MU will accept new nuclear engineering graduate students, Deaton says

BY Caroline Bauman

*Chancellor Brady Deaton said he would open admissions to the university's nuclear engineering graduate programs. An earlier version of this article incorrectly described the graduate programs as belonging to the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute.

COLUMBIA — In response to a letter from the MU Faculty Council, Chancellor Brady Deaton said he would open admissions to the nuclear engineering graduate programs* and stated the curriculum of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute will not be changed within the next five years.

"I have no illusions these two actions will fully resolve the turmoil surrounding NSEI," Deaton said in a letter to Faculty Council Chairman Harry Tyrer. "We must find a way to shift the focus to what is best for the students and institution."

At the Faculty Council meeting Thursday afternoon, MU Graduate School Dean George Justice, College of Engineering Dean James Thompson and Provost Brian Foster defended the administrative decisions behind the move to restructure the institute in March.

The proposed plan is to allocate all of MU's nuclear degree programs into the College of Engineering, Justice said, with the goal of creating a broader nuclear engineering program. The institute, which is currently housed in the Graduate School, cannot continue in its current form as an academic unit, Justice said.

"We have an approval of broader nuclear programs on the way," Justice said.

According to Deaton's letter, all four faculty members in the MU Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute can continue teaching the courses of their choice for the next five-year period.

In his presentation to Faculty Council, Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Faculty Council member Sudarshan Loyalka said he and the three other faculty members of the institute were not involved in the discussions surrounding the decision to restructure the institute. He said he feels they have not been treated by administrators in accordance with the Collected Rules and Regulations.
"This applies to all academic units," Loyalka said. "Transparency was absolutely missing in the actions against us, and trust was missing."

In accordance with the Collected Rules and Regulations, he said, a committee should be appointed that can review all of the information from both sides and make a recommendation in a thoughtful way.

At the meeting in January, Faculty Council members requested to hear both sides of the issue before proceeding with a resolution to Deaton. After hearing both presentations, council members still had questions about why the online application to the institute was removed and whether administration broke the Collected Rules and Regulations in the restructuring process.

"I could not in good conscience accept students into an administrative structure that had already been determined to go out of existence," Justice said. "We wanted to move students and the campus to a larger vision that I think the chancellor's letter lays out. It was closed until we had a structure to which we could admit students and be sure they could achieve success."

Administration had not broken the collected rules in their decisions, Justice said.

Now that the council has heard all sides, Tyrer said, it will try to help moderate this issue and move it forward.

"NSEI has legitimate concerns," Tyrer said. "The vision of the administration is good and big. It is to everyone's advantage to get this resolved."
MU Faculty Council discusses closing of NSEI

By Jack Howland

Staff in attendance at Thursday’s faculty council meeting discussed the problems and possible solutions regarding the March 15, 2012 closing of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute.

No decision was reached, but the floor was open to opposing sides of the argument.

Curator’s Professor of Nuclear Engineering Sudarshan Loyalka opened the discussion with a presentation that outlined events involving the NSEI closing and raised questions to higher-ranking MU officials. The presentation, “NSEI & Shared Governance and CRR,” stated “faculty learned of closure same as the public” and had received no information prior.

In a slide named “Collected Rules and Regulations,” Loyalka said that rules were broken that apply to every school at MU. He cited six laws and bylaws, including 320.150 of the faculty handbook, which states that the president and chancellor will consult with appropriate faculty in the case of a closure.

“There had been no discussion with us,” Loyalka said.

The community at large expressed strong concerns about the decision process, Loyalka said. He described the NSEI as a “top 10” institution over the past 10 years and said it should not have been closed in the manner it was.

Provost Brian Foster acknowledged MU’s “amazing nuclear resources” but said the discussion is about more than that.

“The big question is: How do we take all of this and bring it together to form a very big, coherent, visible, high-impact presence in nuclear sciences?” Foster said. “Something that really matters across the country.”

