Duke Energy gives $4.1 million to Clemson program

FOR THE JOURNAL

COLUMBIA — Duke Energy and Clemson University announced Thursday that as part of Duke's commitment to foster South Carolina's manufacturing base, the company will give a $4.11 million grant to Clemson's Center for Workforce Development.

The move should spur job growth by helping develop a labor force with specific skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and specifically in advanced manufacturing to support the state's burgeoning manufacturing industry.

The Center for Workforce Development will oversee distribution of these funds to partner institutions that include universities, technical colleges, K-12 institutions institutions and STEM-oriented organizations through competitive grants, scholarships and internships.

Duke Energy's contribution, combined with previously announced funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Employment and Training Administration and the National Science Foundation, allows Clemson's center to focus on expanding the talent pool to support workforce needs consistent with Clemson's land-grant mission in four key areas: improving education, capacity and access through e-learning and virtual reality simulation tools: creating career pathways, college affordability and graduation-rate improvement; supporting K-12 STEM education initiatives and industry cluster networking through outreach and research.

"Duke Energy recognizes that workforce development and economic development go hand in hand," Duke Energy S.C. President Clark Gillespy said. "The Center for Workforce Development, through its far-reaching partnerships, addresses the challenges of creating next-generation engineers, technicians and scientists so the region and nation can continue to be competitive in a global marketplace."

The center's e-learning initiatives focus on creating innovative educational tools — aligned with industry employment needs — to increase workforce capacity. The center also supports working professionals who wish to upgrade their skills and further their qualifications.

"The university is committed to meeting the state's technical workforce needs at every level, not just jobs requiring a four-year or advanced degree," said Doris R. Helms, Clemson University vice president for academic affairs and provost.

The Duke Energy commitment is part of Clemson's The Will to Lead capital campaign, which aims to raise $1 billion to support university priorities, including workforce and economic development.