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Roundtable discussion: Southern Nevada's future in renewable and sustainable energy

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2007 Inaugural Energy Symposium

Round Table Discussion

“Southern Nevada’s Future in Renewable and Sustainable Energy”

Facilitator:

Oliver Hemmers, UNLV-OSEP

Members:

Mike Kroelinger, UNLV

Eric Miller, Univ. Hawaii

Stan Smith, UNLV

Kent Hoekman: DRI

Each member was asked to speak for about 5 minutes before the discussion was open to the public.

Mike Kroelinger: UNLV has to focus and be pro-active (vs. re-active) in addressing the challenges ahead. It is not enough to copy initiatives at other places but to develop our own unique programs. This can be done through active research collaborations on and off campus. It is also necessary to develop the infrastructure to support these initiatives. An example is the 2030 challenge the year at which new buildings should be carbon neutral.

Eric Miller: Nevada and Hawaii face similar energy challenges and both have similar underutilized resources such as solar, geothermal and wind. There is no single technology that can change oil dependence in the near future. One technology that would work well in southern Nevada is photovoltaic and the challenge is to further reduce the costs for solar cells. This would help with a distributed energy production (e.g. roof tops, smaller power plants) throughout the state.

Stan Smith: It is UNLV’s priority to address the issues related to renewable energy production and urban sustainability. The necessary changes that go along with the introduction of renewable and sustainable energy programs will affect the lives of many and social issues will need to be addressed as well. UNLV’s focus is also on fundamental research as well as building and developing teams and reaching out to the community. Another major issue that needs to be addressed is the water crisis which is closely related to the energy problems.

Kent Hoekman: One of the main focuses for southern Nevada should be on solar energy and energy conservation. It will also help to interconnect the northern and southern Nevada power grids in order to distribute the renewable energies that are produced in the north through geothermal and the south through solar. There are also potentials for biomass to energy conversions and a bio-diesel industry. It

is important to transition the infrastructure for fuel distribution and to develop solid partnerships with industry.

Audience: The audience was asking how companies can get into contact with UNLV. The office of the Vice President for Research has personnel that work on economic development and should be used for inside-out and outside-in contacts. Furthermore, the true costs of coal burning plants are not passed on to the end users and it is therefore harder for renewable energy to compete. Also, the renewable energy market will create many new jobs not just in big cities but also rural communities.

The audience is hoping for an ongoing dialog and a continuation of the energy symposium on a yearly basis.