MU News Bureau
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MU professor takes legal action to get documents, another shot at tenure process

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 at 11:55 am

A University of Missouri professor took legal action Wednesday against the institution and a handful of administrators, demanding documents he argues he is entitled to after an unfounded research misconduct investigation and his tenure denial and asking for another chance to go through the tenure review process.

Dylan Kesler, assistant professor of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, filed the writ with the help of Columbia-based lawyer George Smith. Kesler has worked at MU since 2007.

Smith and Kesler allege in the 30-page filing that multiple university administrators, including Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, interim Provost Ken Dean and Mark Ryan, director of the School of Natural Resources, mishandled his tenure case during multiple stages of the process.

Kesler's writ alleges an array of violations to his confidentiality after details of an unfounded investigation into a plagiarism accusation were used in the tenure recommendation process.

He also cites several Collected Rules and Regulations clauses that show he is entitled to a “an explanation of that decision,” from the university upon request, which Kesler said he has made several times to multiple administrators.

In addition to the tenure letter, Kesler is requesting administrators “address damages” to his reputation “that came about from the charge of research misconduct.” Kesler said he has yet to receive any sort of reparation. Under the Collected Rules, the university is required when asked “to protect or restore the reputation of persons alleged to have engaged in research misconduct but against whom no finding of research misconduct is made.” That rule is mandated for schools that receive National Institute of Health funding, the writ says.

MU spokesman Christian Basi could not confirm whether those documents exist for Kesler, citing personnel privacy restraints. He did say that it is “standard procedure to send a letter to faculty members to notify them of the tenure decision as well as decisions related to research misconduct.”
Along with those documents, Kesler is requesting another shot at the tenure process with specific requests that would alleviate the alleged confidentiality violations from the past procedure.

Kesler recently dropped a complaint filed in 2013 under the False Claims Act alleging the misuse of federal grants by colleagues. The complaint was unsealed and made public in July after the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Kansas City declined to intervene.

In the complaint, Kesler said Endowed Professor Joshua Millspaugh and Associate Professor Francisco Aguilar improperly paid their spouses at least $130,000 from large pools of federal grant money since 2010 while the women curtailed their job duties as research assistants and lab managers to remain home with newborns, according to reports from the Associated Press. Both women are listed in university records as working for other professors but actually report directly to their husbands, Kesler told the AP.

An internal investigation into the issue found no impropriety. However, accounting records reviewed by The AP show that soon after university officials met with federal prosecutors, a campus fiscal office transferred nearly $60,000 in state funds to replace federal grants paid to one of the women.

Basi said that transaction “relates to a separate issue that was identified during the investigation.”

“In the course of reviewing one of the researchers’ work, it became unclear to us whether her particular work, which was within the scope of the research program, should have been funded by University funds or federal funds,” Basi said in a statement about Aguilar’s wife Satu Lantianen. “We did not want there to be any question about the funding of her salary, so we decided to shift the funds so her salary would be covered by the University. At an April 2014 meeting, MU legal counsel informed the assistant U.S. attorney and USDA counsel that this was being done. They had no further questions.”

Kesler’s year-long, post tenure-review contract with MU ends Sept. 1, 2015.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Annual MU crime and fire safety report released

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 | 9:11 p.m. CDT; updated 9:26 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, September 24, 2014

BY BRIAN HAYES

Narcotics-related arrests continue decline while alcohol-related ones increase

There is a declining trend in arrests related to narcotics, including marijuana and cocaine. According to an MU Police Department report released Wednesday, alcohol-related arrests increased from 2012 to 2013. This increase comes after a decrease in
arrests related to alcohol from 2011 to 2012. DUIs and drunkenness are not included in liquor law violations; unlawful possession and transport of alcohol are two violations that are included.

COLUMBIA – Crime data in the MU Police Department’s annual Campus Crime and Fire Safety Report shows a 42 percent increase in alcohol-related arrests and a 29 percent decrease in drug-related arrests in 2013.

MU police sent out the report by email Wednesday morning.

The data reveals that there were 444 arrests for liquor law violations last year, 42 percent more than the previous year (313 arrests). There were 412 alcohol-related arrests in 2011.

Meanwhile, there were 29 percent fewer arrests for drug law violations and 46 percent fewer in 2013 than in 2011. Over those three years, the number of arrests dropped from 386 to 293 to 208.