Foster said the decision to close NSEI was discussed in detail. He said there was an external review of the issue in 2010 with prominent engineers, and the consensus was that there were amazing assets but it was ultimately a small and focused unit. The goal was to make it broader, Foster said.

Graduate School Dean George Justice attended the council and said emails released last year confirmed the large structural vision for the NSEI that was put forward in 2010. Part of the
reason they wanted structural change was so tenure tracks wouldn’t be in graduate school, he said.

“I participated in national meetings as a graduate dean,” Justice said. “Graduate schools largely do not hold tenure lines – it doesn’t make sense for tenure lines to be in graduate school.”

English professor Karen Piper voiced concern that the closing of the NSEI would harm MU’s reputation and said there are top scientists in the world who are upset by what is happening at MU.

“Why is a top-ranking program in the country being dismantled?” Piper said.

There’s an issue of numbers, Justice said in response. He said that ranking 80 out of 140 might not be that different from 14 out of 28. Although he noted that nobody would dispute the NSEI teachers have sufficiently done their job, he said the decision was to harness what they have on campus.

Randy Curry, director of the Center for Physical and Power Electronics, said friends approached him about the NSEI closure and he found the closure was hurting the quality of research at MU. It’s going to be harder for MU to get grants from Washington, D.C., he said.

“If there’s anything that this university ought to be worrying about right now, it’s bringing money in this environment,” Curry said. “It is one of the toughest environments.”

Curry expressed anger at the notion of separating researchers at the NSEI. “These guys are well recognized, don’t break them up,” Curry said. “Let’s go forward and let’s maintain the quality of the institution.”

After the council meeting closed, Loyalka said he hopes the issue can be resolved in the near future.

“I’m an optimistic person, I believe hope always springs,” Loyalka said. “I would like to see it resolved positively, but there have been some speed bumps.”
No homework on Wiccan, Pagan holidays at University of Missouri?

Students at University of Missouri don’t need to cram for exams that fall on Wiccan and Pagan holidays, now that the school has put them on par with Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanukah.

The university’s latest “Guide to Religions: Major Holidays and Suggested Accommodations” -- designed to help faculty know when and when not to schedule homework and exams -- lists eight Wiccan and Pagan holidays and events right alongside more mainstream occasions. It's all part of the school's effort to include everyone's beliefs, although some critics say listing every holiday associated with fringe belief systems is a bit much.

“The holidays and accommodations section of this guide is provided to faculty, staff and student leaders as an educational resource for the myriad of religious holy days celebrated at Mizzou,” the guide reads. “Not only does this section offer crucial information about dates and practices, we also hope that the information about recommended academic and food accommodations will be valuable to those planning classroom activities and other academic and co-curricular events.”

“It’s beyond political correctness, it’s almost like an excuse to do nothing.”

- Tammy Bruce, radio host

The first holiday on the list is the Hindu two-day festival celebrating the birth of Krishna, a god considered to be a “warrior, hero, teacher and philosopher.” During the observance, which occurs on Aug. 28 this year, Hindus are likely to forgo sleep in order to, among other things, sing traditional songs.

“Avoid scheduling major academic deadlines on this day, since it is likely that students will be operating on very little sleep,” the guide continues.
Other holidays like Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah and Easter are included in the guide of 43 holidays with varying degrees of suggested accommodations to be granted to students at the 34,000-student public university in Columbia.

For Samhain, listed as a Pagan and Wiccan celebration considered by some to be the Wiccan New Year, general practices include “paying respect to ancestors, family members, elders of the faith, friends, pets and other loved ones” who have died. The holiday coincides with Halloween.

In recognition of Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish festival of lights, “academics and work” are permitted according to the guide, which suggests that food accommodations be considered as requested and in accordance to Kosher restrictions.

The Chinese New Year, meanwhile, is billed as the “most important” of traditional Chinese holidays with Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist religions and corresponds to the new moon in Aquarius, which can occur between late January through mid-February. This year’s celebration fell on Sunday, while in 2014 it will be celebrated on Jan. 31.

