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GE promises to hire wind technicians trained at Mesalands

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Victor Abate, vice president of renewables at **General Electric** headquarters in Schenectady, N.Y., has promised to hire all graduates from the wind program at **Mesalands Community College** in Tucumcari.

Mesalands President Phillip O. Barry met with Abate in New York to recruit a GE representative to serve on the College's Wind Energy Advisory Committee. He also requested GE endorsement of the college's wind-technician curriculum to include the GE logo on promotional materials, and he asked for financial aid to build the program's new turbine and purchase tools for training classes.

During the meeting, Abate told Barry that GE would hire all of the program's graduates for the next three years, said Tracy Rascoe, program director and instructor.

"We have developed a program that will become the leader in this industry, able to educate and train technicians to take on the 170,000 new wind technician jobs that will materialize within the next few

years," Rascoe said.

Mesalands -- a small college with about 1,200 students -- plans to build a 60,000-square-foot facility to train students in the operation and maintenance of wind farms. The facility will have a utility-scale, 1.5-megawatt wind turbine financed with \$2.1 million in state money. The turbine, plus ample lab space, will allow faculty and students to conduct research in coordination with **New Mexico State University** and **Sandia National Laboratories**, both of which have agreed to partner with Mesalands.

Only two other colleges in the U.S. offer specialized training for wind technicians, and only one of them has a commercial turbine.

Although the new facility must still be built, Mesalands has already developed the program curriculum and enrollment is underway for students to start course work in the fall 2008 semester.

Given the boom in wind farms -- especially in eastern New Mexico and West Texas -- most program graduates are expected to find jobs rapidly after leaving the program.