MU Police Captain Brian Weimer said the positive and negative data trends are typical. Enforcing the liquor laws, he said, is crucial.

"We're working very closely with the city and areas around campus to enforce alcohol laws because a lot of times other crimes are associated with alcohol," Weimer said.
Weimer said police have been working to minimize alcohol and drug-related crimes by consistently punishing violators and increasing preventative measures. MU Police offer numerous free programs and presentations to raise alcohol, drug and safety awareness, he said.

The report also includes information about sex offenses, hate crimes, procedures and resources for students making reports and details about school policies.

"Clearly, we are out there trying to make a difference," Weimer said. "Hopefully, people will figure that out and make the right choices."

**Crime prevention programs and presentations**
A sample of the events MU police held in 2013 addressing crime prevention:

- Active shooter drill
- Alcohol, drugs and sexual awareness presentations at various residential halls
- Alcohol Responsibilities Month student orientation event
- Campus facilities staff campus safety presentation
- Citizens' response to active threat incidents presentations
- Custodial staff campus safety presentation
- DWI program with athletics department students
- Greek Life leaders meet and greet
- Personal Safety Fair
- "Pot Day" Presentation
- Residential Life Advocacy Committee campus safety presentation
- Safety discussion with campus facilities staff
- Summer Welcome safety and security presentations
A Taste of Nuclear Medicine

September 25, 2014  BY Vicki Hodder
Photography by Anthony Jinson

As drugs go, technetium-99m has a relatively low public profile. Neither technetium-99m — called Tc-99m for short — nor its parent isotope, molybdenum-99, enjoy wide name recognition.

Yet for all its relative anonymity, Tc-99m generally is considered a diagnostic powerhouse. It’s used in medical scans to help evaluate heart disease and for myriad other tests, such as brain and bone scans. In fact, about 80 percent of nuclear medicine exams throughout the world use Tc-99m. In round numbers, that’s 30 million exams per year, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Nearly half of those doses — between 14 and 15 million annually, or roughly 50,000 each day — are used for U.S. patients, the FDA says.

It’s a large market. And Columbia soon might be at its core, serving as a significant domestic supplier of the radioisotope molybdenum-99 (Mo-99) from which Tc-99m is harvested.

Two companies have plans in the works to establish Columbia operations that would produce Mo-99 for commercial use. Most visible is a Northwest Medical Isotopes, LLC proposal to build a Mo-99 processing plant in Columbia’s Discovery Ridge Research Park. The Oregon-based startup proposes to join forces with the University of Missouri Research Reactor (MURR) and at least two other research reactors to produce enough uranium-based Mo-99 to meet about half of North America’s demand for the medical radioisotope. MURR also has a research agreement with another company pursuing Mo-99 production technologies, NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes, LLC. NorthStar, a Wisconsin-based biotechnology company, received funding about a year ago from the the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration to support its plan to work with MURR to produce Mo-99 without using uranium as a source material.

University officials are tight-lipped about specifics on Mo-99 production in Columbia. Still, they acknowledge MURR is collaborating with both NWMI and NorthStar, and welcome partnerships that make use of the university’s nuclear resources and expertise.

“We are positioned to work with both,” says Ken Brooks, MURR’s associate director. “It’s not an either-or moment.”
**Domestic producers wanted**

Despite its status as the source of the world’s most widely used medical isotope, Mo-99 currently is not produced in commercial quantities within the United States. That wasn’t always the case. In fact, MURR produced Mo-99 for more than 15 years starting in the late 1960s. During the 1980s, a Cintichem Inc. reactor in Tuxedo, New York, provided a U.S. supply, but the reactor developed a leak in 1989 and was shut down, a National Research Council report notes. Since then, Mo-99 production has moved abroad, with much of America’s supply coming from reactors in Canada and the Netherlands.

These and other producers create most Mo-99 by irradiating highly enriched uranium provided by the United States, says Orhan Suleiman, a U.S. FDA senior science policy adviser who focuses on Mo-99 production. But that highly enriched uranium is “basically weapons-grade uranium,” Suleiman says, sparking nuclear proliferation concerns. Congressional proliferation worries found expression in the American Medical Isotope Act of 2012. The bill supports the development of U.S. sources of Mo-99 using methods that don’t require highly enriched uranium and phases out the export of such uranium for medical isotope production within seven years of enactment.

