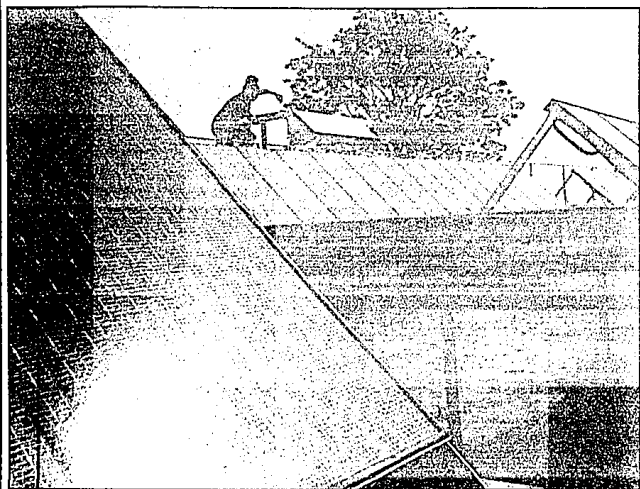


# Edison, OCC 'snare the sun' commercially



By Penny Wright  
special writer

A new solar electric installation drew utility and manufacturing executives to Oakland Community College's Auburn Hills campus last week for dedication ceremonies.

The system will provide power for lighting, heating and cooling, and running equipment in a large office-classroom building.

Besides being the largest amorphous silicon photovoltaic installation — it converts light into electricity — in the Midwest, it is Michigan's first solar electric project built for utility application.

Willard Holland, vice president of Detroit Edison Co., pulled the lever to activate the 4,000-watt photovoltaic system, saying the project will give his company the opportunity to learn more about solar electric power.

"This installation may represent an opportunity for the future. If the system proves beneficial we could start advising our customers to use this technology," said Holland.

THE 4,000-WATT (4 kilowatts) system is connected to Detroit Edison lines in a power-sharing arrangement.

A two-way connection allows OCC to send excess power to the utility or receive power from Edison when power demands exceed available solar generated electricity.

"We will be looking at two aspects

of the system," said Bob Pratt of Edison. "Each utility will monitor the system through a computer hook up to learn how well the system performs under our climate conditions. Then we will study the economics of the system with an eye toward future use."

Pratt estimated the system will produce enough electricity to power an average household using 560 kilowatt-hours per month.

THE PROJECT was funded by a seven-member consortium: Detroit Edison, Consumers Power Co., Lansing Board of Water and Light, Energy Conversion Devices/Sovonics Solar Systems of Troy, OCC, Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) of California and Michigan Energy and Resource Research Association (MERRA).

The installation's estimated value is \$175,000-\$200,000. It includes costs of the solar equipment, monitoring devices, design and installation.

Heart of the solar electric installation is an array of 144 photovoltaic panels manufactured by Sovonics Solar Systems, a subsidiary of Energy Conversion Devices of Troy.

In contrast to the more common photovoltaic panel containing semiconductive silicon wafers, Sovonics panels use a thick film of amorphous silicon material deposited on a sheet of stainless steel to convert sunlight into direct current (DC). The technique was pioneered by Stanford Ovshinsky, president of Energy Conversion Devices Inc.

An inverter is connected to the array and transforms the DC current to alternating current (AC). Each 2-by-4-foot panel is rated at 12 volts and produces 32 watts of electricity — enough to charge a car battery. Suggested retail price is \$300 per panel.

ATTENDING THE ribbon-cutting ceremony, Ovshinsky emphasized that alternate energy technologies could help the U.S. avoid involvement in Middle East tensions.

"It's a matter of blood and oil," Ovshinsky said.

"Snaring the sun and using it for energy is doing something for peace. It's a way to not only save jobs, but to save the planet. Under the sun, let us prosper."

Debra Rowe, director of OCC's alternate energies program, believes the installation will increase interest in alternate energy issues.

"In the past we have changed the focus of our program to keep up with the interests of our students. Energy conservation has been emphasized," said Rowe. "We will likely add some special courses on photovoltaics and other energy generators."

