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MU receives grant to study nuclear energy technologies

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri has been awarded federal grant money to develop new nuclear energy technologies that could someday lead to safer power plants and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

The U.S. Department of Energy announced yesterday it would award MU as much as \$1.15 million for the work, a collaborative project between nuclear scientists and engineers on campus, the chemistry department and MU's research reactor staff.

The goal is to better understand materials that will be used to build the next generation of nuclear reactors, said David Robertson, associate director of research and education at MU's reactor.

Specifically, scientists will be studying Very High Temperature Reactors, graphite-moderated reactors cooled with helium gas rather than water.

When helium runs through the plant, it's expected to come out at between 1,500 and 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, Robertson said. At those temperatures, the reactors could be used not only to make electricity but also to use the thermal energy from the helium gas to make hydrogen for other purposes, such as powering vehicles.

MU won't be trying to build such a plant yet. Rather, researchers are simply trying to understand how materials will react at such high temperatures.

"One of the key objectives of the nuclear power industry is to do everything safely, so you have to understand how materials are going to behave in high temperatures," Robertson said.

While small-scale experiments will be happening at MU's reactor, separate research will be conducted in the lab of Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators' professor in nuclear engineering and the project's principal investigator.

He will be studying how helium and fission products in the process react with graphite, dust particles and other structural materials.

The work will not only set the foundation for operating high-temperature reactors but also help regulating agencies develop guidelines for licensing, he said.

"Hopefully, these new designs will be safer and more efficient," Loyalka said.

MU is among 31 universities in the country to receive one of 51 Department of Energy grants awarded yesterday.

The goal is to ensure nuclear power is part of the country's clean energy mix.

Other universities are charged with studying nuclear waste storage, fixing cracks and other problems in aging plants and other issues surrounding nuclear energy.

"We're very excited about being chosen to get the grant," Robertson said.

He expects work to begin this fall.

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Graphic images might not stop smokers

By Janes Silvey

Images of rotting lips, healthy-versus-charred lungs and a man with smoke oozing out of a hole in his throat will soon grace the covers of cigarette packages, but two University of Missouri researchers say the gruesome warnings likely won't keep people from lighting up.

Starting in September 2012, the Food and Drug Administration will require cigarette packs and advertisements to show prominent images of health problems associated with smoking. The visual warnings are part of a broader strategy to help people stop smoking and to keep youngsters from starting, according to the FDA.

Paul Bolls and Glenn Leshner, both on the Missouri School of Journalism faculty, aren't confident the graphic pictures will work.

In a study published in the *Journal of Media Psychology*, they found people tend to get defensive and tune out information when gruesome images are over-the-top.

"Our research suggests that in health messages, when you go with negatively graphic, pretty intense content, you actually start to push people into the beginnings of defensive responses," Bolls said. "For example, in our experience on televised anti-tobacco messages, at the time and point when the very nasty, graphic images come on the screen, we have evidence of people starting to shut down and withdraw cognitive resources from processing the messages."

The FDA's new label requirements are part of a World Health Organization tobacco initiative. Other countries have adopted the visual warnings and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smokers in most of those countries reported at least thinking about quitting after seeing the packages.

Another recent study appearing in the latest issue of the academic journal *Health Policy* indicates adult smokers in four states were less likely to select cigarette packs with graphic images than traditional packages with written warning labels.

But the study from researchers at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa., also found people were the least likely to buy cigarettes in plain, unbranded packs.

Communicating health messages is more complicated than simply scaring off buyers with nasty images, Bolls said.

The most effective health messages, he said, tell consumers what they gain by making positive decisions, not what they potentially have to lose.

“Not only do you need to tell people and communicate how bad and nasty tobacco use is, but — particularly for smokers — you better have a component of the message that is really boosting their perceived ability to quit smoking.”

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Missouri prison parenting program expands to 3 other states, nation's capital

By Associated Press 4:05 a.m. CDT, August 11, 2011

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A University of Missouri program that helps imprisoned parents keep their families intact is expanding to three other states and the nation's capital.

University outreach workers started the family support program in 1999 at the state's maximum security prison in Potosi. The program is known as the Living Interactive Family Education program, or 4-H LIFE.

