University of Missouri nuclear reactor gets new license

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COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - Federal regulators have renewed the operating license for the University of Missouri’s nuclear research reactor.

The university says the Nuclear Regulatory Commission granted a 20-year operating license to the University of Missouri Research Reactor Center, known as the MURR.

The reactor is used to create radioisotopes for medical use and to analyze artifacts.

The reactor began operating in 1966. Its infrastructure was updated before the university applied for the operating license.
The Columbia Daily Tribune reports the university is seeking a $10 million state appropriation to help pay for expanding the building.

MU nuclear reactor gets new license

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Federal regulators have renewed the operating license of the University of Missouri’s nuclear research reactor.

MU said in a news release that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission granted a 20-year operating license to the University of Missouri Research Reactor Center, known as the MURR. The reactor is used to create radioisotopes for medical use and to analyze artifacts.

Construction started on the reactor in 1961, and it began operating in 1966. The university updated the reactor’s infrastructure before applying for the operating license, the university said.

Officials took state lawmakers on a tour of the reactor in November as MU pushes for a $10 million state appropriation to help pay for expanding the building.

Audit shows concerns about the state keeping universities accountable for performance funding

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 21 hrs ago

ST. LOUIS • An audit of a 3-year-old higher education funding system highlighted concerns about how well the state is holding universities accountable for meeting certain standards.
A small part of Missouri’s funding for public colleges is tied to the schools’ performance on different measures, such as graduation rates.

But according to a Missouri audit released Thursday, the state Department of Higher Education is lacking when it comes to keeping colleges accountable for meeting those standards. That is in part because of ambiguity that leaves schools “to interpret results differently when reporting information” to the state, including identifying peer institutions to compare themselves to, according to the audit.

"The Legislature and the Department of Higher Education must take responsibility for creating appropriate guidelines and improving program management and oversight," Missouri Auditor Nicole Galloway said in a statement. "Without that commitment, it is difficult to determine whether the program provides any real benefits or if it simply creates another bureaucratic task that leads to more paperwork, but fails to improve educational outcomes."

The exact amount of funding tied to performance is determined each year by the Legislature.

Main recommendations from the auditor are for comprehensive standards for peer groups and benchmarks, and continued review of the funding mechanism as a whole.

In a response within the audit, the Missouri Department of Higher Education promised to make these issues a priority this year, with a new task force focused on performance funding.

This is the third of four higher education audits Galloway announced last year. Two released in the fall focused on affordability and on the Department of Higher Education. The final audit will be of the University of Missouri System and is expected in the coming months.
“Black fraternity invites College Republicans for post election dialogue. It was a rich, dignified, nuanced, honest discussion @Mizzou #Onward” — Dec. 16 tweet

When the organizers Phi Rho Eta invited me to observe an unprecedented meeting at the Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center at the University of Missouri, I was both hopeful and cautious.

In all the efforts to heal the racial divide on our campus and in our community, as well as in the United States, we seem to be stuck on this step — talking. We have hosted speakers, teach-ins, town hall meetings and panels. The goal has always been to find a way of bridging the gap between those who know it is a real issue and those who think it is not. And we cannot move forward until we bridge this gap with healthy, ongoing dialogue.

There is value in talking amongst ourselves. However, the sopranos can talk amongst themselves all they want, but if they don’t listen and interact with the altos and the tenors, they will always sound one dimensional. There is something beautiful to the sound of a full choir, with all parts adding dimension and complexity. How do we get to that in our understanding and commitment to build a better world?

After Trump’s victory, the young men of Phi Rho Eta decided to do something a bit different. They invited the College Republicans, a group that had most likely voted for the very candidate
whose campaign had endeared him to white supremacist groups and stoked the embers of fear about the future of civil rights.

It was a tricky move, because if we have learned anything over the last campaign season, it is that these gatherings are guaranteed to come with high tension and deep emotions. Also, this took place the week before finals, so there was a chance nobody would show up. They did not invite any news media, allowing everyone the ability to speak freely without fear of being taken out of context. When I tweeted that this was a “rich, dignified, nuanced, honest discussion,” I meant every word.

I was one of only three people who were not students. We sat in the outer circle and observed quietly as the room filled up. The students separated themselves by group for the most part. The fraternity brothers began with the overall purpose of the event: to truly try and understand each other; and some ground rules: no cussing, no attacking, raise hand to speak, keep responses succinct, no grandstanding.

And then they began with some general questions. Who voted for Clinton? Who voted for Trump? What informed your choice? Who was concerned about the results? The expected hands went up on each question, so no surprises there. But then the discussion began, first staying safe, and then delving into deeper territory. Since only one person could speak at a time, there was a great deal of listening.

