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University developing sustainability master plan

Furman University

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Solar panels provide energy for Townes Center

When students returned to campus for the fall semester, they discovered that solar panels had been installed at the south end of the Townes Center for Science, overlooking Stone Soccer Stadium. The sun-concentrating panels, designed by Menova Energies, a Canadian company, provide energy to heat water and transform sunlight into electrical energy for the four-building complex. A federal grant of \$160,000, which Furman matched, supported construction of the panels.



JEREMY FLEMING (2)

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Over the last 15 years Furman has established itself as a leader among colleges in promoting sustainability, energy conservation and environmental education.

The university's success in these areas was recently acknowledged by the receipt of two awards: the National Campus Leadership Award from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, and the Climate Leadership Award from Clean Air-Cool Planet, a group dedicated to finding solutions to global warming.

Each year Furman spends more than \$3.5 million on utility expenses. As a result, one of the university's primary goals is to become energy independent.

In conjunction with the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, Furman is developing a comprehensive plan to reduce its energy consumption and generate more electricity through renewable resources. A 124-member task force made up of faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni and community leaders has been working on the sustainability master plan. It includes a climate action plan that proposes how Furman will become "carbon neutral" by 2026, the university's bicentennial year.

The board of trustees was to discuss the recommendations in the master plan's initial draft during its fall meeting the first week in November. The recommendations include seeking more renewable energy options and providing additional opportunities for students to be involved with sustainability initiatives.

One proposal is to create an energy conservation loan fund whereby students can apply for support to implement conservation projects on campus. A \$43,000 grant from the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado backs the loan fund.

An in-depth article on the master plan will appear in a forthcoming issue of the magazine. To learn more about sustainability at Furman, visit www.furman.edu/sustain.