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MSU helps fuel expansion, new jobs with steam-powered energy plant

Using a public-private partnership made possible by the 2009 New Jersey Economic Stimulus Act Montclair State University (MSU) is replacing their aging energy system with a \$90 million heating and cooling system that is creating 400 new jobs.

When complete, the project will provide all the steam power needed for the approximately 250-acre campus and 75 percent of electricity for the university, Dr. Susan A. Cole, president of MSU told a gathering of university faculty, state officials and interested parties on Oct. 26.

"I cannot overstate the importance of this project, which is a natural - and necessary - step in continuing the enormous development that has taken place at the university over the past 14 years," she said.

The university's current heating and cooling systems are "inefficient and outdated," and in some cases the pipes that distribute heat are "nearly 100 years old," Cole said.

"We were looking at what are we going to do when the old structure fails," she said.

Joseph Fiordaliso, commissioner for the state Board of Public Utilities supports such plans as the energy plant at MSU.

"The cleanliness of the energy here goes to our master plan goals of enhancing the environment of the State of New Jersey," he said.

State Senator Raymond Lesniak sponsored the legislation that created the stimulus act.

"Not only does it serve the needs of students but it creates 400 new buildings and trades jobs," Lesniak said in an interview with reporters. He also said, "I think 50 years from now people are going to look back and say we really revolutionized energy."

The public-private partnership that enabled the project to be built without tax or university dollars is the second such one MSU has embarked on using the stimulus act. The first was the building of The Heights, an approximately 2,000-bed residence hall, which opened last year and Cole noted that the gathering could see from their seats.

The construction of the university's new energy system is expected to be complete next year Cole said after her speech.

"Almost every building on the campus will be touched," said Frank DiCola, president and CEO for Energenic, which is building the project. "Piping systems have been dug up moved modified and replaced.

"Dr. Cole, you take care of MSU, you do your best to educate the leaders of tomorrow," DiCola said. "We'll do our best to provide efficient energy."

University officials, legislators and representatives for Energenic took a moment to sign a 20 foot steel beam that will be a part of the new plant. As their red and black markers, which are the university's colors, squeaked, a gaggle of media looked on.

Lesniak, said there was a lot of opposition to the part of the legislation that allowed private enterprise to be apart of the process, which was critical to get the project done.

However, in the future all infrastructure projects, including bridges, roads and sewers will be completed through public-private partnerships, he said.

"That's the wave of the future," Lesniak said. "That's the way it's done in Europe and their facilities are better than ours. We'll catch up."

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