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CREATING MARKETS

Universities Supporting Renewable Energy

As discussed in brief #3, creating markets is one option for promoting the development of renewable energy. Creating guaranteed markets reduces the uncertainty for renewable energy developers and makes such investments more attractive. Markets can be created in several ways, such as governments and/or large, recognizable organizations purchasing a certain percentage of their electricity consumption from renewable energy.

Universities have long been recognized for their commitment to environmental issues. In response to recent environmental concerns from students, faculty and administrators, several universities have created progressive energy strategies for their respective campuses. One component of these energy strategies, for many of these colleges, has been to purchase a certain percentage (in most cases 5%) of their electricity consumption from wind power. Some of the universities that have already purchased a percentage of their electricity consumption from wind power include Carnegie Mellon University, Connecticut College, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Colorado-Boulder, the University of Pennsylvania, and Wesleyan University. The following summaries describe some of the ideas and strategies that have proven to be successful for many of these colleges.

University of Colorado-Boulder

The University of Colorado-Boulder was the first school to commit to a purchase of renewable energy as a percentage (5%) of their overall energy consumption. The commitment began as the University of Colorado Environmental Center, a branch of the student government, decided to focus its attention on energy issues and formed Clean Energy Now!.

Clean Energy Now! began developing a plan to bring wind power to the CU campus in early January 2000. Several options were available to fund the additional cost of wind power, such as asking the administration or a selected department (i.e. athletic), however these options had failed in previous attempts. Clean Energy Now! eventually decided to put a question on the student referendum asking the students to increase their activities fees by \$1 per student per semester to fund the development of wind power for the campus.

To garner student support for the referendum, Clean Energy Now! began a campaign to educate students about the benefits of wind power. Articles, editorials, and other advertisements were written in the school newspaper supporting energy conservation and renewable energy. Fliers were produced and handed out to students throughout campus. Public service announcements and press releases were sent to local radio and news stations. Pinwheels symbolizing wind turbines were handed out to students informing them when and where to vote during the week the issue was being voted on.

Not only did Clean Energy Now! get the 1000 signatures they needed to get the issue on the student referendum, they also got the CU students to overwhelmingly (5 to 1) vote in favor of the issue in the highest student voter turn out in CU history. By voting in favor of the referendum, students have agreed to pay for the additional cost of wind power (approximately \$50,000 per year) for 4 years. In addition, since 5% of CU's electricity consumption is approximately equivalent to one 1.5 MW turbine, CU was able to paint their mascot on a turbine tower to symbolize their commitment to renewable energy.

The CU student initiative has paved the way for student groups on other campuses, including Connecticut College, to promote renewable energy development by increasing student activity fees. The student led initiative was also recognized at the recent winter Olympics in Salt Lake City for its promotion of global warming awareness.

State of Pennsylvania Universities

Carnegie Mellon University, located in Pittsburgh, committed to purchase 5% of their electricity consumption from wind power in May of 2001. Carnegie Mellon has made this commitment for several reasons. First, they recognize the global importance of supporting the development of renewable energy. Second, this commitment will provide their students, faculty, and staff with abundant educational opportunities. Third, they believe it is important to support the development of wind power in Western Pennsylvania, thereby supporting rural economic development.

The commitment to purchase wind power began three years prior when the Environmental Practices Committee (EPC), a university group of faculty and staff, conducted an emissions study on possible energy generation suppliers and recommended the purchase of renewable energy. EPC strives to develop environmentally sound policies and hopes these policies will establish Carnegie Mellon as a model for other universities. In addition to recommending renewable energy as a portion of the universities energy mix, EPC hopes issuing a "university challenge" to conserve electricity will actually cover the additional cost of wind power.

In October of 2001, the University of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania State University followed Carnegie Mellon's lead and committed to purchasing 5% of their electricity consumption from wind power. All three of these Pennsylvania universities recognize the importance of promoting the development of renewable energy technologies and hope that other state universities will follow their example. [Note: In April of 2003, the University of Pennsylvania agreed to double their purchase of wind power to 10% of their total electricity consumption].

Oklahoma Universities

The Universities in Oklahoma that are OG&E customers will soon have the option to buy a percentage of their electricity from wind energy. By buying a percentage of electricity from wind energy, Oklahoma Universities would show their commitment to not only the environment but also to further wind development and rural economic development in Oklahoma. In addition, a purchase of wind power could, in the future, save the universities money on their electricity bills if fossil fuel prices continue to rise.

For summaries and a step-by-step strategy of how other universities have purchased green power, please refer to www.cogreenpower.org/campus.pdf.