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David Hollister and Patrick Anderson: Region has to get behind MSU isotope bid

Michigan State University has been a leader in nuclear science for nearly 50 years, and since the late 1970s, has been home the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory, one of the nation's top facilities for studying the inner workings of the atom.

Now, MSU is competing to win the next generation of nuclear research tools, the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, a half-billion dollar project to be funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. It would bring in \$1 billion in economic activity and 400 new jobs to Michigan, and generate \$180 million in additional tax revenue over the next 20 years, according to an analysis by the Anderson Economic Group.

This is a rare opportunity for our region - and one Michigan needs to rally together to win.

Basic nuclear research of the type conducted by international research teams at the current lab has led to important practical applications in many fields - for instance, helping develop advanced proton beam cancer treatments - while expanding understanding of how our universe was created.

Having this world-class lab - considered one of the best internationally for rare isotope research - is also a valuable tool to Michigan's students.

MSU is home to the nation's No. 2 graduate program in nuclear science, behind only MIT, and trains 10 percent of the nation's nuclear science PhDs.

More than 100 graduate and undergraduate students are working at the lab today. Each year, thousands of high school students visit the lab for hands-on understanding of this esoteric but important field.

Each year the laboratory attracts researchers from around the globe to use its facilities, lured not only by the lab's equipment but also by its well-earned reputation for effective management.

To continue attracting those researchers and educate the next generation of scientists, MSU's nuclear physics program needs to have the best tools in the world. The Facility for Rare Isotope Beams is that tool, and MSU has applied to be the site for the project.

MSU is competing against another lab to win this gem. We are certain MSU's application will exceed all of the scientific and management requirements to win.

However, it is vital the state and its congressional representatives show its support for MSU's proposal to ensure that the proposal is fairly considered.

In 2005, the National Academies, the nation's leading scientific consortium, issued a report titled "Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future." It recommended the United States integrate research and education to maintain our advantages in science and technology.

MSU has been doing that for decades. Placing the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams at MSU would help mid-Michigan overcome its "rust belt" image and be a symbol of our transformation into a center for innovation in the new economy.

It will ensure that MSU continues to have the best tools to educate the brightest minds in the world and maintain this nation's economic competitiveness.

Please take a minute to visit www.scienceandjobsformichigan.com to learn more, and then contact our leaders in Washington to voice your support for this important project.
