Westar Energy has committed $125,000 to Wichita State University to help its College of Engineering expand and update its laboratory for teaching power systems, the WSU Foundation announced today.

Existing lab space in Wallace Hall currently being used for undergraduate power systems education will be expanded to include new equipment and tools to teach students about smart grids, synchrophasors, power quality and advanced system modeling. The new space will be called the Westar Power Systems Lab for a period of five years in recognition of the gift.

“We are enormously pleased by the leadership Westar Energy is providing to further the success of our graduates in the power systems area,” said Royce Bowden, dean of the WSU College of Engineering, who will begin his job on Jan. 16. “Westar Energy’s willingness to invest in the communities they serve is commendable. We look forward to this important partnership.”

Helping engineering students at Kansas schools get a high-quality education is one way Westar can meet the needs of its customers, said Don Sherman, vice president of community relations and strategic partnerships for Westar Energy.

“Our Kansas schools are our most reliable source of engineers who are knowledgeable and passionate about providing great service to our customers,” Sherman said. “The Westar Energy Power Lab will create a strategic partnership between Westar and WSU that will help both Westar and its customers find technical solutions to their electrical supply needs. This partnership will also be a great addition to the engineering program at WSU and bring matching funds to WSU from the state.”

The gift from Westar will allow Wichita State to qualify for matching funds from the state under the University Engineering Initiative Act.

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The creation of the Westar Power Systems Lab will help deliver exceptional hands-on learning to students, said John Watkins, chair of the department of electrical engineering and computer science in the WSU College of Engineering.

“This donation will allow the department to provide more equipment and new types of equipment to students who use our power systems laboratory,” he said. “As the lab will be used in a broad range of electric energy classes, it will provide many students more hands-on experience in the electric energy area.”

In addition to funding power system equipment for the lab, Westar’s gift will be used to expand the existing lab space, purchase new furniture and rewire the lab.

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**Media note:** A photograph of Westar Energy representatives presenting an oversized check to WSU officials can be found at [www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos](http://www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos)

**Photo cutline:** Westar Energy presents a $125,000 oversized check to representatives of WSU and the WSU Foundation to upgrade a power systems lab. Pictured (l-r) are: Megan Smith, WSU Foundation director of development for the College of Engineering; Elizabeth King, WSU Foundation president and CEO; Kelly Harrison, Westar Energy, Inc. vice president, transmission; Ward Jewell, professor in the WSU College of Engineering; John Watkins, WSU chair of the department of electrical engineering and computer science; and Don Sherman, Westar Energy, Inc. vice president, community relations & strategic partnerships.

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