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Contact: Carla York
703-931-1410
James Schlesinger Jr.
703-785-8922

Innovation Drive-University of South Carolina Team to Develop and Integrate National K-12 Fuel Cell Education and Awareness Program

Alexandria, VA.....Innovation Drive, a technology commercialization company, has been selected to lead a multi-state team to develop, pilot, and integrate a national education program to foster better understanding of hydrogen and fuel cell technology. This project, co-sponsored by the South Carolina Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance and the Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge, will leverage South Carolina's familiarity with the technology, infrastructure, and environmental benefits of the hydrogen economy to help prepare students across the nation for the transition to hydrogen as a key component of a clean, sustainable energy economy over the coming decades.

As a way of localizing their efforts, Innovation Drive has partnered with an interdisciplinary team of faculty members from the University of South Carolina (USC) to provide experience and expertise in developing a technical curriculum to assist teachers and students in becoming more knowledgeable about hydrogen and fuel cell technology. The program will conform to national and state progressive learning standards.

The University of South Carolina Center for Science Education, College of Education, College of Engineering and Information Technology, and the School of Journalism and Mass Communication will be integral in building awareness and gaining public acceptance of hydrogen technology. Ideally, this exposure will also stimulate student interest in science and create demand for skills-related education applicable to a hydrogen economy.

Phase I of the program will develop "beta" materials to be tested in Richland and Aiken Counties in South Carolina. Concurrently, the team will establish program goals and a comprehensive plan for national implementation. In essence, any school system in the country will be able to use the curricula to achieve educational milestones while exposing future generations to hydrogen and fuel cell technology and its benefits.

"Richland School District One is proud to play a role in the advancement of hydrogen and fuel cell technology in South Carolina. We are especially pleased that we were chosen to pilot an education program that will educate students across the state about the benefits of environmentally-friendly hydrogen fuel," said Allen Coles, Superintendent, Richland County School District One.

"What a great opportunity for our community! I am excited to have Aiken County Public School students selected to participate in the pilot hydrogen and fuel cell technology program," said Dr. Linda Eldridge, Superintendent, Aiken County Schools

"We are pleased to participate in such an important and prestigious effort to cultivate awareness of hydrogen and fuel cell technology," said Carla York, CEO of Innovation Drive. "We commend South Carolina in its forward thinking and strategic planning to develop a usable national education program. And we are privileged to work with the University of South Carolina whose experience and expertise will be essential in realizing this beneficial program."

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2/2/2 Innovation Drive, USC and Hydrogen

“Educating future generations on emerging hydrogen technologies is extremely important as they develop the skills needed to compete in future market places,” said Ms. York. “Ideally, this education program will not only inform and educate, but also inspire these children to embrace sciences and become the generation that brings a profitable, environmentally-friendly, and sustainable hydrogen economy to full fruition.”

Fred Humes, Chairman of the SC Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance commented, “Education at all levels is a critical element in advancing hydrogen and fuel cell technology. The team of Innovation Drive, USC, and Richland and Aiken school districts will have both a state-wide and national impact.”

“This is truly an exciting initiative that we are developing,” said Professor Ed Dickey, Chairman of the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education at the College of Education at USC. “Often educational products do not meet the needs of teachers or students. This program and its accompanying materials will provide exciting fuel cell related resources for teachers that address state and national science standards in a manner that engages and motivates students, all packaged in an easy-to-use format customized for universal application from state to state.”

In addition to the traditional curriculum materials, the team has also devised a branding campaign that will ensure everyone recognizes the value of hydrogen as a fuel. The H2FUEL4U brand will speak to the obvious and subtle uses of hydrogen as a fuel for any variety of applications including fuel cell technology and other applications.

During the Phase I, the team’s Advisory Committee, comprised of industry, science, and education experts from around the country, will provide guidance, establish goals and clear a pathway for future initiatives planned over the next two years. Additionally, the team will seek contributions, collaboration, and participation from other universities, government agencies, laboratories, and educational foundations to fulfill programmatic goals during Phase II.

Specifically, the program will partner with state agencies and resources in two other states across the country in order to establish a diverse environment in which the program is developed and piloted. This geographic approach will be integral to ensuring the program and educational materials are usable with progressive learning standards that vary from state to state. It will also establish a footprint from which the national program may expand.

Funding for the SC project will come from the SC Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance and its member organizations and the Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge. During the initial phase, Innovation Drive and the proposed Advisory Committee will identify and pursue other funding opportunities. The team believes several federal, state and private institutions will be interested in contributing to the program’s future development and success.

“The proposal submitted by Innovation Drive fits nicely within our overall objective of creating an innovation pipeline around hydrogen and fuel cell technology” said Russ Keller, demonstration project manager for the Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge. “We are excited by the opportunity to partner with the South Carolina Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance to extend the reach of this initiative throughout the state of South Carolina and beyond.”

Editorial Notes:



Innovation Drive, Inc., headquartered in Alexandria, VA, provides integrated solutions through operational and management support, strategic planning, and team building. The company's mission is to commercialize new technologies and processes that improve performance, efficiency, and economic prosperity and reduce environmental impacts and dependence on imported energy. Its business strategies and marketing-related services permit streamlined product introduction and market acceptance for its partners and clients, resulting in energy savings, emissions reductions, security improvements, greater profit potential and public benefit for U.S. and international markets in Transportation, Energy and Homeland Security. ID and its technology partners offer deployable products, including new transit technology for emission reduction and operational efficiency, renewable energy, electrolytic hydrogen production, energy storage, and green building materials.

University of South Carolina

Center for Science Education will provide expertise in developing science curricula and standards-based tools for different audiences.

College of Education will coordinate overall program content and materials development, drawing on the exceptional pedagogical and instructional experience of its faculty. The COE will analyze national and state progressive learning standards as well as package content for different audiences and educational levels.

College of Engineering and Information Technology will provide technical input and content review to ensure accuracy of information in the education process.

School of Journalism and Mass Communication will help brand the program and provide graphics and design services. Additionally, the SJMC will help promote the program through an aggressive integrated campaign including public relations, community relations, targeted trade advertising and other promotional initiatives to help educate and integrate the final program into school systems nationwide.

The South Carolina Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance (SCHFCA)

The South Carolina Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Alliance is a non-profit partnership of government, business, academia and citizens working together to grow the economies of local communities, the state and the nation, enable energy security and limit our environmental footprint with the use of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies that are cost-effective, convenient and produced with local resources.

Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge (GCFCC)

The Greater Columbia Fuel Cell Challenge seeks to engage firms and service providers to partner with the City of Columbia and the University of South Carolina to assist in the design and implementation of a groundbreaking plan involving unprecedented integration of hydrogen fuel cell technology into multiple aspects of the city and the University. Columbia's vision of becoming the first planned end-to-end Fuel Cell District will be realized by building the innovation pipeline around fuel cells in three phases: Discovery, Development and Deployment. The GCFCC is looking for industry partners involved in fuel cell research, education, energy distribution, transportation, manufacturing and commercialization as they adopt and utilize real world applications and provide a home for cutting edge demonstration projects.