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UMM recognized by EPA as green power partner

Summary:

(January 26, 2005)-The University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) has been recognized as a green power partner by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Morris campus has a long-standing tradition of students, faculty and staff working together to promote resource conservation.

"Much of the credit for this proactive approach can be attributed to the students and the student organizations on campus," said Lowell Rasmussen, associate vice chancellor for physical plant and master planning at UMM. "The Morris Campus Student Association, MPIRG (Minnesota Public Interest Research Group), and student residence hall organizations have all contributed, and encouraged the campus to become more environmentally responsible."

The campus has established a Green Energy Task Force to review and monitor campus operations with a goal to move toward a more resource conscious approach to energy and resource conservation. The task force was comprised of a cross section of the campus community with an emphasis on involving students and key supervisors who made decisions about resource utilization.

Outcomes from this process were often two-fold, explained Rasmussen. First, the campus began looking at alternatives that used less resources or used them more efficiently. Second, the process often established a learning curve to allow everyone to better understand what the real resource issues were and how to look at the bigger picture. An example of that process follows:

Otter Tail Power Company, which provides electrical services in Morris, announced a wind energy program that would allow customers to purchase electrical energy for an additional charge. UMM students wanted to participate in this program. After looking at how wind energy might be used to benefit the student body, an agreement was reached to designate the Morris campus Student Center as a green energy powered building since all students use that building.

To cover the additional \$15,000 required to power the building with wind energy, campus administrators challenged the students to conserve the equivalent amount of money in other resource conservation programs. The students agreed to an extensive water conservation program which reduced the amount of water used on campus, encouraged the campus fleet operations to purchase hybrid vehicles for campus transportation needs, changed from a paper-based campus newsletter to an electronic format, and worked to increase the amount of material recycled through the campus recycling program. These efforts were essentially successful, and saved the equivalent amount of dollars that were being spent on wind energy. It became a cost neutral program for students and for the university.

"Over the past few years a number of the members of the Morris Campus Student Association (MCSA) have actively sought out responsible environmental conservation, from the way that light pollution affects our campus to the amount and types of things that can be recycled," said Tim Lindberg, UMM student from Roseville and MCSA president. "It is refreshing now for students to see that their commitment has paid off through this recognition. The push for further

conservation techniques will continue with UMM students continually spearheading new initiatives."

The campus has now moved to the next level of green energy/ alternative energy programs. A new 1.6 megawatt wind turbine, located at the West Central Research and Outreach Center Renewable Energy site, will be dedicated on April 22. The campus will purchase directly from the turbine approximately 60 percent of the campus's power needs.

A second initiative is now underway to establish a biomass gasification system on campus that will focus on using corn stover as the primary fuel source to provide up to 75 percent of the heat and cooling loads for the campus from alternative energy. This will be a greenhouse gas neutral energy source that will use the local biomass instead of fossil fuels. It is intended to reduce the use of natural gas and fuel oil as the campus energy source.

This is a state of the art gasification system that will be used to conduct research on the emissions, and production of syngas, from a biomass fuel source. The biomass/energy cogeneration facility is included in the campus's bonding request to the 2005 Minnesota Legislature.

"UMM is proud to be recognized by the EPA, and is privileged to have a campus community that has worked to make this happen," said Rasmussen.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.