

6/27/2008

Washington State University Signs Bio-Cooperation Agreement with Aalborg University

AALBORG, Denmark - Washington State University and Aalborg University have signed an agreement of cooperation, with Professor Birgitte K. Ahring acting as an international bridge in the quest to develop biofuels and bioproducts that reduce the world's dependence on oil.

WSU Tri-Cities Chancellor Vicky L. Carwein was in Denmark for the June 16 ceremony. She met with Professor Ahring's research team, visited the bioenergy labs at Aalborg University (AAU), and brought the agreement - which had been previously signed by WSU President Elson S. Floyd - to be signed by AAU's Rector Finn Kjærdsdam.

Ahring will become the director of WSU's Center for Bioproducts and Bioenergy and a Battelle Distinguished Professor under the state of Washington's "star researcher program." She will arrive in mid-August at WSU Tri-Cities in Richland.

The agreement is effective for five years and can be extended for additional years. It creates a framework for close cooperation between AAU and WSU and is based on the goal of reducing the world's dependency on fossil fuels by developing renewable energy resources.

AAU and WSU will work closely together on specific projects and will develop faculty and student exchange programs. This will allow the two universities to take advantage of each other's specific skills and to develop new, strong technical environments to create cutting-edge technologies in biofuels and bioproducts.

"We have a strong record of work in the renewable energy arena, and we have great ambitions in biological research," said Frede Blaabjerg, Dean of AAU's Faculties of Engineering, Science, and Medicine. "The Center for Bioproducts and Bioenergy and this new agreement with the U.S. researchers is a great thing. It provides a good base for knowledge sharing, staff development and international partnerships."

Ahring emphasized that the formal agreement for cooperation is an exciting prospect. "This agreement will open doors for close cooperation," she said. "In Denmark we have some unique skills in the production of bio-ethanol and bio-energy in general, while WSU is conducting exciting bio-products research. Together we can develop concepts to be used in the future of 'bio-refineries' to enter a new era of bioenergy."

Ahring especially sees great opportunities in the research and development of new processes for bio-refineries, going beyond the production of biofuels to also produce valuable industrial products and raw materials for the transportation, food, and pharmaceutical industries.

Washington State University Tri-Cities is located along the Columbia River in Richland, Wash. Established in 1989 with upper division and graduate programs, WSU Tri-Cities offers 17 baccalaureate, 14 master's, and five doctoral degree programs. The campus added freshman and sophomore courses in fall 2007 to become a full four-year public university, extending the WSU land-grant mission of providing affordable, accessible higher education. For more information, call 509-372-7250 or visit www.tricity.wsu.edu.

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