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## University of Vermont selects nine clean-energy projects

*By Tim Johnson, Free Press Staff Writer*

Students at the University of Vermont decided several years ago to pay more than lip service to the need for renewable-energy development. For the last couple of years, they've each been paying \$10 a semester into a fund that aims to finance clean-energy projects on campus.

This week, the project-selection committee for new Clean Energy Fund announced the first round of approvals, from solar panels to new research and course initiatives, totaling \$174,669.

The intent is to engage students in energy issues and to promote energy-saving initiatives in the process. The 11-member committee, which comprises students, faculty, staff and alumni, chose nine projects from among 18 proposals.

"Our hope is that the Clean Energy Fund will encourage students to think broadly about sustainable energy, become involved in a hands-on way, and learn about the issues so they can become informed participants in the global energy debate after they graduate," said Eric Garza, chairman of the committee, in a news release. Garza is a doctoral student in natural resources.

The committee is committed to seeking matching funds for some of the projects from other sources, such as Vermont's Clean Energy Development Fund.

The idea for UVM's Clean Energy Fund germinated among students in a sustainability course in 2005, said Gioia Thompson, now director of UVM's office of sustainability. A student-researched proposal was endorsed by the Student Government Association in 2007, and approved by UVM trustees in 2008. With two years' proceeds, it has accumulated a surplus balance of about \$196,000, which will be used to fully finance projects that don't receive matching money. The fund brings in about \$225,000 a year.

The approved projects include:

A photovoltaic system to be installed on the roof of the Spear Street Equine Center (\$62,809, plus matching funds).

Electricity-generating solar trackers on the roof of the Votey Building (\$13,500 plus match, with accompanying research) and on UVM land near the Forest Service Building on Spear Street (\$4,500).

- A solar hot-water unit at Slade Hall (\$24,750, plus smaller match).
- A "dashboard" system, similar to the one at the Davis Center, for displaying real-time energy use in four campus buildings -- Votey, Given, and the residence halls at University Heights North and South (\$44,000).
- New courses that will train students to analyze campus energy use (\$12,110) and study sustainable transportation systems drawing from lessons provided by the university's plug-in hybrid electric vehicle, to be powered by the Equine roof panels (\$6,000).
- An evaluation of the biomass energy potential of UVM's Trinity campus (\$7,000 plus larger match),

where several buildings are electrically heated.

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