ExxonMobil Donates $2.5M to UW for Energy Research

MEAD GRUVER,Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Another major corporate gift from the oil and gas industry, this time from ExxonMobil, seeks to boost hydrocarbon deposit research at the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources.

Gov. Matt Mead, UW President Tom Buchanan and ExxonMobil vice president Randy Broiles announced the $2.5 million gift Thursday at the State Capitol.

"Our company utilizes technology and innovation in virtually everything we do. So it's very, very important to us. Math and science are key to the energy business and they're certainly key to many of the challenges our country faces," Broiles said.

Part of the money will go to laboratory modeling to replicate the temperatures and pressures that exist in the deep rock formations that hold oil and gas, said Mark Northam, director of the School of Energy Resources.

"The fundamental work, especially in unconventional reservoirs, just has not been done. So that is where we're going to focus," Northam said after the announcement.

The lab data will help inform computer modeling of oil and gas deposits and extraction techniques, he said.

The donation will benefit the University of Wyoming School of Energy Resources by a total of $5 million because of a state fund that matches private donations to the university.

ExxonMobil's operations in Wyoming include the Shute Creek gas plant outside LaBarge. The plant extracts much of the nation's helium supply from nearby gas wells. The wells also produce large amounts of carbon dioxide that help recharge depleted oil wells in central Wyoming.

The announcement comes three weeks after Hess Corp. announced a $4.4 million gift to the university for research into oil and gas extraction. That donation will help fund equipment to examine rocks at extreme magnification to help understand how oil and gas flows through those rocks.

The petroleum industry has donated a total of $10.9 million to the university in recent months. Other donors have included Baker-Hughes, $500,000; Shell, $500,000; Marathon, $1 million; and Ultra, $2 million, according to Ben Blalock, president of the UW Foundation.

The recent fundraising also will help to build an energy engineering research

facility. More fundraising will follow, he said, to meet a goal of $15 million from corporate donors.

"I assure you, we don't sleep on the job as far as this is concerned," he said.

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