“Avoid scheduling important academic deadlines, events and activities on this date,” the guide reads. “Many Chinese employees will probably request this day off.”

University officials said no complaints had been received in connection to the guide, which many have found “useful and informational,” according to a statement to FoxNews.com.

"The information about the Wiccan and Pagan holidays has been in the guide since last fall," the statement read. "Please keep in mind that this is not intended just for faculty. This is an informational guide for anyone across campus (and beyond)."

Of Mizzou’s 34,748 students enrolled in fall 2012, more than 14 percent were listed as minorities and 6.1 percent were international students, with China, Korea and India accounting for the most pupils from overseas.

Tammy Edwards, radio host of the nationally syndicated “Tammy Bruce Show” and Fox News contributor, said she found the guide to be indicative of an unbecoming societal shift.

“It almost seems as though we’re looking for excuses for people to not have to take their commitments seriously,” Edwards told FoxNews.com. “It’s beyond political correctness; it’s almost like an excuse to do nothing. It’s like societal nihilism, where nothing matters.”
MU Extension tax option gains Senate approval

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Senate gave first-round approval yesterday to one of the University of Missouri’s top priorities for the year, a bill that gives local MU Extension districts taxing power.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, needs a final vote before moving to the House.

Under the measure, local Extension councils already in place would be able to vote to form single- or multicounty Extension districts by a majority vote.

The Senate approved an amendment that prevents St. Louis County from forming or joining a district.

The newly created districts would be able to ask voters to approve a property tax levy of up to 30 cents per $100 assessed value. If voters in one county of a multicounty district did not approve the tax, that county could withdraw from the district. If it did not do so, the tax would not go into effect.

That’s how the bill protects taxpayers, Pearce said during debate.

“It is a local decision,” he said. “It would go to voters of a county or a multicounty area. It would not be imposed.”

The bill was questioned by lawmakers worried about another layer of taxes on local property owners. In northwest Missouri, Sen. Brad Lager, R-Savannah said, property owners are taxed for schools and a community college, and he said he worried that a new taxing entity would make it more difficult for those entities to get approval of their measures.

“It is a challenge for them to raise resources for capital improvements,” he said.
MU Extension provides services designed to bring the educational resources and research to all corners of the state. There is an Extension council in each county, composed of elected and appointed members, and the services provided in each county vary based on local needs. The programs range from help with farming and soil analysis to business development and the 4-H youth program.

The bill would provide relief to stressed county budgets by allowing counties to reduce or eliminate their annual contributions to the local Extension councils. It also would benefit the university as a whole by relieving some of the need to fund local councils.
MU alumni Zach Toombs and Steven Dickherber, junior Ben Levin and Chancellor Brady Deaton show all the 2012 Geyer Awards on Monday. Toombs, Dickherber and Levin received the award for their work on the More for Less campaign. Matt Flores/Photographer

JEFFERSON CITY – A year ago, three Missouri Students Association leaders were in Jefferson City advocating for UM funding. Almost exactly a year later, the three were back, but this time, MU was recognizing them.

The three – Steven Dickherber, Ben Levin and Zach Toombs – were given the Mizzou Alumni Association’s Geyer Award, which recognizes the work of public officials and citizens who have made a positive impact on higher education at MU, according to the Mizzou Alumni Association’s website.

The three all held positions within MSA last year: Dickherber was the legislative advocacy officer, Toombs was the director of student communications and Levin was the academic affairs
chairman. Dickherber and Toombs graduated in December 2012. Levin is an adviser to the
current MSA executive cabinet.

Together they led the More for Less campaign against Gov. Jay Nixon’s proposed 12.5 percent
budget decrease in higher education funding for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

“These three were the nuts and bolts of organizing the entire effort,” Mizzou Legislative
Network Chair Wally Pfeffer said.

Their efforts included compiling 6,000 letters from students, rallying 150 students and
convincing senators to speak on students’ behalf.

All of it was successful when the Missouri legislature revised the budget to level funding for the
university – an achievement various Missouri senators credited the MSA leaders for helping
with, Jim Gwinner, the president of the Mizzou Alumni Association, said.

