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Grant to foster international exchange of ideas in renewable energies

PLATTEVILLE, Wis. – Thanks to a newly awarded grant, University of Wisconsin-Platteville students and Brazilian students will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and practices in the growing field of renewable energies. The Universidade Estadual Paulista, Guaratinguetá in São Paulo, Brazil, is the recipient of an award from the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund, designed to create innovative student exchange and training programs. UW-Platteville is the partnering institution on the grant, spearheaded by Dr. Samir El-Omari, associate professor of general engineering at UW-Platteville.

El-Omari has helped students explore green technology internationally for several years now, leading past trips to UW-Platteville's partner school in Darmstadt, Germany. However, giving the students this opportunity in Brazil offers an important perspective, he said. "Germany is a top country in the area of renewable energy, but our students need to learn how developing countries do this as well," said El-Omari. "Brazil is one of the developing countries that is doing a great job in this area."

El-Omari first forged a partnership with the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Guaratinguetá two years ago. Last spring, he took six students on a short-term education abroad trip to Brazil, spending part of the time at the partner institution.

Through this newly funded program, four students from Brazil will come to UW-Platteville in spring 2018, allowing them to take part in El-Omari's Green Building Design class. As part of the course, students work in groups to conduct energy audits for buildings throughout Platteville – an experience El-Omari said will be

valuable for the Brazilian students to have.

In summer 2018, four students from UW-Platteville will have the opportunity to spend four weeks in Brazil and work on research, attend classes in the areas of bioenergy and renewable energy and visit major renewable energy projects and green buildings. The grant will cover the students' airfare and room and board.

“It is important for students to be exposed to this international experience, especially in the area of renewable energy,” said El-Omari. “Improvements are happening in this field not only here, but all over the world. It is important for students to learn about these techniques and open their minds to various technologies as well as interaction with other cultures; it changes their lives.”

The grant will also cover the cost for two professors from Brazil to visit UW-Platteville. They will each visit for a one-week period – one in fall 2017 and one in spring 2018. While on campus, they will conduct seminars that UW-Platteville students can attend and earn one credit.

The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is a partnership between the U.S. Department of State, Partners of the Americas and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Its goal is to increase the annual number of U.S. students studying in Latin America and the Caribbean to 100,000, and bring 100,000 students to the United States by 2020. To learn more about the fund, visit www.100kstrongamericas.org.

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