NSEI alumnus who works in a national lab for the Department of Energy, is worried MU's treatment of the nuclear engineering institute has given the state a black eye. "Competitors are going to show potential hiccups and make sure reviewers are aware of it," he said.

In a letter to UM System stakeholders, Nixon and lawmakers, Meyer said the attempted closure of NSEI "reflects an uncertain commitment to nuclear engineering research and education."

Administrators announced March 12 that NSEI's name and website would no longer exist as of March 15. The decision has since been reversed, and NSEI will remain open until the last student graduates, but it is unclear what will happen after that.

NSEI's future already was hazy, though, because some of its four faculty members are nearing retirement age, Provost Brian Foster said. He envisions a future nuclear program that incorporates multiple disciplines.

NSEI was created a decade ago when nuclear engineering faculty members were pulled out of the College of Engineering and put under the Graduate School. In some external reviews, NSEI has been criticized for not better collaborating with colleagues.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton was adamant that there's nothing in the current plans that would threaten or undermine the state's proposal for federal dollars.

"The bottom line is MU will be stronger and continue to grow in stature as we have done in the last decade," he said.

The Westinghouse-Ameren partnership highlights the need for MU to keep up with changing industry demands, he said.

UM System President Tim Wolfe is leaving the discussion to those on campus, but he is following the talks, spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said. David Bradley, chairman of the UM Board of Curators, said he has requested that Deaton give the board updates, though he and fellow Curator Wayne Goode stressed that the board would not get involved in decisions regarding NSEI.

Dale Klein, associate vice chancellor for research at the University of Texas System and former chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, has been following the NSEI discussion. He said if grant reviewers are aware of the discussions and internal politics, it could have an impact.

"Anytime you have negative publicity like that, it doesn't help," he said. "The only way it will be relevant, though, is if someone at the review level knows of the specific turmoil lurking there."

MU's plans to propose new residence hall discussed

By Nicole Jones

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COLUMBIA — Plans for a new residence hall were discussed Monday by MU's Residential Life Committee.

The university requires all first-time college students to live on campus, which has begun to create problems as MU continues to expand.

In recent years, the university has already had to rent up to 700 beds off campus to house its students, and next year's freshman class is expected to be the university's largest yet.

The committee met to consider proposals that would create more space for housing students.

"We're a growing institution, handling the challenges," said Frankie Minor, director of Residential Life.

No decisions have been made, but the committee plans to propose the building of a new residence hall to the University of Missouri System Board of Curators in June.

The new residence hall would be built in the southeast corner of campus, on the south side of Hospital Drive across from Responsibility, Discovery, Excellence and Respect residence halls.

Currently labeled Virginia Avenue South, the hall would create space for 330 more students to live on campus. Twenty percent of those rooms would be singles designed for students with disabilities.



Study dispels single 'God spot' in brain

By JANESE SILVEY

Monday, April 23, 2012

There's no single spot in the human brain responsible for spiritual experiences, a University of Missouri research team has found, contradicting previous studies that indicate there's a "God spot" in the brain.

Rather, Professor Brick Johnstone has concluded that people feel spiritual when the right side of the brain is impaired because that's the area that controls self-orientation. Shut down the selfish side, he said, and people are more in tune with spiritual experiences, regardless of religion.

"Basically, that allows you to connect with things beyond the self — self-transcendence," Johnstone said. "In a lot of religions, people want to become selfless. Minimizing right-lobe functioning is just one way that's manifested."

For the study, he researched 20 people with traumatic brain injuries affecting the right parietal lobe, the area of the brain a few inches above the right ear. Johnstone surveyed participants on spirituality, such as whether they felt close to a higher power or felt they were part of a divine plan. Participants with more significant injury to their right parietal lobes were more likely to feel close to a higher being.

Those findings align with other studies conducted a decade or so ago that showed the right parietal lobe shut down in Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns who were meditating or praying, Johnstone said.

"The two studies are both really consistent," he said.

"In a brain injury where the right lobe is hurt, the same part shut down for the Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns, the more spiritual people reported being," he said. "In a nutshell, this is what it boils down to — the part of the brain associated with self-orientation."

There are other ways to minimize selfishness, such as reading books, listening to music or being in a romantic relationship, Johnstone said. The study should simply show people one way they can feel a spiritual connection, he said.

"There's not one part of the brain that believes in God, but there is a neurological process of becoming selfless, and you can do that through meditation and prayer," Johnstone said.



That Impulsive, Moody Preschooler May Grow Up to Be a Problem Gambler

ScienceDaily (Apr. 23, 2012) — Give me the child at 3 and I will give you the adult compulsive gambler. That is the striking finding of a new study in *Psychological Science*, a journal published by the Association for Psychological Science.

Based on tests of over 900 individuals beginning in toddlerhood, the study found **that "people who were rated at age three as being more restless, inattentive, oppositional, and moody than other three-year old children were twice as likely to grow up to have problems with gambling as adults three decades later,"** says psychologist **Wendy S. Slutske of University of Missouri**, who conducted the study with Terrie E. Moffitt and Avshalom Caspi, both of Duke University and University College/London; and Richie Poulton of University of Otago, in Dunedin, New Zealand.

As the first study to establish a causal link between a so-called "under-controlled" temperament in early childhood and later compulsive gambling, said Slutske, it answers a crucial question: "How early can we tell a person is at increased risk?"

