



Friday, April 9, 2010

OIT lands \$2.5M stimulus funding for renewable energy program

Portland Business Journal

U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu announced Thursday that the Department of Energy is awarding nearly \$100 million for 54 smart grid work force training programs, including \$2.5 million to the **Oregon Institute of Technology's** renewable energy engineering program.

The money will go toward strengthening OIT's bachelor's program and adding a master's program in the renewable energy engineering discipline, and enhancing hands-on opportunities for students in areas such as power-system modeling and analysis, distributed power systems, power conditioning and utility-focused energy storage.

The OIT program falls under the Department of Energy's work force training initiative for the electric power sector, which received \$41.6 million of the stimulus funding announced Thursday. Smart grid work force training received \$57.7 million.

Oregon Institute of Technology is based in Klamath Falls but its renewable energy engineering program got its start at the university's Portland-area campus.

The stimulus grant will allow the university to hire five additional faculty — three in Portland and two in Klamath Falls. The grant will also fund five power labs and a part-time coordinator.

Lita Colligan, OIT's vice president for strategic partnership, said the school is already working with Oregon companies who have offered support in the form of internships, scholarships and technical assistance for the program. The companies linked with the program include Iberdrola Renewables, Johnson Controls, Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, Evergreen Energy, SNC-Lavalin (a thermal power company out of Quebec and Bothell, Wash.), Santec Consulting, Vestas Americas and Energy Trust of Oregon.

The master's program for renewable energy engineering is in the midst of an approval process with the Oregon University System.

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