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PAGE 3

Mesalands proposes new Wind Center

TUCUMCARI—Something new is in the wind at Mesalands College and it has the attention of several influential people in Santa Fe offices. It is called the Mesalands Wind Center (MWC) and it could bring about the creation of a great deal of academic and economic activity in Tucumcari.

The proposed Center will provide educational opportunities in a new facility that will educate and train people about all aspects of wind energy technology. It will include an operational turbine located on College property where students can learn, in a hands-on situation, about the operation and maintenance of wind turbines. At the same time the turbine will provide power to the college, thereby reducing the present energy bill of the institution.

After meeting with Peter Kampfer of the Greater Tucumcari Economic Development Corporation, Amy Welch of the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy, representatives of the Rural Development Corporation, and local advisor Robert Lumpkin, an initial proposal of the MWC has been presented to Rick Homans, New Mexico Secretary of Economic Development and David Griscom, Energy Specialist for the Regional Development Corporation by Dr. Phillip O. Barry, President of Mesalands Community College, with encouraging results. Plans are now to meet with Joanna Prukop, New Mexico

Secretary of Energy to seek additional approval.

At the same time, Representative Brian Moore is requesting a capital project request for \$70,000 that will be used for energy projects in eastern New Mexico. All of this comes on the heels of a recent announcement by Governor Bill Richardson about his desire to continue to develop renewable energy sources in New Mexico.

"The Mesalands Wind Center is a winning situation for this area in many ways," said Dr. Barry. He described the various classes that will be offered at Mesalands Community College as a result of the proposed facility and the introduction of related industries and services that could come to this area as a result of the continued development of wind energy.

"We visualize the possibility of our Wind Center becoming a training and information center where people visiting the area can come and see how wind turbines work and gain a greater understanding of the importance of the development of renewable energy sources, and technicians from all over the country can come and receive training on construction and maintenance of turbines," Dr. Barry said. Possible related businesses and industries that could result from the continued development of wind energy in the area include sources for electrical and mechanical

services, and warehousing. Not only will there be an increased need to support for the turbines, but there will probably be a growing need for support and development of an expanded grid system as well.

In addition to having a wind turbine as the central component to the MWC, there will also be solar panels connected to the system, thereby giving an additional dimension to the project. Another type of renewable energy that may be added to the project later involves biomass or bioenergy. Biomass can be any organic matter from plants or animals that can be converted to fuel and serve as a means to generate electricity or provide power in other forms.



Photo courtesy Mesalands Community College

Reviewing proposed wind center

TUCUMCARI—New Mexico Secretary of Economic Development Rick Homans (left) and David Griscom, Regional Development Corporation (standing) review the Mesalands Wind Center proposal with Dr. Phillip O. Barry, President of Mesalands Community College.