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Sustainability committee struggles to pass wind turbine

proposal

[Kelly Gibbs](#)

October 23, 2008



udent Sustainability Committee fears that plans to construct a wind turbine on campus will be abandoned by the University.

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4, the committee embarked on its biggest project, installing three, 1.5 megawatt wind turbines on the campus South Farms. Suhail Barot, ittee chair and graduate student, said the project, which would have covered about 3 percent of the campus's electricity consumption, was funded cating \$300,000 from the Student Clean Energy Fee.

added that it appears the University is going to use the current budget problems from the recession to try to end the committee's original project nstead, they hope to construct only one wind turbine that would transfer 1 percent of the campus's electricity into sustainable wind energy.

ere able to obtain commitments from the administration and the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation for an additional \$3 million to he rest of the cost," Barot said. "However, due to issues with University bureaucracy, the project has dragged along for almost four years, and ncreases have reduced the number of turbines we can afford to one."

nds currently allocated for the project are \$3.3 million. Of this total, \$300,000 comes from the Student Clean Energy Fee, \$2 million from the ; Clean Energy Community Foundations grant and \$1 million from the University. While the University's utility prices will reap the benefits of e electricity, they are unwilling to contribute to the project.

project is important, and the Student Sustainability Committee has consistently voted for the project," said Stephanie Bogle, former chair of the it Sustainability Committee and graduate student. "The project savings would outweigh the expenditures in roughly 14 years."

On the other hand, the coal and natural gas power used by the University has a zero payback, Barot said. Once completed, this facility would have been one of the first University-owned, multi-turbine, on-campus wind farms in the United States.

The University will own, operate and maintain the turbines, and campus facilities will use 100 percent of the electricity generated by the wind turbines. Barot added that this energy will feed directly into the University electric distribution system.

One of the main functions of the Student Sustainability Committee is to explore the options for sustainability and alternative energy generation. The committee has reviewed and recommended projects to be funded from two student fees: the \$5 Sustainable Campus Environment fee and the \$2 Clean Energy Technologies fee.

According to the Student Sustainability Committee Web site, this student fee will finance initiatives including sustainable campus development, green buildings, energy efficiency, sustainable resource purchasing and education and campus engagement to create a more sustainable campus environment. The site also said it helps the University align its operations and academics with the principles of sustainability.

The wind turbine was once expected to be installed and operational by early 2010.

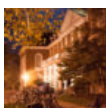
"It is definitely important to maintain focus on promoting this project," said Amanda Schield, president of Students for Environmental Concerns and senior in LAS.

"It is crucial the University should go ahead with the wind turbine project in order to prove that they are serious about their commitment to sustainability."

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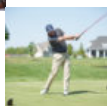
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