The chasm between the two sides was deep, but the differences in perspective could not simply be thrown into a liberal or conservative basket. Some fundamental differences emerged:

1. Identity politics vs. racial oppression: It is time to stop playing identity politics, a few of the College Republicans said. They insisted that focusing on different identities is divisive. Black students responded with reminders of disparate incarceration rates and cases of police brutality; there is a need to work together to get rid of racial oppression, they countered. There was no disagreement here. Yet, each side seemed divided as to which of the two issues was the more urgent priority. As long as some Americans explain the racial divide as “identity politics,” they disregard the very real impact of the deep, enduring roots of racism. Refusing to acknowledge
different identities results in a dangerous denial of the patterns of racial oppression that remain at the heart of the matter. This basic difference in understanding how diverse identities can thrive is a speed bump in the road ahead. We have to keep trying to explain.

2. Melting Pot vs. Salad Bowl: Several times, the metaphor of the melting pot was cited by the College Republicans. “We are a melting pot,” they said. “We should stop talking about our differences and just talk about our Americanness.” A young black woman shot her hand high in the air after the third or fourth reference to the melting pot. “Please,” she said. “Let us not speak of a melting pot because that metaphor aims to erase my very identity. Instead, let’s think about a salad bowl metaphor in which we all maintain the integrity of our identity.” This counter-analogy was a new idea for some in the room. And yet, it is such a basic and important idea.

3. The Individual vs. The Collective: Another clear difference was the weight given to the value of individuality. It is good, one Republican said, not to go along with what everyone else is saying. He encouraged people to make judgments for themselves and make up their own minds about issues. All the students agreed with this. However, some of the black students spoke about the value of community too. It is community that supports us, that helps us make sense of the world. It struck me that if we could find our way to valuing both the individual and the collective, we would be moving in the right direction.

4. People vs. Policy: It was important to the black students that they convey the impact on people, while Republican students responded by highlighting the importance of policy. One black student shared a story about his little sister who got on to her school bus the day after the election. (She attends a predominantly white school near Chicago.) Some kids on the bus shouted at her: Trump was president now, so black kids now have to sit at the back of the bus. The student then asked the room, “What would you tell her if she was your little sister?” The entire room shook their heads, responding that nobody should have to go through that experience. Another story touched a nerve. In response to the questions about Trump’s running mate, Mike Pence and his alleged hostility against the LGBTQ community, a young woman who was a member of the College Republicans, said she was gay and was also concerned. But she had read Pence’s policies and had assured herself that he was not anti-LGBTQ. She advised the room to read the policies carefully before arriving at a conclusion. Again, people seemed to listen. The
two stories were personal and moving, but represented two orientations, one focused on the
effect on people, the other on the importance of policy. Both are important, and if you focus on
one and eschew the other, the way forward will be rocky.

When time was up, there was still so much more to be said, and they agreed to disagree, but also
committed to continuing the conversation next semester.

The novelty of this dialogue was that there were different parts of the choir finally in one room.

I commended the effort as one of the most fruitful I had seen on our campus. I agreed with one
student who said this is just step one. We wondered what it would take to get to step two. We
can’t get there if we don’t have more intentional gatherings of different perspectives, and if we
do not unpack the differences that result in the perpetual misunderstanding between and amongst
us.

When the next opportunity comes, I hope you’ll join us.

CBS Affiliate in Iowa City, IA

University of Missouri Study on Teacher Retention Aims to Help Keep Teachers in the Classroom

Watch the story:
COLUMBIA, Mo. - The start of 2017 is looking good for the MU Law Enforcement Training Institute as more students are enrolled in the current class than this time last year.

ABC 17 News has been following these enrollment numbers since last year.

When we checked back in with training institute officials they said the Columbia Police Department is partly to thank because of it's sponsoring five students. Those sponsorships usually takes place during the fall session.

The current January class has 20 students enrolled, which is six more than last January.

The institute says part of the reason for the higher number is more participation from police departments across the state.

"Police departments have stepped up their recruiting," Adam Duncan, with the M-U Law Enforcement Training Institute told ABC 17 News. "We are seeing a greater proportion of students that are sponsored by the department than we had the last couple of classes."

Duncan also says the institute struggles with recruiting more diverse students.

"The major benefit of having a diverse group of officers is that is streamlines the process toward having a conversation with all members of the community," he said.

It's something that the Columbia Police Department also struggles with. On Tuesday night's Columbia City Council meeting Clyde Ruffin, councilman for Ward 1, asked Columbia Police Chief Burton how the diversity recruitment was going with the new officers coming in.

Chief Burton responded with, "It's not good, not good. We are just not getting applicants."
Duncan has similar views to those held by Chief Burton but agrees that early intervention in school and after-school programs are a good start, especially if recruits come from a background of police hostility.

"It's a conversation you have to have," he said. "You have to ask why someone has a bad taste in law enforcement. Whoever that person is, you have to ask them why."

Currently the M-U LETI has five female students enrolled, something that has been a struggle for years.

ABC 17 News reached out to the Columbia Police Department to see about it's recruitment efforts for the four new positions it gained.

In an email response the department says it isn't doing anything special but is continuing to recruit at the surrounding military bases.