Panels to provide ASU with solar energy

by Allison Denny
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In a world abuzz with the green movement, ASU is taking a step to do its part.

University officials announced plans June 10 for a series of rooftop solar panels that would meet 7 percent of the energy needs of the Tempe campus.

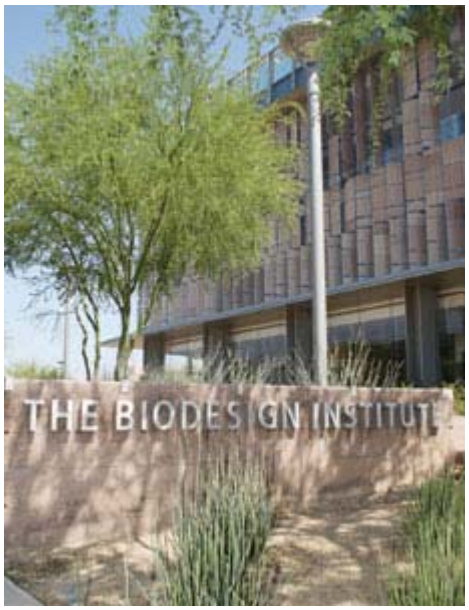
With Honeywell Building Systems, Independent Energy Group and SolEquity covering the installation costs, ASU would pay nothing up front.

George Maracas, an electrical engineering professor working with ASU's Global Institute of Sustainability, said the University will purchase power at a locked-in rate from Arizona Public Service for the next 15 years.

Over the 15-year contract, ASU would save $425,000 in energy costs, Maracas said.

The first phase of the solar power project will give ASU two megawatts of power — enough to run about 4,600 computers — by the end of the year, Maracas said.

"We'll also reduce the carbon footprint as well because we're just not burning that much fossil fuels for generating that power," he said. "We need to be a carbon neutral society."



ON THE ROOFTOP: University officials announced plans June 10 for a series of rooftop solar panels to be installed on top of the Biodesign Institute.

Replacing two kilowatts of power with solar energy reduces the Tempe campus's carbon emission by about 2,825 tons per year — equivalent to about 523 automobiles, Maracas said.

Generating two kilowatts of solar power will take about 135,000 square feet of roof space, Maracas said.

The first 500 kilowatts of solar power will be generated from panels atop the Biodesign Institute, Maracas said. The location of the other panels is not yet set in stone, he said.

The long-term goal is to up ASU's solar power output up to seven megawatts, Maracas said. The seven megawatts would be split between the four campuses, he said.

A 2004 University study identified about 330,000 square feet of roof space usable for solar energy generation on the Tempe alone, Maracas said.

The growth of ASU's campuses has added to that number, Maracas said.

"ASU is growing so much," he said. "It's one of the reasons that we can grow to seven megawatts."

The solar project exemplifies ASU's dedication to becoming a leader in sustainability, Maracas said.

The Global Institute of Sustainability, established in 2007, is the first of its kind in the nation, he said.

The institute brings together professors and students from different disciplines to examine how different

choices affect the world, from the impact of renewable energy sources to decisions the government makes, he said.

"Sustainability is sort of like an umbrella," he said. "It covers all matters that are related to renewable energy and its impact."

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