



News Release

EcoEnergy, HCC announce plans for wind technology program

FREEPORT, Ill. – Oct. 17, 2007 – Officials from Highland Community College and EcoEnergy announced plans Tuesday to develop a wind turbine technology degree program at the Freeport campus.

The HCC program will be the first associate's degree program for wind turbine technicians in Illinois. The College intends to submit the program for approval by the Illinois Community College Board before the end of the year.

"Wind energy is the fastest-growing segment of the energy industry today," said EcoEnergy President Shawn Gaffney. "As more wind energy facilities are developed, the need for qualified turbine techs will increase. We see that as another positive aspect of wind energy – more stable, reliable jobs for our communities."

The program, in which students earn an Associates Degree, is expected to take 2 years to complete, and officials hope to begin offering the classes in Fall 2008. "There are related courses such as prerequisites in electronics that students could take before the program is in place," said HCC Associate Dean of Business and Technology Scott Anderson. "The actual program curriculum will include courses in subjects including electronics, meteorology, lab work and even physical fitness."

The program has come together quickly thanks to the efforts of Anderson, electronic instructor Steve Gellings and Dave Vrtol, Illinois wind project manager for EcoEnergy. "We started discussing the program in late spring 2007. With EcoEnergy's help, we found a college in Oregon that would share curriculum information, and we've been building on that information to create our own program," Anderson said.

The initial capacity for the program is 16 students the first year, plus 16 new students in the second year for a total of 32 students. HCC plans to increase the

program's capacity to 48 students within three years.

"We expect high demand for this program," said HCC President Joe Kanosky. "Similar programs in other states have been very successful, with graduates getting good jobs very soon after graduation. Having a wind technology program is a great fit for Highland, and we're pleased to have a good partner in EcoEnergy."

EcoEnergy's role in the program doesn't stop at development. EcoEnergy staff will serve as instructors for some of the classes and plans to be a longtime partner in supporting the curriculum.

"We're very pleased to be working with Highland Community College," Gaffney said. "We hope to employ some of the graduates of this program, and I'm confident they'll be well-trained and ready for the job."

Highland Community College offers more than 60 programs of applied and transfer degrees, community education and business training. In addition to comprehensive academic programming, Highland provides theatre, art and music opportunities for the community. Highland Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association's Academic Quality Improvement Program. Located in Freeport and Elizabeth, Highland is conveniently positioned in the tri-state region with access to several major metropolitan areas. For more information about Highland Community College, visit www.highland.cc.il.us.

EcoEnergy is an alternative energy solutions developer and a unit of the Morse Group, headquartered in Freeport. The Morse Group has been in business for more than 60 years and serves clients in the electrical, energy and construction markets across the United States. For more information on EcoEnergy, visit www.EcoEnergyllc.com. For more information on wind energy, visit www.ifnotwind.org.

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