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Hurricane season in the US continues through Nov. 30, so reminders to be ready for power outages are frequent in Florida. And when future outages occur, the microgrid built by a Florida Power and Light (FPL)-Florida International University (FIU) partnership will supply backup power to FIU's engineering center -- considered one of the most high-tech learning facilities in South Florida.

The microgrid's power comes from 4,400 solar panels that make up the 1.4-MW array at the FPL-FIU Solar Research Center. The system stores and discharges renewable energy in a large-scale battery (3 MW/9 MWh) integrated with a command-and-control center.

The center is the only solar research facility that FPL has installed at a Florida university. The solar canopy provides shade for about 400 parking spaces and incorporates a 24-foot by 12-foot FIU logo visible from high above.

For more than three decades, FPL and FIU have partnered on various energy engineering projects. Faculty and students at FIU will use this installation to conduct research that will help FPL advance solar energy in the state. FPL invested \$6.9 million in the project. The microgrid system will begin operating later this year.

"With this microgrid, FIU students have the opportunity to contribute to the future of energy yet again - gaining hands-on experience with emerging technology and research that will bring real-world benefits to Floridians," said FIU President Mark Rosenberg.

The microgrid leverages FIU's state-of-the-art research facilities, the Proactive Analytics and Data-Oriented Research on Availability and Security (PANDORAS) Lab, which will serve as a virtual control room, in addition to the GENIE Lab.

The GENIE Lab houses the FPL-FIU team's custom designed and constructed microgrid controller. The lab includes Opal-Real Time and LabVolt simulators along with an InTouch Wonderware system. This artificial intelligence system absorbs and sorts through massive amounts of data. Its machine learning algorithms study the grid, determine where failures happen and supply power to those areas.

"This cutting-edge microgrid is an opportunity for FIU students and faculty to contribute directly to a brighter energy future for the Sunshine State. This is a future that includes more solar, more energy storage and, hopefully, more microgrid technology on a greater scale," said Eric Silagy, president and CEO of FPL.

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