



Innovative Energy... and Entrepreneurs

DR. TONY SMITH

President and CEO of Secure Futures tells a guest about the solar array, the first commercial installation in the state.

Innovative Village @ Rockingham (IV@R), with an expansive valley, poultry farms, and mountains, is a magnet for professionals focused on the research, testing, production, processing, and distribution of energy. Here in the Harrisonburg, Va., area, college and university energy programs combine with entrepreneurs and abundant natural resources to support biomass, wind, solar and breakthrough energy technologies.

Sustainability is practiced as a way-of-life in the communities surrounding the Village where energy conservation, research, and instruction are part of the psyche.

In 2010, Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) flipped the switch on Virginia's first commercial-scale solar project capable of generating more than 100 kW of electricity. An innovative 20-year contract with Secure Futures allows EMU to purchase the solar power at a "grid-parity" price equivalent to the rate paid for power from the local utility.

"Our environmental stewardship approach focuses on people, the planet, and profits," says Dr. Tony Smith, CEO and president of Secure Futures. "We offer sustainable energy with a good return-on-investment for the customer and great benefits for the environment.

"At EMU, the solar array gives students hands-on experience with photovoltaic panels," adds Smith, who also is associate professor of business and economics and for the MBA at EMU.

The hybrid wind turbine/solar pilot project at James Madison University (JMU) is paving the way toward similar energy applications throughout the Shenandoah Valley. Preliminary test results indicate the Valley's wind resources are suitable for small turbines that have a dual purpose—charging storage batteries and producing electricity for the grid.

Innovation Village @ Rockingham is infused with a strong community spirit and "can-do" optimism that helps great ideas move to reality. Anchored by SRI International's 25-acre east coast campus, IV@R is a 365-acre Class A research and technology village being developed in three phases, allowing for the establishment of new facilities or campuses customized for each company's specific needs.