



PHOTOS BY PAUL BUCKOWSKI/TIMES UNION

CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES across from the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering on Wednesday. The NanoCollege is planning a solar manufacturing center on land that will be available after the project is complete.

A tax to charge solar center

TU 7/28/11

NanoCollege makes a case for a \$25 million share of levy applied to utility bills

By **LARRY RULISON**
Business writer

ALBANY — The University at Albany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering is hoping to land \$25 million from the state to bolster its new federally funded solar manufacturing center.

The NanoCollege wants \$5 million a year over five years from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, which leads the state's energy initiatives.

The money would come from a NYSERDA-run funding source called the System Benefits Charge that is essentially a tax on the monthly utility bills of consumers and businesses. The SBC, which was started by state regulators when utilities were deregulated in the late 1990s, collects about \$175 million annually. The average homeowner pays several dollars a month to the SBC.

The NanoCollege says the NYSERDA money would help attract solar manufacturing companies to the state.



THE CENTER'S purpose is to standardize the U.S. solar industry and get the most advanced and cost-effective solar technologies to the marketplace.

In April, the U.S. Department of Energy awarded the NanoCollege \$57.5 million to create a solar manufacturing consortium.

Named the U.S. Photovoltaic Manufacturing Consortium, the center is designed to unify the U.S. solar industry and rapidly deploy the most advanced and cost-effective solar technologies to

compete with countries like China and Germany that have been dominating the industry.

The NanoCollege is spearheading the effort with Sematech, the computer chip technology consortium that recently moved from Austin, Texas, to Albany. Sematech was responsible for helping

Please see **SOLAR C2** ►

SOLAR

▼ CONTINUED FROM C1

the U.S. computer chip industry reclaim the lead from Japan in the 1980s.

Many of the same processes used to make computer chips are used to make solar-electric, or photovoltaic, panels.

The SBC is up for renewal by the state Public Service Commission, and NYSERDA is proposing new programs targeting technology and market development that aim to accelerate the state's "clean energy" economy.

The NanoCollege believes a good use for the money would be for its new solar manufacturing consortium, which will build a manufacturing clean room at a new building planned for its Albany NanoTech complex on Fuller Road.

The NanoCollege has already attracted dozens of companies and

academic institutions to the center, along with \$300 million in funding.

"What this money allows us to do is add capacity to the line and jobs to New York," said Alain Kalloyeros, chief executive officer of the college.

NYSERDA has submitted its new plan for the SBC to the PSC. The plan sets aside tens of millions of dollars for clean energy initiatives, including solar.

However NYSERDA awards money through a competitive bidding process, so the plan can't say where the money will go.

James Denn, a spokesman for the PSC, said there is no timetable for a decision on the SBC plan, although he said it expires at the end of this year, and the commission will not allow the program to expire without making a decision.

► Reach Larry Rulison at 454-5504 or at lrulison@timesunion.com.