The Nursing Alumni Organization nominated Dickherber, Levin and Toombs for the award, and
they became the first students to be given the award.

“We appreciated the influence they had,” said Judith Miller, dean of the Sinclair School.

The night in Jefferson City was a time to thank the three for their success.

“I think it gave a student voice to the issue of higher education,” said Cathy Scroggs, vice
chancellor of student affairs. “It was an activism and an appropriate activism: They timed it
perfectly when they needed to take it to the capital and they engaged the students and sent a
strong message.”

Chancellor Brady Deaton said their work represented the university by providing a firsthand
testimony to legislators.

“They are honored tonight for their dedication and success,” Deaton said. “Their work shows the
importance of our students’ voice, and they understood the legislature and the needs of the
university.”

The three expressed humility and gratitude to be award recipients.

“I stand here almost exactly a year later, and it’s a little hard to wrap my head around,” Levin
said. “And at the time, it would’ve been equally hard to believe that higher education funding
one year later would appear to be in such excellent shape.”

Their work, along with the help from the student body, dispels the stereotype that students are
apathetic, Levin said.

“It’s no secret that there is a stigma against college students,” Levin said. “That despite our
enthusiasm, we don’t hold weight off campus, that we get lost in our idealism and our optimism.
And more often than not, that’s probably true, but at Mizzou our leaders realize that any student body in the nation can be enthusiastic. We expect more than enthusiasm. We expect to be effective.”

Toombs said he hopes More for Less will have a lasting impact.

“We hope our achievements will inspire other students to think big and be unconventional,” Toombs said.

Many others also said the three leaders’ work will set a precedent.

Pfeffer cited MSA’s creation of the Legislative Advocacy Officer position, who will advocate for students in the future.

“(Someday), we can look back and say we were here when this started,” Pfeffer said. “I have high hopes this is where our future will go.”
MU will accept new nuclear engineering graduate students, Deaton says

BY Caroline Bauman

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Married Couples Healthier Than Single People, Study Finds

The Huffington Post | By Shelley Emling 02/14/2013 10:56 am EST

Happily married couples are more likely to enjoy better mental and physical health than their single friends, a new study shows. And those in good marriages are more likely to rate their health as better as they grow older, meaning aging adults in poor physical health could benefit in particular from improvements in their marriages.

Christine Proulx, assistant professor in the University of Missouri Department of Human Development and Family Studies, examined the long-term relationship between self-rated health and marital quality, and found that -- no matter what stage of marriage -- positive or negative relationships impact a person's health.

She said that spouses should be aware that how they treat each other and how happy they are in their marriages play a role in both partners' health, meaning they should consider the maintenance of their personal relationship as key to feeling good both mentally and physically. Happily married people are also found to enjoy better health than those who are unhappy in their marriages.

"We often think about the aging process as something we can treat medically with a pill or more exercise, but working on your marriage also might benefit your health as you age," Proulx said in a press release. "Engaging with your spouse is not going to cure cancer, but building stronger relationships can improve both people's spirits and well-being and lower their stress."

Proulx suggests that health professionals factor in patients' personal relationships when designing health promotion programs or treatment plans.

"Physicians should recognize that the strength of patients' marriages might affect their health," she said. "I suspect we'd have higher rates of adherence to treatment plans for chronic illnesses if medical professionals placed more of an emphasis on incorporating families and spouses in patients' care. If spouses understand their partners' disease and how to treat it at home, and the couple has a strong marriage, both people's health could improve."

Proulx analyzed data from 707 continuously married adults who participated in the Marital Instability Over the Life Course panel study, a 20-year, nationwide research project launched in 1980 with funding from the Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics and the National Institute on Aging.
Most study participants were white, had more than a high school education and earned more than $55,000 in annual family income in 2000. Because of these characteristics, Proulx says the participants probably had some protection against marital and health challenges more commonly faced by people of different ethnicities or with less education or income.