Besides Potosi, it's now offered at Missouri's Vandalia prison and the Algoa Correctional Center in Jefferson City.

Program leaders now plan to tap a federal grant to offer 4-H LIFE in Alabama, Louisiana, New Hampshire and Washington, D.C. The effort will also expand to other state prisons in Missouri.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Extension program given grant funding to connect children, parents in prison

By [Andrew Mitchell](#)

August 10, 2011 | 7:14 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Some parents currently incarcerated in Missouri Department of Corrections facilities will have the chance to strengthen relationships with their children sooner than expected.

MU Extension's 4-H Living Interactive Family Education, otherwise known as LIFE, was one of three initiatives chosen by The National Mentoring Program to receive funding from a \$5 million grant to help children and incarcerated parents build stronger relationships.

The grant also supports [4-H Youth and Families With Promise](#) based at Utah State University and [4-H Tech Wizards](#) at Oregon State University. They receive funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

4-H LIFE works to improve the relationships of children with their incarcerated parents through supervised hands-on exercises at the correctional facilities' visiting areas, said 4-H Youth Development Specialist Lynna Lawson.

"The model that we use works with the children and their incarcerated parents to improve the outcome of their children," Lawson said. "We don't want the children to follow in the footsteps of their parents."

Children with incarcerated parents are six times more likely to end up incarcerated at some point during their lives than those with non-incarcerated parents, Lawson said. The program uses building components from the [Building Strong Families program](#), whose mission is to strengthen the family unit.

Lucy Schrader, a Building Strong Families coordinator, said the program works to help adults and children find and build on strengths, provide life-skills information and workshops and

to train facilitators. The parent, legal guardian or caregiver has the opportunity to bring children in once a month to participate in activities with their parents during a structured time frame that can last anywhere from two to five hours.

“The activities encourage decision making, which teach the children to understand the impact their decisions make,” Lawson said. “Other activities include subject-matter activities, leadership activities and making sure there is positive social interaction between the child and parent.”

The meetings are referred to as "enhanced visitations," Lawson said. Unlike traditional visitations allowed at the facility, enhanced visitations offer much more interaction between the child and parent.

“The parent can get up and go to the vending machine or get up to get a ball or toy with their kid, and (enhanced visitation) even allows the child to sit on their parent's lap and the parent to put his or her arm around them, which is not allowed during traditional visitations,” Lawson said.

Stepchildren, nephews, nieces and grandchildren are allowed to be on the visitation list. The program also offers classes for incarcerated adults to learn positive ways to discipline their children and effectively communicate with and encourage their children.

Lawson said 4-H LIFE will work with five corrections departments in Missouri:

- Chillicothe Correctional Facility, Chillicothe
- Women’s Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, Vandalia
- Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Pacific
- Potosi Correctional Center, Potosi
- Jefferson City Correctional Center, Jefferson City

There are a few restrictions on participating in 4-H LIFE services. The incarcerated parents must be free of violations for a set amount of time, which may vary from three to six months, depending on the facility. Participation also depends on the severity of the crime for which a person was convicted. For instance, 4-H LIFE does not work with sex offenders. Lawson said stronger relationships with children will also help prevent the adults from committing crimes upon their release.

“They go back to a community and are connected to their children and family and are less likely to recommit crimes,” she said.

OTC eLearning expands with partnerships

Partnerships increase educational chances for Ozarks students.

11:00 PM, Aug. 10, 2011 |

As the cost of education rises and government support dries up, it is important for schools and students to find inexpensive alternatives to students seeking a good education.

Congratulations to Ozarks Technical Community College for finding a great alternative through its agreement with the University of Missouri to provide an online option for three possible bachelor degrees.

The traditional classroom experience, for all its advantages, in many cases is no longer the most appropriate or cost-effective way to get an education. Today's students turn to their computers for information and interaction, and schools need to take advantage of that technology and their technology-savvy students in order to provide the best educational experience for the least cost and the most convenience.

It is a shame, however, that OTC had to start by reaching out to universities in other states -- Maryland and Illinois -- to find partners in this technology and eLearning.

By partnering with MU, OTC is allowing students to stay in the Ozarks and support a Missouri school. That is a great thing.

