

Confab to focus on 'new energy'

Ohio University and Gov. Ted Strickland will host the multi-state Appalachian Regional Commission conference titled "New Energy. New Jobs. New Opportunities for Appalachia," Monday through Wednesday of this week in Baker Center.

"It's not every day that we have the governor host a conference here that highlights work that's so important to this university and region," Scott Miller, director of energy and environmental programs at the Voinovich School for Leadership and Public Affairs, said in a release. "And this is a national conference. It's a national stage and allows us to trumpet the important work that's going on here."

This year, Ohio — one of 13 states with portions designated Appalachian — was selected to host the conference. The governor chose Athens and OU.

In the release, Strickland said, "Ohio University and Athens represent the bridge between Ohio's inventive past and our innovative future, and also illustrate the importance of a quality, affordable education in economic development. Companies like Diagnostic Hybrids and Dovetail Solar & Wind are demonstrating the good work being done in Athens in high-growth industries like clean energy and biosciences. I am proud to highlight the hard-working and innovative workers in Athens, and I know this community will be warm and welcoming hosts for this conference."

Along with the governor, attendees will include U.S. Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, U.S. representatives from Ohio, Zach Space and Charlie Wilson, state Rep. Debbie Phillips,

and keynote speaker James Rogers, president and CEO of Duke Energy.

Highlights of the conference will include a welcome and opening remarks from Strickland and Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-chair Anne B. Pope and a wide array of panel sessions, including "New Ventures in the New Energy Economy — Growing Green Entrepreneurs and Jobs," moderated by OU alumnus David Wilhelm, this year's alumnus of the year, founder of Adena Ventures venture capital company and former chair of the Democratic National Committee.

Carole Womeldorf, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, will moderate "Wind-Powering Appalachia."

A press conference featuring Strickland and Pope will be held at 10 a.m. on Tuesday in the 1804 Lounge on the fifth floor of Baker Center.

The conference also will include site visits to OU's fuel-cell research facility, biomass gasification research facility and electrostatic precipitation research facility, as well as the Innovation Center and Ecohouse.

Off-campus site visits also will take place at local alternative energy businesses Third Sun Solar & Wind Power and Sunpower Inc.

Each year, the Washington, D.C.-based ARC hosts the conference in one of the federally defined Appalachian regions, which includes 32 Ohio counties. The ARC is a federal-state partnership program dating back to the 1960s that works on promoting economic development in Appalachia, a 420-county region in 13 states along the Appalachian Mountain chain.