The new study is hardly the first to suggest a link between marriage and better health. A large body of research links marriage with a lower risk of developing cancer, having a heart attack and being diagnosed with dementia and various diseases.

There is good news for singles too. Research shows that unmarried people with active lifestyles enjoy their own health benefits.
How Celebrating Valentine's Day Could Save Our Economy

I know what you’re thinking. Valentine’s Day is just a fake commercialized holiday perpetuated by restaurants who want to double their prices for one night; card companies who think a clever saying can encapsulate all of your love; and confectioners who aim straight at the heartstrings with a single bite of chocolate. Well, all of that may be true. But here’s the thing—these small gestures might be just the nudge your relationship and our economy needs.

When I say this will help the economy, I’m not highlighting the profits of participating businesses. I am focusing on the long ripple effect—specifically in keeping your spouse or significant other happy. Bear with me.

A nationwide study by Ohio State’s Center for Human Resource Research found that married people increased their wealth about 4 percent each year just as a result of being married, with all other factors held constant. For people who married and then divorced, there was a slow build-up of wealth during the early years of marriage and then a steady decline beginning about four years before divorce. Total wealth bottomed out the year prior to divorce. Researchers believe that the decline in wealth may happen because they are working less and not trying as hard to build wealth as they have marriage troubles.

In terms of hard numbers, people who remained single had a steady, but slow growth in wealth over the course of 15 years to an average of about $11,000. Conversely, those “who got married and stayed married showed a sharp increase in wealth accumulation after marriage, growing to an average of about $43,000 by the 10th year of marriage.” Getting a divorce decreased a person’s wealth by roughly 77 percent. So far this sounds like a little Valentine’s Day effort is worth it, right?

Other research backs this up. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau found that full-time median income for married men was $55,958 versus $34,634 for single men. Married women fair better too, earning $40,489 compared to their single counterparts earning $32,593. More income obviously means you can spend more money, which would help the economy. You can see how staying happily married has its financial rewards, regardless of the cause and effect.

It’s not just about hard currency either. A big part of the political debate recently has been about the cost of healthcare. A British study found that those who reported being happiest had a 35% reduced risk of dying compared with those who reported feeling unhappy. If you think that blow-up, heart-shaped balloon will make your wife happy, spend the couple of bucks. If that weren’t enough, happily married couples also have better mental and physical health than their unmarried peers and are less likely to develop chronic conditions than their widowed or divorced counterparts, according to a new study from the University of Missouri.
Proulx, an assistant professor in the MU Department of Human Development and Family Studies, says “we often think about the aging process as something we can treat medically with a pill or more exercise, but working on your marriage also might benefit your health as you age.” Proulx continues, “Engaging with your spouse is not going to cure cancer, but building stronger relationships can improve both people's spirits and well-being and lower their stress.”

So, do your part for the American economy today and make your spouse or significant other happy this Valentine’s!
Panel takes up graduation standards

By TAYLOR BECK

JEFFERSON CITY — The state House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education yesterday looked at two measures that would require more from Missouri high schoolers before they graduate.

The first bill, sponsored by Rep. Dave Hinson, R-St. Clair, looks to require students to enroll in math and science courses their last two semesters before entering higher education. Students now are required to take three years of math and science courses, so many students choose not to take one their senior year of high school. Hinson said this causes problems when they enter college and haven't studied math or science for two or more years.

Tim Wolfe, president of the University of Missouri System, said he doesn't know whether this proposal is the best way to go, but many first-year students struggle with math courses. "Is it because they didn't take it in their senior year? Possibly, in some cases," Wolfe said.

Wolfe also said employers in Missouri are telling him the universities are not producing enough graduates in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Larry Davis, who spent 30 years as a superintendent for schools in Missouri, South Dakota and North Dakota, spoke in opposition of the bill. "If you mandate what students have to take, it gives them very little as far as electives," Davis said.

Davis also said the state requires "enough" of students and passage of this bill could hinder vocational technology programs that are very popular in rural areas.

