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Solar Project at MCCC Provides Learning Opportunities, Savings

► May 28, 2012 7:37 PM, By Kelly Stratton, Contributing Writer

NEW JERSEY—The Mercer County Improvement Authority (MCIA) is working with the West Windsor Campus of Mercer County Community College (MCCC) to install a solar energy project, which the school will use for academic opportunities.

The energy output of the 8-megawatt solar project will provide real-time data that will allow students to conduct cross-disciplinary studies of the benefits of alternative energy and sustainability.

"We are excited about the multiple ways in which this solar project will foster academic opportunities for MCCC students," said Dr. Guy Generals, vice president for academic affairs. "Such learning opportunities will break new ground in community college education, preparing students for a world that is moving further away from expensive, dirty fossil fuels and closer to clean, renewable sources of energy."

In addition, the system will benefit students by allowing the college to re-channel savings on energy costs, among the college's highest operating expenses, back into college programs and services that were cut because of budget constraints.

The ground-mounted solar array will offset approximately 70 percent of the college's West Windsor Campus annual electricity usage, saving about \$750,000 annually on electricity costs. The project will be built on 45 acres within a 67-acre parcel of currently undeveloped land owned by the college on the east side of the campus.

The ownership of the project has been structured as a lease-purchase agreement. The title owner is the MCIA; the MCIA and MCCC have entered into a 15-year lease with SunLight General Mercer Solar, which will offer energy from the project to MCCC at a discounted rate of 3 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared to the 14 cents per kilowatt-hour the college currently pays to its local utility.

The lease transfers all burdens and benefits of ownership to SunLight General Mercer Solar, including the right to sell energy to the College.

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