

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

OU marks \$2.7M Human Health Building grant as groundbreaking nears

Anticipating the groundbreaking of Oakland University's \$62 million Human Health Building, campus leaders are pleased to announce a welcome and generous boost to its efforts to develop a state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly academic facility.

The U.S. Department of Energy has awarded the university a \$2,752,163 grant to install a geothermal heat pump system in the facility, which is planned for construction on the northwest corner of OU's 1,441-acre campus. Upon completion in 2012, the building will house both the School of Nursing and the School of Health Sciences.

University and community leaders, faculty, staff, students and other OU supporters will gather on the Human Health Building site for an official groundbreaking ceremony beginning at 10:15 a.m. on Monday, April 12. The event will highlight Oakland's goal to transform health education and research in southeastern Michigan, as well as celebrate cutting-edge technology being utilized to facilitate that goal.

The geothermal heat pump system will include a roof-mounted, solar thermal hot water array designed to provide the 160,000-square-foot facility with summer dehumidification of ventilation air, as well as cooling, heating and domestic hot water.

The Department of Energy grant is part of \$338 million in Recovery Act funding that will support a total of 123 geothermal field development and research projects in 39 states. Oakland's grant is one of 37 projects classified as ground source heat pump demonstrations. These will showcase environmentally friendly heating and cooling technology in a variety of buildings managed by both public and private entities.

Jim Leidel, energy manager for OU facilities management, said the geothermal system will reduce energy-related carbon emissions and likely cut the building's energy costs in half.

"This is the first green building we'll have as a new construction project, and we were originally planning on going for a gold rating," he said, referring to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System developed by the U.S. Green Building Council.

"This grant will take us from the partial, hybrid geothermal system we originally had planned to a full geothermal system assisted by a solar thermal dehumidification component. We think that will most likely push us up to the platinum level, which would make this the first educational facility with this designation in the state of Michigan."

Oakland University President Gary Russi said this is encouraging news and a fitting development in building design given the university's commitment to promote the use technology and innovation in shaping a better future for society.

"A top priority here at Oakland University is to expand our research-intensive academic environment and nurture the kind of scientific advances that have very tangible and very beneficial impacts," he explained. "It's only fitting that as we grow, we also demonstrate just how meaningful these advances can be in real-world applications. We're sincerely grateful that the Department of Energy is helping us do just that."

OU facilities management also has received a \$75,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to help cover the costs of designing a green building. In awarding the grant, foundation administrators complimented the university for its commitment to developing an environmentally sustainable facility.

In addition to its green features, the Human Health Building will feature state-of-the-art classrooms, seminar rooms, an interactive media center and clinical, computer, simulation and distance learning labs. It is being financed with \$40 million in Michigan Capital Outlay Budget funds, as well as funding to be generated through university general revenue bonds.

SUMMARY

The groundbreaking of OU's \$62 million Human Health Building offers time to celebrate a \$2.7 million grant for the environmentally friendly academic facility.

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