

4-17-2006

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Recommended Citation

Office of Public Affairs, "Governors State University to Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn to Discuss the State's Largest Solar Panel Installation" (2006). *Press Releases*. Paper 196.
http://opus.govst.edu/press_releases/196

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For Immediate Release

Governors State University to Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn to discuss the state's largest solar panel installation

University Park, Illinois, April 17, 2006 – Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn will visit Governors State University on Wednesday, April 19, at 12:00 p.m. Quinn will meet with the public, university representatives, and area legislators to discuss the university's recent solar panel installation.

In 2003, Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn suggested to GSU's Chief Operating Engineer that the University consider using solar energy to help reduce energy costs. In 2004, after contacting Solar Service Inc. of Niles, IL to engineer a solar thermal system, GSU was awarded renewable energy grants of \$150,000 from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and \$65,323 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, totaling 70% of the cost of the solar thermal installation. Solar Service Inc. was contracted to install the system and when completed in May 2006, it will be the largest solar thermal system in Illinois.

"Governor Blagojevich and I are excited to be supporting the state's largest solar panel installation and increasing the visibility and use of this important energy source. By making investments to support new, renewable energy technologies we are helping to keep our energy dollars in Illinois and supporting job creation in new, renewable energy industries," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The system's primary purpose is to pre-heat water for GSU's Olympic size swimming pool as well as provide domestic hot water for most of the University. When necessary, the University's current heating equipment will automatically back-up the solar system. The system has a life expectancy of over 30 years with expected energy displacement of 40 therms of natural gas per day. Projected 2006 energy cost savings of \$10,000 will increase over time as energy costs are projected to continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

In addition, the GSU Science Department's PHYS 325 will observe this solar thermal system and use it as a "field trip" activity and practical hands-on learning project. With four electronic digital displays and over 25 thermometers, the solar system will offer both students and faculty the opportunity to perform energy and cost savings calculations with real GSU data.

"Governors State University is pleased to be a leader in new technology and ecologically sound operations," said Susan Rakstang, Director of GSU's Physical Plant Operations. "The installation of the solar panels demonstrates our commitment to the environment, the community, and the taxpayers who ultimately benefit from the cost savings."

64 solar thermal collectors, in groups of eight, have been installed on the gymnasium roof. Each collector is 4 feet wide and 10 feet tall and mounted at a 52 degree angle for optimum year-round performance. Tempered, non-reflective glass cover plates convert sunlight to heat; similar to how a closed car heats up when sitting in the sun. Even on a 10 degree winter day panel temperatures can reach 200 degrees. Inside each collector a copper absorber plate, painted with a selective black coating, transfers the heat to 10 copper riser tubes attached to the back of the absorber plate.

A solution of water and non-toxic anti-freeze passes through the tubes and delivers the heat to eight stainless steel, doubled walled heat exchangers located in the power plant mechanical room. Each bank of collectors has its own pump and heat exchanger. Two additional pumps circulate water through the heat exchangers, transferring the heat from the solar collectors to two 318-gallon insulated water storage tanks. Once in storage, the solar heated water is available for immediate or future use for lavatories, shower rooms, and other uses throughout the University.

An additional double-walled, copper-nickel/stainless steel heat exchanger installed in the pool mechanical room will utilize solar heated water to pre-heat the pool water before it enters the conventional pool heater. Solar is expected to supply a substantial amount of the energy needed to heat the swimming pool.

The solar system operation is completely automatic and will collect and deliver heat to storage whenever available. Even on overcast days, the solar thermal collectors will generate heat. Based on historical climate data, the system is expected to deliver 100% of its design performance seven out of every ten days. The system is maintenance-free and will operate for decades. The solar panels have a design life beyond thirty years.

For additional information on this project, call (708) 534-4515.

