

The North American Wind Research and Training Center History

In late 2004 a retired school teacher approached the College President to write a letter to the Governor supporting the concept of renewable energy, specifically wind and the need to begin to educate the community.

In the spring of 2005, the College met with both the New Mexico Secretaries of Economic Development and Energy Minerals and Natural Resources. These meetings resulted in increased support and excitement grew prompting the name of the project to be called The North American Wind Research and Training Center (NAWRTC). In order to insure that this project was worthy of further development, College officials attended the American Wind Energy Association's conference in 2005 and discussed the project with multiple wind turbine manufacturers and maintenance firms. The College received positive response and moved forward with the development of the project. In 2005, the College received a state appropriation with the help of State Senator Clinton Harden and Representative Brian Moore together with a contribution from The Greater Tucumcari Economic Development Center for the College to develop a Feasibility Study. The FS indicated that the project was worthy of further development. A formal business plan was then developed.

The remainder of 2005 the College solicited support from the State and local governments. Although no funds to purchase a wind turbine were received from the Legislature, the College received a \$63,000 grant in November of 2006 from New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary, Joanna Prukop, for the installation of wind resource monitoring equipment and data collection.

Throughout 2006, the College continued to solicit support from all levels of government. With the encouragement of Senators Domenici and Bingaman, and then Representative Udall, the College was awarded a \$2 million U.S. Department of Labor Grant for the President's Community Based Workforce Development. In April of 2007, the College received over \$2.1 million in state appropriations from Governor Richardson and the New Mexico Legislature.

In 2007 the NAWRTC Research Agenda, which encompasses operations and maintenance, was finalized with Sandia National Laboratories.

In July of 2007 the College purchased a 1.5 megawatt wind turbine to be erected in October of 2008. In August of 2008, the first class of wind energy technicians began training through The North American Wind Research and Training Center at Mesalands Community College.

In the summer of 2007 the College submitted its Capital Projects request to the New Mexico Higher Education Department. That process resulted in the College being recommended for \$7 million for the North American Wind Research and Training

Facility. This recommendation was forwarded to the New Mexico Legislature and Governor Richardson in spring of 2008 for inclusion in the statewide General Obligation (GO) Bonds. In the fall of 2008 the citizens of New Mexico approved the GO bonds and Randal Kilmer and Associates of Clovis began the architectural design for the NAWRTC. Bids were let and awarded in the fall of 2009 with construction starting in October by Gerald A. Martin, Ltd. of Albuquerque, New Mexico.