The study looked at individuals from the Dunedin (New Zealand) Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, a longitudinal study of one birth cohort. Based on behaviors observed during a 90-minute assessment, 1,037 three-year-olds were categorized as having one of five temperaments: under-controlled, inhibited, confident, reserved, or well adjusted. Those children who were categorized as having an under-controlled temperament were more restless, impulsive, and negative and were less able to regulate their emotions.

At ages 21 and 36, 939 of the study participants answered questions about gambling behavior. At 21, 86 percent of the respondents had gambled, but only 13 percent in a "disordered" way -- defined by such problems as a preoccupation with gambling; a need to wager more and more to get the same enjoyment; getting into financial, personal, or work-related difficulties because of gambling; and difficulty in cutting down or quitting. By 32, only about 4 percent of the participants still gambled at that level.

Among the compulsive gamblers, men were more numerous than women, as were those with low childhood intelligence and socioeconomic status. But under-controlled temperament in toddlerhood remained a significant predictor of disordered gambling in adulthood, even after gender, intelligence, and socioeconomic status were taken into account.



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It is important to keep in mind that the number of people who actually end up becoming compulsive gamblers is relatively small. But the findings, said Slutske, are still important given "the ever-increasing number of [gambling] temptations our world presents," such as the opportunities to place bets at home on the Internet at any time of day or night. Some vulnerable individuals may not be well-equipped to handle such temptations.

And the implications of the study may even go beyond gambling. "It fits into a larger story about how self-control in early childhood is related to important life outcomes in adulthood," said Slutske. New programs for boosting self-control -- even Sesame Street's segments on the importance of saving money and waiting until later for goodies -- might not only head off a painful future of compulsive gambling but also increase children's chances of academic success, financial security, and personal happiness when they grow up.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Commencement season is at hand across St. Louis

Missouri Gov. Nixon, actor Val Kilmer and Gloria Steinem are among speakers, degree recipients.

BY TIM BARKER • tbarker@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8350 | Posted: Tuesday, April 24, 2012 12:05 am | [\(0\) comments.](#)

College and university commencements will get under way soon.

As usual, the region's ceremonies will feature a wide range of speakers and honorary degree recipients. Among the biggest names on the speaking circuit will be actor Val Kilmer, journalist Cokie Roberts, cartoonist Mike Peters and Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon. Honorary degrees will go to pioneering feminist Gloria Steinem, former Harris-Stowe State University President Henry Givens and U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Anne Patterson.

Among the ceremonies:

- **Missouri Baptist University:** May 1 commencement starts at 7 p.m. at the St. Charles Family Arena.
- **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville:** Four ceremonies will be spread over two days, with the first event at 6:30 p.m. May 4 and the final event at 5 p.m. May 5. All four events will be in the Vadalabene Center. Speakers include alumnus Fernando Aguirre, chairman of Chiquita Brands International.
- **Missouri University of Science and Technology:** Two ceremonies will be in the Gale Bullman Multi-Purpose Building in Rolla. The first will be at 6 p.m. May 4, the other at 11 a.m. May 5. Scheduled to speak is NASA astronaut Sandra Magnus, a Missouri S&T grad who made three shuttle flights.
- **William Woods University:** Ceremonies will be at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. May 5 in the Cutlip Auditorium. Actor Val Kilmer, starring in the new thriller "Twixt," also will present his one-man show "Citizen Twain" in the school's Dulany Auditorium. He also plans to visit the Mark Twain Boyhood Home and Museum in Hannibal.
- **Maryville University:** Plans call for an outdoor ceremony at 10 a.m. May 5.
- **University of Missouri-Columbia:** Nearly 20 ceremonies will take place over three days, starting May 11. As of Monday, the university had not announced speakers.

- **Lindenwood University:** Graduate and undergraduate ceremonies will be at 7 p.m. May 11 and at 10 a.m. May 12 at the St. Charles Family Arena.
- **Harris-Stowe State University:** Ceremony will start at 10 a.m. May 12 in the Emerson Performance Center. The event also will serve as the inauguration of new president Albert Walker.
- **Southeast Missouri State University:** Gov. Jay Nixon will address the school's largest graduating class, 1,322 students, at 2 p.m. May 12 in the Show-Me Center.
- **Webster University:** Anne Patterson, the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, will receive an honorary degree at the ceremony at 10 a.m. May 12 at the Muny in Forest Park.
- **University of Missouri-St. Louis:** Ceremonies will begin at 10 a.m. May 12 and end at 6 p.m. May 13. All will take place in the Mark Twain Building. Among those receiving honorary degrees are Henry Givens, the former longtime president at Harris-Stowe, and Dr. Patricia Wolff, founder of Meds and Food for Kids.
- **Southern Illinois University Carbondale:** Commencement will be handled in three events at 9 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. May 12 in the SIU Arena.
- **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:** There will be two campuswide commencements, at 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. May 13 in the Assembly Hall. NBC political commentator Cokie Roberts will handle one ceremony; agribusiness broadcaster Orion Samuelson, of WGN Radio, will take the second.
- **Washington University:** Commencement will be at 8:30 a.m. May 18 in the Brookings Quadrangle. Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Mike Peters, creator of the Mother Goose & Grimm comic strip, will speak and receive an honorary degree, along with Gloria Steinem and four others.
- **Fontbonne University:** Commencement will be at 10 a.m. May 19.
- **St. Louis University:** Ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. May 19 at Chaifetz Arena.