

University Receives Grant, Launches Solar Energy Project

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Austin, TX – The University of Texas at Austin has received almost \$1.6 million in a grant from the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) for installing two solar cell systems at the J. J. Pickle Research Campus (PRC) in north Austin. Together, the systems are capable of producing nearly 434,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of renewable energy per year.

The statewide grant is derived from federal stimulus funds to encourage development of renewable energy sources. Grant dollars will pay 80 percent of the cost of the nearly \$2 million installation, with the university paying the remainder.

The project consists of two grid-tied solar power systems. One system will be a ground-mounted array of solar panels in a field south of the Microelectronics & Engineering Research Center building. The other system will be an array of panels over a newly constructed carport west of the Bureau of Economic Geology Administration building. A monitoring system will track the energy generated at each installation.

“We’re going to offset a portion of PRC’s annual electrical load with non-polluting solar panels, and see savings over the next 25 years,” explained Juan Nuñez, associate director of Facilities Services at PRC. With the new technology in place, PRC expects to decrease peak demand costs and reduce around 100 metric tons of carbon per year.

“We are pleased to partner with SECO to expand renewable energy sources at UT Austin,” said Mike Miller, director of Facilities Services for the university. “This project supports the university’s sustainability policy and efforts to maximize efficiencies in its operations and services.”

Work on the project will begin on February 14, 2011, and be substantially completed on April 21, 2011. Contractor is Jamail & Smith Construction of Austin. Texas Solar Power Company of Austin is the subcontractor.

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For more information, contact: Laurie Lentz at (512) 471-2273, or laurie.lentz@austin.utexas.edu

PRC interactive map: <http://www.utexas.edu/maps/prc/>