The committee also heard a bill, dubbed the Student Accountability Act, that would require students to take certain end-of-course exams before receiving a high school diploma. Bill sponsor Rep. Bryan Spencer, R-Wentzville, said it would be a more accurate way to see how students will perform in college and beyond.

The bill would require, starting with the 2017-18 school year, all public school students to pass at least one state assessment taken after eighth grade in each of four core areas: mathematics,
communication arts, social sciences and science. If students do not pass a test in each area before graduation, they might receive a diploma of "local achievement."

Rep. Michael Butler, D-St. Louis, voiced concerns but liked the idea of holding students more accountable. "I'm not afraid of taking hits on some kids not graduating if that means they're not prepared to go into the world," Butler said.

The bill also says a special education student whose individualized curriculum would not be accurately reflected in a state exam also can receive a diploma of "local achievement." No one opposed the bill, but some expressed concern about how special education students might be affected.

The committee did not vote on either bill, but it did approve a measure to ban bullying in schools and a bill requiring schools to publish a letter-grade report card for each school building to the House.
Sustain Mizzou celebrates 9th birthday

By Katie Pohlman

Sustain Mizzou celebrated its ninth birthday as a student organization Thursday. The organization’s actual birthday was Feb. 4, according to its website.

Alumni of Sustain Mizzou and current executive board members were invited to attend the birthday celebration and talk about their experiences in the organization. During the second half of the meeting, a round-table discussion allowed attendees to ask questions to any of the former and current members.

“It’s a chance for the executive board, long-term club members and alumni to teach the new members about the club,” Sustain Mizzou President Abigail Keel said.

Junior Alexis Harris, one of the new members, said she was encouraged by the event to get more involved with the club. She said it was only her second time attending a Sustain Mizzou meeting.

“(I hope the club) will help me learn about sustainability and help me give back and do my part in the community,” she said.

Keel said volunteers like Harris keep the club running. She said Sustain Mizzou primarily functions through volunteer activities that it sets up to help students get involved in the community and university.

The organization has had many projects during its nine-year history, many of which were short-term or are no longer being conducted. Keel said the club’s longest running project is Tiger Tailgate Recycling, which has been around for eight years and produced its highest yields in history this year.

Former president senior Tina Casagrand said the organization has learned to adapt throughout the years as well.

“When the club first started, we used to be the main drivers of environmental affairs at the university,” she said.

But with the introduction of the MU Sustainability Office in 2010 and the Environmental Leadership Office, Casagrand said the club had to reassess its role on campus. She said the club soon found its own place, however.
“We focus on bridging the gap between interested students and getting them involved in sustainability projects,” Casagrand said.

The club also partners with other organizations like Tigers for Community Agriculture, with whom they help grow vegetables for the dining halls and Tiger Pantry.

Keel said Sustain Mizzou’s newest project is Sustainability Week, which is in April. The week consists of different environmentally themed days – such as sustainability at MU and in Columbia.

“Each day has an educational component to help students understand that sustainability goes beyond environmentalism,” Keel said.

Adam Saunders, a former member of Sustain Mizzou, spoke at the birthday gathering about the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture, which actually grew out of a project started by the club. Saunders said he became involved in the club during its second year on campus and that, although initial interest in it was strong, it has grown substantially since that time.

Casagrand said she believes Sustain Mizzou will always be a big part of campus initiatives for sustainability.

“We will always be in the foreground for volunteer work,” she said. “And as a collective voice of students, we have power to request changes on campus that university-run organizations can’t match.”
American Airlines begins flights at Columbia Regional Airport

BY Chris Jasper, Ethan Colbert

NO MENTION

COLUMBIA — The Embraer Regional Jet glistened in the midday sun Thursday on the Columbia Regional Airport tarmac, ready for the inaugural American Airlines flight from Columbia to Chicago.

Inside the airport, several staff members huddled around computers at the American Airlines ticket counter. They worked to make the ticketing and check-in process as quick as possible for the dozens of people waiting in the airport’s lobby.

