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Solar panels added to fourth floor BIF addition

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Gies College of Business are intensifying their commitment to renewable energy with a brand new solar array atop the fourth floor addition of the Business Instructional Facility (BIF). The project began in May 2018 and the new solar panels have been installed this spring semester. Construction is scheduled for completion this summer.

The new 12.5 kW array will be the second rooftop installation at the facility. The current array, on top of Deloitte  solar panels 2 Auditorium, produces about 41,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) annually, – or about 3.4% of the electricity needed to power BIF for an entire year. The new array will be smaller but will supply enough power to offset the anticipated energy usage of the fourth floor addition by contributing 15,500 kWh per year.

The university is continuing to incorporate building-specific solar installations into projects for teaching and research facilities and residence halls as part of major renovations or new construction. Expanding on-campus solar energy production is a specific objective in the 2015 Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) to help the University of Illinois become carbon neutral as soon as possible and by no later than 2050. Currently there are 18 LEED® certified projects on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus, coordinated by Facilities & Services[1]

The Student Sustainability Committee is funding \$60,000 of the \$116,290 project, which maintains the energy performance of the existing LEED v2.1 Platinum building while increasing the overall renewable energy supplied to BIF. At current utility rates, the photovoltaic panels are estimated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 26,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide annually and reduce power costs for BIF by approximately \$1,300 per year.

The Business Instructional Facility is an important example of Gies College of Business' commitment to social responsibility. Completed in 2008, BIF was awarded the U.S. Green Building Council's highest rating of LEED Platinum. It was the first such building at any public university business school in the world and one of only 15 platinum-certified buildings in Illinois. The “green” aspects of BIF include the materials it is made from, the practices used in its construction, the demand on campus utilities, its impact on the environment, and the functions it serves for users.

[1] <http://www.fs.illinois.edu/projects/leed-certifications>

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