

Utah Campus Tackles Aging Buildings

Colleges and universities across the country are grappling with problems as campus buildings and mechanical systems age. The University of Utah in Salt Lake City has decided to do something about it. It has opted to use performance contracting to finance \$31 million in energy improvements that include the retrofitting of 23 buildings and the construction of a new chiller plant. Roughly one third of that amount – \$10 million – will be invested in building retrofits.

“The university gets high marks for being innovative and putting aside traditional forms of project financing,” said Mike Glenn, director of the Utah Office of Energy Services and lead for the Rebuild America Western States Coalition partnership. “State appropriations were never enough to do what needed to be done. The University of Utah serves as a regional example of how universities can improve their campuses and save money by investing in energy efficiency.”

One of the first projects fostered under the

western states partnership was with the University of Utah, which has a student population of 26,000. The 10 state energy offices that comprise the partnership work with energy service company (ESCO) representatives to overcome barriers to performance contracting among facility managers.

The university worked with a team from the Utah Energy Office and the Division of Facilities Construction and Management in the competitive selection of Viron Energy Services, Inc. The ESCO has started work on 1.3 million square feet in the Eastern portion of the campus which houses health sciences, hospital, school of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and biomedical buildings.

“The University is targeting aging buildings – 30 to 40 years old – that are inefficient in terms of heating, cooling, lighting and water use,” according to university plant operations director Pieter van der Have. Approximately \$1.4 million in annual savings from the retrofit

of campus buildings will be reinvested in other energy improvements on campus, such as the replacement of several chiller plants with one central high-efficiency plant.

“Performance contracting provides a mechanism for financing and replacing equipment which reduces our maintenance liabilities,” noted van der Have. “It harvests some great energy savings – and we get fewer complaints from occupants.”

Other universities within the jurisdiction of the western states partnership are using the University of Utah as a model for their own procurement. “Members of our western coalition have benefited from help and support from Rebuild America Financial Services,” said Glenn.

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