

## Students tap solar power

By Josh Nichols, Free Press Staff Writer

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A group of Mesa State College students knew how much money they needed to bring solar power to campus, so they set out last year to raise it.

They announced last week they hit their goal — and then some.

“We initially set our goal at \$42,000, but when funders realized the value of our project they wanted to help us succeed,” said Jessica Shaw, a member of the student group Western Colorado Action Network.

The students actually raised more than \$65,000.

They were able to smash their goal courtesy of some significant contributions toward the end of their campaign.

In January, the students received \$28,000 from the Denver Foundation.

Students began their campaign to bring solar energy to Mesa State in November 2004 after Amendment 37 passed the state ballot.

Now WeCAN is in the final stages of working with the Mesa State College facilities department to finalize installation of the largest grid-tie photovoltaic solar system in western Colorado.

Grid-tie systems are designed to feed directly into the main electric box to reduce the use of electricity from the grid.

If the solar system is producing more electricity than someone is using, the system will feed power back to the grid.

“We recognized that Colorado could be a leader in solar energy and we wanted Mesa State College to be part of the movement toward sustainable energy,” said WeCAN member Kim Lisenby. “WeCAN is here on campus to prove that clean renewable energy is both a viable and a cost effective source of energy for western Colorado.”

Along with providing renewable energy for Mesa State College, WeCAN will receive a sizable rebate for their solar installation.

Xcel Energy and the Colorado Public Utilities Commission have set up a rebate program in accordance with Amendment 37 that rebates customers \$4.50 per watt on solar systems less than 10 kilowatts in size.

WeCAN will use the rebated money to establish scholarships and seed money for their future campus projects.

WeCAN currently is campaigning for a “green fun” that will help finance environmental projects at Mesa State College.

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From left: Trevor Jones, Mesa State College President Tim Foster, Kim Lisenby, Celia Demers and Jason Sullivan pose for a picture at a Western Colorado Action Network event last fall. The network announced last week it reached its fund raising goal to bring solar power to campus. *Courtesy Photo*