Dale Jenkins, 54, appreciated their extra effort. The Tuscumbia native was headed to Virginia Beach, after a layover in Chicago, to see his granddaughter.

"Check-in was great," Jenkins said. "They have definitely impressed me so far. I am excited to see what American can do for this airport."

In the fall, Delta Air Lines decided to discontinue air service to and from Columbia after the city offered a two-year, $3 million revenue guarantee to American Airlines to provide flights to and from Chicago and Dallas-Fort Worth.

American Airlines agreed to merge with U.S. Airways on Thursday, which would create the world's largest carrier, according to the Associated Press.

Moberly resident Louise Bott, 65, another passenger bound for Chicago, was using Columbia's airport for the first time. She said she felt right at home with Columbia's airport and the American Airlines staff.

"I really don't like big airports," Bott said. "I have always flown out of St. Louis, but once American announced they were coming here, I knew I would come here instead. I really like American Airlines."

Passengers such as Jenkins and Bott are a focus for American Airlines, said representative Brett Hoeyerink, senior manager for American Airlines market development.
"We recognized the great need to expand the air service here in Columbia and we are very excited to provide that service," Hooyerink said. "We are very pleased with the response from the community. Our pre-ticket sales have surpassed our expectations. We have full flights for the next week or so, and the numbers look good for months ahead."

Members of the Ravipudi family, who are headed to Los Angeles via Chicago, said they will be repeat customers of American Airlines and the Columbia airport.

"We have already booked a flight for next month," Sanjeev Ravipudi, 41, said. His mother, Meena Nuper, said she has even booked one for November. Ravipudi said he was pleased with the increased options at the airport.

"With American we are not losing access," Ravipudi said. "We are actually gaining access to the entire world. I would encourage everyone else to come and support American Airlines out of Columbia Regional Airport."

A couple of incoming passengers on the Dallas-Fort Worth early afternoon flight, Dan Rand and Warren Vaughn, said this was their first time flying into Columbia. They were impressed.

"I will definitely use it more as I travel so much for my work," Rand, an employee of Texas A&M University, said. "Everything went so smoothly, from the runway to service on the plane. The flight attendant, Roger, was simply terrific."

Another passenger who came in from Dallas-Fort Worth, 54-year-old Bob McCann, is visiting family in mid-Missouri and said the convenience of flying into Columbia can't be beat.

"For my first time flying into Columbia, it was great," McCann said. McCann said he can see why so many different types of people would use the Columbia airport now with American Airlines providing service.

"We had plenty of people on the plane," he said. "It was pretty full. There were even four or five guys who were all headed up here to see their girlfriends on Valentine's Day."

Following the first arrival, the American Airlines staff turned their attention to the inaugural departure from the Columbia airport. The debut had been near perfect until the departure plane filled with passengers sat on the tarmac for thirty minutes. Originally scheduled for a 1:55 p.m. departure, the plane didn't take off until around 2:30 p.m.

Joy Warner, a general manager for American Airlines, attributed the delay to human nerves and to the staff's unfamiliarity with the airport's computer system.

"Whenever you open a new station, there are going to be hiccups," Warner said. "This should be our only delay today. Everything else is ready to go for our later arrival and departure today."
Mayors Bob McDavid and Eric Struemph, of Columbia and Jefferson City, respectively, joined Boone and Cole County commissioners to speak at a ribbon cutting ceremony at about 4 p.m. in the airport lobby.

“We here in mid-Missouri now have one-stop access to virtually anywhere in the world.”
McDavid said.

During the ceremony, the first return flight from Chicago arrived.

Dawn Eckenrode, a Columbia resident who was on the flight, said she loved using the airport.

“The people are friendly and the proximity is nice,” said Eckenrode. “We don’t have to drive long-distance and the parking is free.”

Steven Sapp, spokesman for the Columbia Public Works Department, focused on the positives of Thursday’s inaugural flights.

"American Airlines is the perfect combination of business airfare and pleasure airfare," Sapp said. "No matter where you want to go, you can go there now. Hopefully, everyone will start and end their trips here at the airport."