

Campus revives wind turbine project

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Chicago may have a competitor for the title of "the Windy City."

The University has issued a Request for Proposals for the South Campus Wind Turbine Project. Between one and three turbines will be constructed in the South Farms area of the Urbana campus, near the intersections of Curtis Road and Race Street.

The turbines will provide at least 1.5 megawatts of wind-generated electricity, linked directly to the University's electrical distribution grid.

The University is searching for a firm to implement the turbines. The project has been allocated \$4.5 million in its budget.

The turbine project will aid in the renewable energy goals of the Illinois Climate Action Plan, or iCAP. The climate plan promises that 5 percent of total campus energy will be renewable energy by 2015, and 25 percent by 2025.

The wind turbine project has been in the works for several years now, said Suhail Barot, chair of the Student Sustainability Committee and graduate student.

"I think it's long overdue and really important. The campus is actually taking responsibility in getting its energy from renewable sources, and I'm excited about that," Barot said.

The project was almost approved in 2008, but financial setbacks along with a downward spiraling economy caused the project to be put on hold, said Morgan Johnston, Sustainability and Transportation Coordinator for Facilities and Services.

Due to unwavering student interest and better financial means, the project is able to begin now, she said.

"The students were very, very instrumental in keeping the project alive," Johnston said.

Wind and solar are two of the best and most cost-efficient renewable energies for this region, Johnston said.

"I am very excited to see a major step in renewable energy for this campus. This is a beginning of a shift in the way that we behave," she said. "It makes a visible showing that we're making progress in our goal of being carbon neutral by 2050."

Barot said he is excited because of the financial support from the University.

"The biggest investment up to now was probably the solar array on top of the Business building, and no actual University dollars went into that," he said.

Barot said he predicts only one wind turbine will be built due to the cost of the project, but that he hopes they can stretch the money to be able to complete two.

"In terms of installed on-site wind capacity, we're not going to be the first school to have done it anymore, but we're probably going to be in the top ten or fifteen in installed capacity once this goes in," Barot said. "It's a really big step for the University."

Jesus Lopez, junior in LAS, said he is glad he will be able to see his money from the Student Green Fee be put into action.

"It's something really good that we should be focusing on. Because of the fact that we're in such an energy crisis, we can't count on our old ways to suffice for our energy needs," Lopez said.

All proposals are due Nov. 23, and the project is scheduled to run through Jan. to May 2011.

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