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Posted: Tuesday, 23 February 2010 1:34PM

WMU, Eaton Team Up on Hybrid Research

Eaton Corp. has entered into a five-year agreement with Western Michigan University to invest in and jointly staff a 1,000-square-foot testing lab to focus on hybrid drive systems for commercial and military vehicles.

A memorandum of understanding, finalized in late December, calls for Cleveland-based Eaton to invest \$350,000 for lab startup, and then about \$300,000 annually to maintain the facility at the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences on WMU's Parkview Campus.

Research at the lab will involve Eaton's hybrid electric drive business group and WMU researchers at CAViDS, the university's Center for Advanced Vehicle Design and Simulation.

The lab, which is expected to be up and running by June, will be used to evaluate electric motors and other critical components and to test batteries and develop power electronics equipment. It will be staffed by both Eaton engineers and WMU student interns who will be taught how to operate the test equipment and analyze results. WMU also will provide faculty advisors and technicians.

"This is another important step toward advancing hybrid vehicles," says Dimitri Kazarinoff, vice president and general manager of Eaton's Hybrid Power Systems Division. "Western Michigan has a first-rate engineering program, and we're looking forward to collaborating with them in this endeavor."

According to William Liou, professor of mechanical engineering and director of WMU's CAViDS, the focus of the new Eaton/WMU lab will be on systems integration -- looking at how well things work when they are put together in the same vehicle.

"This Hybrid-Electric Drive Applied Research Lab represents a unique opportunity for Western Michigan University to enter the emerging field of hybrid vehicle systems integration research," Liou says. "It will serve as the foundation for future academic programs in hybrid vehicle engineering research at our University. Funding and development of this lab represents a major commitment from Eaton toward that goal and reflects on how the company sees CAViDS and WMU as a viable partner in its long-term hybrid drive business plan."

Both Liou and Eaton officials say one goal of the new partnership is to attract other partners into joint research ventures. Such ventures would be aimed at hybrid research and testing that would lead to hybrid innovations that could be applied to both commercial and military vehicles.

News of the Eaton-WMU lab development came during the same week as news that Eaton is receiving \$2 million in federal funding for research and development work aimed at building better military vehicles. That hybrid hydraulic drive work also involves collaboration with WMU's CAViDS. The Department of Defense award was part of spending bill passed by Congress in late December and announced by U.S. Rep. Fred Upton at Eaton's Galesburg center on Feb. 1.

Launched in 2006, CAViDS was formed at WMU to provide breakthrough applied computer simulation technology and knowledge to the vehicle industry in the area of vehicle design and analysis. Eaton is a charter member of the CAViDS consortium, along with Dana Corp., L-3 Communications, Mann and

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