

UVA, Darden, Dominion Virginia Power Launch Ambitious Solar Partnership

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Dec. 9, 2016 — The University of Virginia and its Darden School of Business have entered into an innovative solar power partnership with Dominion Virginia Power. The agreement, announced Friday, positions UVA to achieve key sustainability targets, while further expanding Dominion's renewable energy initiatives.

Under the agreement, the University and Darden will purchase the entire output of electricity produced at a new, 160-acre solar facility in King William County for the next 25 years. The UVA Hollyfield Solar project – owned by Dominion, who will construct and operate it – is expected to produce an estimated 17 megawatts of alternating current, a figure representing about 12 percent of the University's electric demand. The Darden School, as a participant in the partnership, will assume responsibility for about 25 percent of the electricity production, which will enable the school to achieve its long-term zero-carbon goal.

"This is an exciting day for the University of Virginia and for the commonwealth," Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe said. "Last year, I announced a state commitment to power our operations with more renewable energy, and today's announcement helps to fulfill that commitment. With this project, the state is now a third of the way to meeting its 8 percent procurement goal in fewer than 12 months.

"I congratulate UVA on its leadership and strongly urge other higher education institutions to use this model to reduce the commonwealth's carbon footprint and drive innovation in the renewable industry."

Kevin Fay, who chairs the Board of Visitors' Buildings and Grounds Committee, challenged the University to set stretch goals that would more aggressively address sustainability and firmly place UVA in a leadership position.

Patrick Hogan, the University's executive vice president and chief operating officer, cited the collaboration as an important new element in the University's well-established and growing portfolio of sustainability initiatives.

"Adding renewable, solar energy to the mix of options means the University of Virginia is making even bigger strides in our efforts to be efficient, green and sustainable," Hogan said.

"The University is pleased to be working with Dominion Virginia Power in this unique venture."

Jim Eck, vice president of business development for Dominion Virginia Power, said, "This project with the University of Virginia represents the first large-scale solar facility dedicated to a Virginia university and is a continuation of our partnership on the solar front. We are pleased to support the University in achieving its key sustainability goals."

The solar farm will enable the University and Darden to reduce their combined carbon footprint by more than 18,000 metric tons a year, positioning each to meet key sustainability milestones.

UVA has pledged to reduce its carbon footprint by 25 percent below its 2009 levels by the year 2025.

Darden's sustainability vision includes becoming a carbon-neutral enterprise by 2020. Professor Michael Lenox, Darden's senior associate dean and chief strategy officer, said the school over the past eight years has instituted multiple energy-efficiency initiatives to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint. Darden also has made great strides in composting, recycling and energy-use reduction.

"By supporting the solar energy project, Darden will reach carbon neutrality by 2020 and will be one of the only top-ranked business schools in the United States to realize this accomplishment," Lenox said. "We at Darden are pleased to participate in this project. I believe that Virginia's universities can and should play an important role in leading the way for the commonwealth's transition to cleaner energy production."

UVA Senior Vice President for Operations Colette Sheehy said the University has a successful track record on sustainability and energy conservation initiatives, with the new solar energy project broadening that commitment.

The University has reduced energy costs, lowered water usage and diverted waste from landfills, she said. Through Facilities Management's Delta Force program, which pursues energy savings, the University has reduced energy use in 37 buildings, which together constitute about 44 percent of UVA's energy consumption. Other UVA initiatives include fueling buses with biodiesel, promoting ride-sharing and biking, providing University-wide recycling, composting food wastes and serving locally sourced foods in dining facilities.

"This is a major step forward in reducing our carbon footprint," Sheehy said. "Much credit should be given to Don Sundgren, associate vice president and chief facilities officer, and Cheryl Gomez, director of operations in Facilities Management, for their vision and analysis that allowed us to see the possibilities this project would bring to the University."

Dominion acquired the Hollyfield Solar Project as a development asset from Virginia Solar LLC, a Virginia-based company. The facility will feature approximately 65,000 solar panels, enough to power about 4,250 homes at peak output. Construction is slated to start in late 2017, with commercial operations occurring by the end of 2018.

Dominion now has announced 391 megawatts (alternating current) of large-scale solar facilities in Virginia under development or already in operation. This amounts to enough electricity at peak capacity to power more than 95,000 homes.