James Madison Coordinating Virginia's Green Effort
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By Heather Bowser
HARRISONBURG

James Madison University has taken the lead role in a statewide effort to produce "green" energy, initiating a project that aims to substantially increase the Valley's consumption of renewable energy by 2015.

For years, individuals, organizations and businesses across the commonwealth have tried to boost the use of solar and wind energy. They want Virginia to produce a quarter of its energy from renewable sources by 2025. But up until recently, no one group has coordinated the statewide effort.

Research officials at JMU last month organized a group called the "Virginia 25x'25 State Alliance," according to a release. The coalition, modeled after a national group with a similar name and goals, is geared to push businesses, policy and research toward accomplishing the green goal.

Headquartered in Harrisonburg, the group is the 14th such alliance in the nation, according to Ken Newbold Jr., director of Research Development at JMU and a member of the alliance.

The group's first meeting boasted 55 members, including representatives from other Virginia universities, local governments, nonprofits and businesses and a host of government agencies such as the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

"This is a pretty big effort," Newbold said. "It's a big deal because the nation is facing [a] recognized energy crisis. This program will hopefully help us produce some solutions and regulate costs."

The alliance isn't the only initiative JMU has taken on to spearhead the green energy effort, he said. For the next few years, the university is organizing a long-term "demonstration" project in the Shenandoah Valley.

JMU will partner with energy providers and consumers to promote training and research into environmentally friendly energy sources. Through those partnerships, JMU wants to achieve the 25 percent green goal by 2015, a full decade ahead of the state and national target, Newbold said.

"It's an exciting time in our country for renewable energy," Newbold said. "Our vast agriculture and forestry resources will play a key part in Virginia's energy future."

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HARRISONBURG — JMU is taking the lead in a statewide effort to produce 25 percent of Virginia's energy from renewable resources by 2025. While a number of individuals, organizations and businesses across the state have been involved for many years in trying to boost the state's use of renewable energy from agriculture, solar and wind, there has not been a coordinated effort.

With the recent creation of the Virginia 25x'25 State Alliance, headquartered at JMU, a coalition now exists that can shape the state's energy policy and demonstrate renewable energy strategies for other states as well.

The Virginia 25x'25 State Alliance, modeled after a national organization with similar goals, will develop a new energy vision for the commonwealth and will promote that vision to decision makers, opinion leaders and other stakeholders.

To further exemplify the commitment of Virginia stakeholders to meet the goals of 25x'25, JMU is coordinating the 25x'25 Shenandoah Valley Demonstration Project. The project will use a mix of local resources to increase local renewable energy production while emphasizing efficiency to reduce overall energy consumption. Because of its proximity to Washington D.C. and the eastern seaboard, the Shenandoah Valley presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to a wide audience how America can achieve the national goal of getting 25 percent energy from clean, renewable sources. The 25x'25 Shenandoah Valley Demonstration Project will be a model for other regions of the state and nation in implementing renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.

"It's an exciting time in our country for renewable energy and Virginia's 25x'25 Alliance is dedicated to make our state a front runner in this industry," said Kenneth F. Newbold, Jr., director of research development at JMU and a member of the Virginia 25x'25 State Alliance. "Our vast agriculture and forestry resources will play a key part in Virginia's energy future."

Other members of the alliance include the Virginia Department of Agriculture, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, Hampton Roads Clean Fuels Coalition and Osage Bioenergy.

JMU Leads the Way for 25X25
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James Madison University is leading a statewide effort to produce 25 percent of Virginia's energy from renewable sources by the year 2025. The Virginia 25X25 Alliance headquarters will be also at JMU.

Students and faculty will conduct research on alternative fuel vehicles and wind and solar energy.

JMU director of research Kenneth Newbold says the college wants to take part in the national movement to use more renewable sources of energy and provide energy security.

"JMU has recognized this national priority, and wants to be part of the solution, and help to lead and drive applications, policy and technology for the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia and the nation," says Newbold.

As part of the alliance, local renewable energy production is expected to increase, and that will serve as a model for other parts of the state.