

UW Oshkosh gets solar power

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/5640/uw-oshkosh-gets-solar-power/>

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is installing its first solar energy systems to provide the campus with electricity and hot water. This is the first wave of solar power installations that will soon be commonplace on the campus.

A photovoltaic array has been installed on a popular walkway adjacent to the campus tennis courts. The 2.9-kilowatt system slowly adjusts position to track the sun as it moves from east to west and as it rises and falls in the sky. The system was installed by Appleton Solar and funded as a State of Wisconsin Energy Conservation Project with support from Focus on Energy and Wisconsin Public Service.

Water will be heated by 120 solar panels being installed on the rooftops of four buildings to serve a wide range of needs. Blackhawk Commons will generate hot water for food service and dishwashers. Hot water for showers will be provided in Taylor Hall. Albee Hall solar collectors will heat an indoor swimming pool. The campus Heating Plant will pre-heat water used to generate steam and heat campus buildings. These solar systems will replace natural gas or coal-based heat.

The Solar Thermal Energy Systems are being installed and maintained by H&H Energy Services of Madison. Funding is through a State Solar Energy Agreement that allows the systems to be owned privately by Regenes Power of California, who will then sell the heat to UW Oshkosh at a set cost. Focus on Energy is also providing financial incentives.

New construction and refurbishment projects at UW Oshkosh are planning to add more solar power in the future.

“University buildings have long lives, so it makes sense to build them with solar power upgrades in mind and to install the systems that are affordable today,” said Michael Lizotte, UW Oshkosh director of sustainability.

The Student Success Center, opening September 2010, is an example of a “solar-ready” building. During its refurbishment, features were added for a future photovoltaic array, including rooftop curbs to support solar panels, conduit for wiring and a closet set aside for electrical components.

The Renewable Energy Facility, which will begin construction in September will also be solar-ready. The main building will be the nation’s first commercial-scale dry fermentation anaerobic biodigester to convert yard and food waste into electricity and heat. The building is designed with a large roof area at the best angle and direction for future addition of solar panels, and has indoor space dedicated for the necessary electronics.

A new academic building, scheduled to open in Fall 2011, is being constructed to utilize most of its rooftop, window awnings, and part of the grounds for both solar electric and solar hot water panels. The

building is designed to generate more than 10% of its energy needs from alternative energy sources on-site.

A new residence hall, scheduled for completion in 2012, will also include solar hot water and solar electricity generation in its design.

Solar power generation will help us meet University and state goals for energy independence, while providing students with opportunities to see and study the innovations coming in renewable energy,” said Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services Tom Sonnleitner.

Since making the commitment to be a green University, UW Oshkosh has hit several milestones in becoming more sustainable in energy use. Since 2000 the campus has benefited from a steady stream of conservation technologies identified with the help of Johnson Controls. In 2003, the university became the first Wisconsin university to join the EPA’s Green Partnership by agreeing to purchase at least 3 percent of its energy from alternative sources. In 2006, the campus was one of four selected by the governor to work toward energy independence. A comprehensive Sustainability Plan was adopted in 2008 with goals for energy efficiency and alternative energy. Following carbon-footprint studies conducted by Johnson Controls and university staff, in 2009 the University established one of the nation’s most aggressive Climate Action Plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025.