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WSU News

April 2: Energy summit tackles critical smart grid challenges

March 30, 2015

PULLMAN, Wash. – Washington State University will host its inaugural energy summit on April 2 with a focus on storage technologies, one of the most critical challenges of incorporating renewable energy into the electric power grid.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, Senator Maria Cantwell, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, as well as Imre Gyuk, Energy Storage Program Manager, and Pat Hoffman, Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability, will be among those speaking at the daylong summit, which will be held in the Lewis Alumni Centre.

The event, hosted by WSU's Energy Systems Innovation Center, will also feature tours of WSU's smart grid testing laboratories. WSU will also join in celebrating the dedication of Avista's Energy Storage Project, a new battery storage system that will be tested in a real-world setting at Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories.

"We're pleased to be able to foster these important discussions around the critical challenge of energy storage," said WSU President Elson S. Floyd. "WSU has long worked on research for building a more resilient, robust, and smarter electric power grid, and being able to store solar or wind energy remains one of the key pieces to building a sustainable, carbon-free power grid of the future and a stronger economy for the state."

WSU has a long history of leadership and a top-ranked program in electric power grid research, with researchers working to develop and incorporate new technologies aimed at improving the efficiency and reliability of electric power

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systems. WSU participated in a Department of Energy-funded smart grid demonstration project that made Pullman one of just a few smart grid cities in the U.S. and receives workforce development support to train graduates for the smarter power grid of the future.

Last year, Washington State University researchers received support to build the most comprehensive “smart city” laboratory in the U.S. to test smart grid technologies, complete with simulated windmills, solar panels, fuel cells, power substations and smart meters. WSU also has had a unique power research niche because of its close ties and interdisciplinary work with computer science faculty on electric grid communications.

“This is a critical time in the development and incorporation of smart grid and renewable technologies into the power grid, and it’s exciting to bring together the key players in the state and country for this summit,” said Chen-Ching Liu, director of the Energy Systems Innovation Center. “The large-scale deployment of these new technologies provides a tremendous opportunity to improve energy efficiency, sustainability, and reliability of the power grid.”

The Energy Systems Innovation Center is a collaborative research center at WSU focused on research, development, and technology transfer for a smart electric power grid. The center includes ten core faculty members conducting research in the electric power grid as well as 20 faculty members in a variety of fields, including computer science, environmental sciences, economics, and sociology. Faculty teams work on interdisciplinary research and education projects funded by industry and government.

Contact:

Chen-Ching Liu, Director, Energy Systems Innovation Center, (509) 335-1150,
liu@eecs.wsu.edu

Tina Hilding, communications coordinator, Voiland College of Engineering and Architecture, (509) 335-5095, thilding@wsu.edu

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