The drive for domestic Mo-99 production took on additional momentum when the Canadian government announced its aging National Research Universal (NRU) reactor would no longer produce the isotope after 2016. The NRU has at times produced as much as 67 percent of the world’s Mo-99 supply, and NRU shutdowns in 2007 and 2009 prompted worldwide Mo-99 shortages, Suleiman says. Moreover, a French reactor supplying Mo-99 will shut down permanently in 2015, and a Belgian reactor will go offline for about one and a half years starting in early 2015 while it undergoes refurbishment.

What’s the result of these proliferation and production concerns? “There’s a lot of pressure to have some production capacity in the United States,” Suleiman says.

**Center of production**

Domestic producers are proposing to provide that capacity in various ways.

NWMI plans to build a 50,000-square-foot radioisotope production center on nearly 7.5 acres the company has leased in Discovery Ridge, a developing research park at Discovery Parkway and U.S. Highway 63 owned by MU. The $50 million facility, which still needs state, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and FDA approvals, would produce only Mo-99, says NWMI CEO Nicholas Fowler. Fowler says he hopes to receive NRC approval to build the facility by the fall of 2015 and aims to have the building complete and start Mo-99 production in late 2016.

Once in operation, NWMI’s Columbia facility would be at the heart of a Mo-99 production supply network designed to meet at least 50 percent of North America’s demand for the isotope. The proposed facility would extract and purify Mo-99 from irradiated uranium supplied by nuclear reactors across the country, including MURR, the Oregon State University reactor and a third reactor whose name Fowler says he is not yet willing to disclose.
“We’re envisioning three, but we have the ability to add more,” says Carolyn Haass, NWMI vice president and technical program director.

For MURR’s part, Brooks says merely that “there have been initial discussions about how we can work with them [NWMI] in the future.” Whichever reactors act as NWMI’s partners, the company plans to irradiate low-enriched uranium — rather than the highly enriched uranium whose use the federal government is trying to rein in — to produce Mo-99. Although it would use a well-known fission technique to create the isotope, Fowler says NWMI’s proposed process is innovative in that it could generate commercial quantities of Mo-99 using small research reactors such as MURR’s 10-megawatt facility. The company plans to use a unique design for its target, the name given to the material containing the uranium slated to be irradiated in a nuclear reactor, to be able to make use of the smaller reactors, according to a NWMI press release.

As the home of MURR and an experienced high-technology workforce, Columbia was a natural site for the new production facility, Fowler says. Moreover, NWMI had an existing research relationship with MURR, which Fowler says was a “huge piece of our decision to be here.” Columbia’s central geographic location as well as the warm welcome that university and civic leaders gave the proposal also influenced NWMI’s site selection, Fowler says. The Missouri Department of Economic Development is offering NWMI an economic incentive package for its project, which the company predicts will create nearly 70 high-skill jobs.

Steve Wyatt, MU’s vice provost for economic development, says the university has been looking for ways to build upon its nuclear and medical facility strengths. University leaders are excited at the opportunity the production facility presents to develop those strengths while serving the national health care system, Wyatt says, and will continue to explore other possibilities.

“We hope that opens up other opportunities,” Wyatt says.

**Alternative technology**

Another Mo-99 opportunity already is at MURR’s fingertips. NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes has for years been pursuing a couple of alternative Mo-99 production technologies, aided by National Nuclear Security Administration cost-share arrangements worth up to $15.5 million in federal funding. Included in that total is $10.9 million awarded by the NNSA last November to support NorthStar’s work with MURR to develop a commercially viable process for producing Mo-99 without using uranium as a source material. Although university officials describe MURR’s work with NorthStar as a “research and business development project,” a NorthStar representative says the company is ready to go.

“We’ve moved beyond proof of concept, and our technology works,” says Edmond J. Fennell, the company’s vice president of business development. “…We’re ready to go.”

The NorthStar Mo-99 development process based in Columbia calls for producing the isotope using a “neutron capture” technique. Instead of uranium, NorthStar’s process starts with molybdenum-98 (Mo-98) — a stable molybdenum isotope found in nature — that would be irradiated under the plan to produce Mo-99 along with a range of other molybdenum isotopes,
Fennell says, MURR would then dissolve the irradiated molybdenum into a solution and deliver it to NorthStar’s on-site dispensing area, where the company would transfer the Mo-99 solution to smaller containers for shipment. From there, NorthStar would ship the Mo-99 to nuclear pharmacies equipped with the company’s proprietary technetium extracting technology, which captures Tc-99m from the Mo-99 solution with commercial-grade efficiency. The only uranium used would be that required to operate the reactor, under NorthStar’s plan.

