

FGCU Solar Field goes Online



In late December, Florida Gulf Coast University's solar energy farm quietly went live. The 2-megawatt system, encompassing of 10,080 panels on 16 acres, is now powering about 200,000 square feet on the FGCU campus, including Lutgert Hall, Holmes Hall, and Academic Building 7. It is the largest working solar field operated by a university in the United States.

A partnership between FGCU and Regenesis Power, construction of the \$14 million project appears to be completed on time and under budget. The field should result in energy cost savings of between \$700,000 and \$800,000 per year.

"This 16-acre energy field will significantly reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy sources, save money, reduce our carbon footprint and serve as a model of environmental and ecological sustainability for our region, the state of Florida and the nation," said FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw at the project's initiation.

"In addition to the environmental, sustainable, and cost saving attributes of the solar field, we are looking forward to enhanced research opportunities since a portion of the solar field has been dedicated for research purposes," adds Dr. Tom Roberts, FGCU Associate Vice President for Research and FESC Oversight Board member.

The Florida legislature appropriated \$8.5 million to FGCU during the 2008 legislative session to construct a solar energy field. FGCU formed a public-private partnership with Regenesis Power resulting in the construction of a \$17 million project. Regenesis Power is a national alternative energy company headquartered in Simi Valley, California with regional offices in Florida.

"Delivering solutions to our client's energy needs today requires a combination of advanced technology, innovative expertise and collaborative partnering, and we are pleased to bring these resources to FGCU's solar energy initiative," said John Polumbo, President and CEO of Regenesis Power. "This PV installation, together with the utilization of solar hot water systems on campus, will significantly advance FGCU's energy goals."

Regenesis Power is a solar energy company with expertise in the design, construction and financing channel management of large scale commercial photovoltaic projects. Regenesis Power also provides fully managed solar water heating programs for electric and water utility companies, enabling them to offer their residential and business customers a clear choice for clean energy on a mass scale. The Regenesis Power team has designed, developed and managed over 30 MW of industrial and commercial solar projects throughout the U.S.

FGCU and the entire community will reap major benefits from the solar energy farm. Paramount among its benefits is cost-savings. The solar energy field is projected to save the institution \$22 million over a 30 year period. Its impact will be felt immediately as electrical cost will be reduced from 10.5 cents per kilo-watt hour to two cents per kilo-watt hour.

Environmentally, the benefits are equally dramatic. As a clean energy source, annually the solar energy field will prevent an estimated 9,000 pounds of nitrogen oxide, 14,000 pounds of sulfur dioxide and 5.1 million pounds of carbon dioxide from being introduced into our environment.

Given the rich resource of sunshine in Southwest Florida, the solar energy field is a pilot program designed to encourage and model the use of clean energy. On behalf of the state of Florida, FGCU will use this project to teach and conduct research into renewable energy sources to benefit K-12, the business community and the construction industry as well as the general public.

For additional information on the project visit www.fgcusolar.com; the website will serve as the prime project resource for updated information.

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