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College Trains Workers for Green Jobs in the Ohio Valley

October 13, 2009

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - One of the few American industries actually growing right now is the manufacturing of wind, solar and other renewable-energy equipment. Observers expect solar cell production in Ohio to double or triple in the next few years, thanks in part to a state requirement for a portion of electricity to come from alternative sources.

Jerry Hutton, the dean of Ohio's *Hocking College Energy Institute*, says their program to train workers for the industry is growing rapidly, and their first few graduates have already been snapped up.

"Most of those students got jobs locally - Dovetail Solar And Wind, Third Sun, Sun Power, Global Cooling, Chieftain Biofuels - twenty to thirty minutes from here. Those people have pretty much taken our graduates and they hope to continue to grow as well."

Hutton says creating jobs in the renewable-energy industry will take a lot of work, and it won't happen overnight. But he says the program at Hocking College, in Appalachian Ohio, is getting a lot more students than it did when it started.

"It was three students and a briefcase six years ago; now we have over a hundred students and a brand new campus. It's not going to fall in your lap. It's an extreme amount of work; you have to stay the course and keep the faith."

Critics have dismissed renewable energy as marginal, but Hutton says solar and wind power are reaching mass production and competitive viability.

He will be one of the speakers at a "Good Jobs, Green Jobs" workshop at the Big Sandy Arena in Huntington, West Virginia, next Sunday (October 18), 1-4 p.m., as part of the Create West Virginia conference.

Dan Heyman, Public News Service - WV

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