NorthStar has about 1,800 square feet at the MURR site, and is currently installing Mo-99 processing and dispensing equipment there, Fennell says. NorthStar has applied for FDA approval of its project, which it must receive before beginning commercial production. Fennell says NorthStar expects to begin producing small quantities of Mo-99 by late 2015. By the end of 2016, NorthStar expects to be able to supply about half the U.S. demand for Mo-99, he adds.

“Our strategy is to start small and then ramp up,” Fennell says.

University officials shy away from discussing MURR’s role in future Mo-99 production, saying the timeline to move from proposed to actual production is lengthy and includes many steps. The FDA’s Suleiman is more forthcoming.

“The University of Missouri has actually been a focal point,” Suleiman says.

University of Missouri System opens up Providence Point for events

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 at 2:49 pm Comments (1)

The University of Missouri is opening up Providence Point, formerly the president’s residence, as a venue for meeting space for internal and external groups starting next week.

Administrators decided to use the space for programming after UM System President Tim Wolfe moved out of the home last fall, but have been compiling proposal packets for the building’s new use.

Usage fees are $600 for university groups with 50 or fewer guests and $750 for more than 50. For non-university groups, the cost is $750 for 50 or fewer guests and $1,200 for more than 50.
All fees are based on a three-hour rental time. The usage fee includes use of the first floor of the building, outdoor space, linens, tables, chairs, a coordinator for the site, set up and clean-up, according to the UM System pamphlet.

Providence Point will not be used for political events, promotion or sale of a product or for personal use, according to a news release.

“It is important for the university to maintain the high level of recognition and prominence that Providence Point receives from those who are invited as guests,” Wolfe said in a statement. “Missourians and other supporters take great pride in the residence and it is our intention to uphold this prestige as the facility takes on a new role.”

The nearly 13,000-square-foot home was built in 1971, with an addition completed 14 years later. Each of current UM System President Tim Wolfe’s eight predecessors has lived at the presidential home.

Wolfe initially said he planned to move out in April 2012 but ended up staying for another year while the university assessed what work needed to be done on the house.

Before Wolfe’s arrival in early 2012, then-interim President Steve Owens said the home was not a comfortable living space for families. He also expressed concerns about the home’s fitness for hosting large numbers of guests.

A bill summary of upgrades made at Providence Point during 2012 and 2013 shows the university spent just more than $200,000 on the property.

The UM System is now taking reservations for the building that officially opens for event use Oct. 1. There will be an open house Oct. 1 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for those interested.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

RSVP Center teaches how to help friends after sexual violence

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 | 9:49 p.m. CDT
BY ZHOU HANG

COLUMBIA — If a friend tells you that she has been a victim of sexual violence, the three most important things for you to do are to listen to her, believe her and support her, Danica Wolf, the coordinator of the MU Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, said during a discussion Wednesday afternoon.
The discussion, "Listen, Believe, Support: How to Help," was held at the RSVP Center at MU as part of Rape Awareness Month. The talk was aimed at teaching people how to best help a friend or family member through a crisis situation.

“Sexual violence, relationship violence, stalking, these kind of things, they are unfortunately very common," Wolf said. "And these are the things people are not comfortable talking about. So when people have the tools to respond well, that’s important."

Nicole Logue, an administrative assistant in the Department of Student Life, attended the discussion in hopes of gaining some of those tools. She works with students and said she wanted to know the best way to support them in a time of crisis.

“If you don’t know how to respond, then you respond inaccurately, or you hurt somebody, or you make a situation worse for them,” Logue said. “So I think it’s important for everyone to know the best way to help their friends, their students.”

The purpose of Rape Awareness Month is "to acknowledge and raise awareness about the issues of rape and sexual assault," according to the RSVP website. Upcoming events include a Green Dot Conference and a self-defense class for women. Green dots symbolize "any behavior, choice, word or attitude that promotes safety for all of us and communicates utter intolerance for any form of violence."

More information about how to help or future events is available at the MU RSVP Center, G-210, MU Student Center.