

Syracuse University commits to purchasing at least 20 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources

Syracuse University will begin purchasing a minimum of 20 percent of its electricity in the form of renewable energy, as of July 1, 2005. Renewable energy sources take many forms, including wind, hydropower, solar, biomass and geothermal.

"By committing to the use of renewable energy, Syracuse University is showing we are serious in taking a leadership role in the area of sustainability and energy conservation," says SU Chancellor Nancy Cantor. "This is exemplified by our great strides in campus energy management over the years, as well as the sustainable design aspects of the Whitman School's new building and the programmatic efforts of the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems, in which SU is the lead partner."

Says SU Senior Vice President for Business, Finance and Administrative Services Louis G. Marcoccia, "Our commitment is very aggressive in that we are setting a substantial goal of moving to 20 percent implementation in a very short timeframe." In comparison, in 2003, Gov. George E. Pataki issued an executive order directing that buildings owned, leased or operated by state agencies obtain 10 percent of their annual electrical needs from renewable energy sources by 2005 and then move to 20 percent by 2010.

Marcoccia convened a meeting April 13 involving administrators and a small group of concerned individuals including students representing the Student Environmental Action Coalition. Cantor and Marcoccia had previously discussed the topic of renewable energy, and the Chancellor expressed her commitment, which led to a very successful April 13 meeting, he says.

"The group had some concerns and called for the University to step up in embracing renewable energy usage," Marcoccia says. "I give the students credit for their caring and for bringing attention to the need for renewable energy sources."

A request for proposals (RFP) will go out next week to 12 pre-approved retail electric suppliers identified as renewable energy providers. Upon receipt and review of the responses, a supplier contract will be awarded for the purchase of renewable energy commencing with the start of the University's new fiscal year, July 1. Deadline for receipt of responses to the RFP is the first week in May.

SU uses about 110 million kWh per year. Electricity is transmitted to campus via Niagara Mohawk/National Grid power lines. Currently, Niagara Mohawk/National Grid supplies 20 percent of SU's electricity; that relationship will continue. The remaining 80 percent comes from other retail electric suppliers.

Electricity from renewable sources tends to be more expensive than electricity generated by traditional sources, Marcoccia says, but the use of renewable energy is consistent with the University's values and commitment to the environment, and the added cost will be accommodated along with other variances in the normal fall revision to the institution's budget plan.

Syracuse Record – Kevin Morrow