A few weeks from now, in San Jose, California, DOE will host its second annual Solid-State Lighting Manufacturing R&D Workshop. This event, which takes place April 21-22, is one of three workshops on solid-state lighting that DOE hosts each year – the other two focusing on R&D and market introduction. While these annual workshops play a key role in DOE's SSL program, from time to time we also host special workshops, roundtables, and meetings to solicit and share input on targeted issues. One such workshop that's coming up soon is Solid-State Lighting in Higher Education Facilities, which takes place May 25-27 in Portland, Oregon.

The purpose of the Portland workshop is to jumpstart a candid conversation between manufacturers of solid-state lighting products and the people who use them, with an eye toward identifying needed changes in product design that will improve quality, functionality, and sustainability. To that end, workshop presenters will include lighting designers, engineers, and facilities managers, with the audience consisting of SSL manufacturers.

But the line between presenters and attendees will be a blurry one in Portland, because just like our other workshops, this one is intended to be loose and interactive rather than of the "we talk, you listen" variety. Presenters and attendees alike will roll up their sleeves and join forces to dive down deep into the issues, share experiences, and brainstorm solutions on how to improve SSL products and integrate them into the higher education environment.

Why higher education? Because not only do colleges and
universities collectively comprise an important market for lighting products, but they use almost every kind of luminaire there is. A college campus is a complex facility that's a lot like a small city in many ways, with lighting applications that run the gamut from classrooms and offices to theaters, labs, libraries, dining halls, dormitories, museums, chapels, walkways, parking lots, garages, lecture halls, arenas, and outdoor stadiums. That kind of setting provides an ideal springboard to ensure that workshop discussions cover as broad a range of product types and issues as possible.

Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Portland workshop is a chance for SSL manufacturers large and small to go beyond the bottom line and get the inside scoop from those who specify, pay for, install, use, maintain, and dispose of lighting systems for nearly every type of application. They'll explore the barriers to SSL adoption, the applications where LED products work best, and ways to avoid the most common pitfalls. It's our hope that these discussions, which could lead DOE planning in new directions, will help manufacturers gain a new understanding of the thorniest issues, which might lead to product design changes.

But in order to ensure that the workshop is both interactive and productive, the size will be limited to 100 attendees. That's why we're encouraging SSL manufacturers to send one attendee only – preferably the person who directs product development and can best represent the company's engineering and design aspects. Afterwards, a report will be posted on the DOE SSL website, for those who are interested but were unable to attend.

I hope to see representatives from as many manufacturers as possible at the Portland workshop. What we need are lots of solutions, not just one, because it will take multiple solutions to move the whole industry forward.

To register for DOE's Solid-State Lighting in Higher Education Facilities Workshop, or to learn more about it, visit
As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach me at postings@lightingfacts.com.

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