"We have approximately 180 students in our program. About 60 percent are people who want to learn how to conserve energy in their home. The other students are training for careers in the energy field."

"All of our students are here because they believe alternate energy technologies are a good investment," she said.

This is a portion of the 144-panel solar electric generating facility set up by Detroit Edison and other utilities on the Auburn Hills

Campus of Oakland Community College. Generating 4,000 watts, it was manufactured by Energy Conversion Devices of Troy.

## Alternate energy conference open

Oakland Community College's Alternate Energies Technology Department will host an all-day conference at the Auburn Hills Campus from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, June 20.

It's geared for homeowners and individuals interested in the rapidly growing energy industry. The Auburn Hills Campus is on Featherston Road east of Opdyke.

The conference will feature tours of the Center for Advanced Technology, the Energy Demonstration Center, the photovoltaics array displays and speakers. New technologies and environmental implications will be discussed.

Information on conservation, renewable energies, solar energy and biomass applications, and employment opportunities in the energy industry will also be available.

"The Alternate Energies Program functions as a community resource," said Debra Rowe, OCC alternate energies instructor. "The conference will give consumers an opportunity to learn about techniques that can be used to lower utility bills. . . Individuals interested in working in the energy industry will get a chance to take a look at career and program opportunities."

Areas of training in OCC's Alternate Energies Technology Program include energy conservation and management, solar energy, heat reclamation, cogeneration and building automation.

For registration information about the Alternate Energies Conference, call OCC at 853-4394.

## Gilbert won't force vote on petitions

AP — An Oakland County circuit judge has rejected a request to force the state to accept petition signatures aimed at putting the issue of a part-time Legislature on the ballot.

But Judge Alice Gilbert delayed ruling on whether to order an election for proposals blocked last year by a Supreme Court ruling that signatures had to be collected within a 180-day period.

Gilbert ruled April 30 that the state Legislature unconstitutionally passed the 180-day "state signature" limit. That reinstated a previous regulation saying signatures could be collected anytime in the four years between gubernatorial elections.

Based on her ruling, backers of a part-time Legislature proposal delivered petition signatures to the secretary of state's office last week.

State Elections Director Christopher Thomas, however, said they must have been collected since Nov. 4 — the latest gubernatorial election.

PETITION ORGANIZERS withdrew the petitions and traveled to Gilbert's court to argue that the state should accept them.

But she refused to order the state to take the petitions, said her clerk, Sue Young.

Young said the judge "took under advisement" — or refused to rule on at this time — a request by Ann Arbor attorney David Rafflaub that she order an election on ballot issues that were blocked or "chilled" by last year's Supreme Court ruling.

The high court ruling had thwarted ballot drives to reinstate the death penalty in Michigan and curb utility rate increases.

DEAN FITZPATRICK, a job shop owner from Troy, said about 380,000 signatures had been collected to put the part-time Legislature issue before voters. That appeared to far exceed the 239,657 valid signatures needed to place the issue on the 1988 ballot.

But under Thomas' ruling, only signatures collected since the gubernatorial election would be valid.

The part-time Legislature drive was inherited from Brighton businessman Richard Chrysler, who unsuccessfully sought the Republican gubernatorial nomination last year.

Also part of the drive is John Laube of Grosse Pointe Woods, a General Motors Corp. employee who tried unsuccessfully to recall Gov. James Blanchard after the 1983 income tax increase.

## OCC dean at workshop

Oakland Community College is one of 60 community and junior colleges participating in a national effort to expand educational services for adults.

Dr. Carol F. Stencel, dean of OCC's Business and Professional Institute, represented OCC at a workshop at the national convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges in Dallas, Texas. Titled "Options: Expanding Educational Services for Adults," the

workshop featured an overview of the guidelines and strategies to successfully expand, improve, or design a comprehensive program.

The OPTIONS program resulted from a yearlong synthesis of research undertaken by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at Ohio State University.

Participating colleges represent urban, suburban and rural communities in 35 states.



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