It would be even greater, if Missouri State University were in the mix. As MSU puts more effort into utilizing online education for its students OTC students who hope to continue at the four-year university will be able to be part of that effort.

eLearning is the future of education. The concept is being embraced at all levels of education -- from kindergarten through advanced degrees.

It has proven to be a valuable tool, especially for students who are not able to spend time on a campus.

It is also a valuable tool for campuses that face the cost of keeping up physical plants to accommodate growing numbers of students.

We applaud OTC's efforts to provide its students with as many alternatives as possible to attain their education.

And we encourage MSU to follow OTC's lead and take full advantage of eLearning technology.



MU student drops expulsion lawsuit

By Janese Silvey

A University of Missouri law student has dropped his lawsuit against Chancellor Brady Deaton and the UM System's Board of Curators.

Marcus Bowen voluntarily dismissed the case, effective Monday, but he retains the right to refile the lawsuit in the coming year, according to court documents. Neither Bowen nor his attorney, Ken McClain, returned Tribune phone calls.

Bowen filed the lawsuit after he was apparently expelled from MU's School of Law over allegations that he forced a woman to perform oral sex. It's not clear, though, when that expulsion was or is expected to take effect. He's listed as a student in MU's directory. McClain said last month that the time frame of the expulsion was the issue being legally challenged.

The university won't comment on litigation and does not discuss student discipline, spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

Bowen went through a student review process in 2010 after the woman filed a complaint against him, according to the lawsuit he filed in Boone County Court in June. A review committee voted in December to expel him, a decision Deaton upheld. The lawsuit asked a judge to direct the university to allow Bowen to continue his studies.

The woman allegedly met Bowen in 2009 at a Halloween party where they drank alcohol and returned to his apartment. The two engaged in consensual sex, the lawsuit said, before she alleged Bowen forced her to perform oral sex.

Bowen is a Jackson County Republican committeeman and former vice president of the MU College Republicans.



Former MU visiting law professor alleges age discrimination

By Janese Silvey

A former North Dakota attorney general who served as a visiting law professor at the University of Missouri last year is proceeding with plans to sue MU over alleged age discrimination.

Nicholas Spaeth, 61, applied for a full-time faculty position for this coming school year but was passed over for younger candidates, his attorney, Lynne Bernabei, said. One of the people hired for four open slots at MU's School of Law had a "distinguished" background, she said, but that person's wife also was hired, as well as two other individuals she doesn't believe are as qualified.

Spaeth of Kansas City applied to teach not only at MU but also at other law schools, including Michigan State University, which he sued last week. Spaeth alleges that Michigan State hired three candidates with significantly less experience. He is asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to grant him a teaching position at Michigan State and require the university to pay compensation for lost wages, emotional distress and other compensatory and punitive damages.

Spaeth graduated from Stanford, was awarded a Rhodes scholarship and earned a master's degree from Oxford University before returning to Stanford's Law School. He has served as a law clerk to a U.S. Supreme Court justice, was a trial lawyer and was North Dakota's attorney general from 1985 to 1993. He then worked in corporate law and was executive vice president, chief legal officer and chief risk officer at Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines.

"Experience always seems to pay dividends, especially for a professor. Nicholas J. Spaeth has plenty of relevant experience in his field, both in and out of the classroom," MU's law school wrote about him in the fall 2010 Transcript publication for alumni.

At MU, Spaeth had good student evaluations, Bernabei said. She said Dean Larry Dessem was "shocked" at the faculty's decision not to hire him.

Dessem would not comment. A law school faculty member also said he would not talk about personnel issues other than to say the faculty hiring process is rigorous.

"He has tremendous experience, including what MU was looking for, and they knew his caliber of teaching, and he still can't get a job," Bernabei said. "It just doesn't make any sense when you look at the needs of the law school and his career and credentials. There's just no other explanation" than age.

Spaeth, now out of work, is waiting for the green light from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to sue MU. Bernabei said the suit likely would be tacked onto the Michigan State lawsuit as a related case.

Since news of Spaeth's suit against Michigan State broke, Bernabei said they have been getting calls and emails from older, unemployed individuals having a tough time getting hired.

"If he can't get a job given his experience and credentials, there is no other explanation other than age," she said. "Think about other people who don't have stellar backgrounds. I can only imagine how tough they have it finding a job because of their age."

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