

State Agriculture Department funds research effort at Alfred University

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ALFRED – Alfred University's Center for Environmental and Energy Research (CEER) and an Arkport, NY, business will share a \$19,700 grant from the Agricultural Energy Pilot Program, according to Nathan L. Rudgers, state Agriculture commissioner. Dr. Chris Sinton, assistant director of CEER, is the principal investigator for AU on the project. Sinton and Roy Butler of Four Winds Renewable Energy will use the state grant to fabricate and install three units to demonstrate and market photovoltaic-powered pumping systems for watering dairy and beef cattle. For the demonstration project, the pumps will be installed at neighboring Alfred State College's farm. They will use proven technology that is currently used in the western United States but has not yet been utilized in the Northeast, said Sinton. The benefits of the system include opening up for grazing remote pastures that have no surface water resources, he said. The systems can also reduce the risk to animals that are now drinking directly from ponds and streams. "We want to demonstrate that this environmentally friendly technology can give regional dairy farmers a competitive edge by providing a reliable and inexpensive method of supplying water for their livestock," said Sinton. One mobile pump will be taken upcoming fairs and other events to demonstrate the system to farmers and consumers. Alfred University created its Center for Environmental and Energy Research to meet the continuing national need for innovation and development in resource management, energy efficiency, and environment sustainability, said Dr. Robert K. Bitting, associate vice provost for sponsored research and acting CEER director. "We are excited that the State Agriculture Department funded this initiative," said Bitting. "This project fits very well into our mission because it looks at an alternative way to power critically needed pumps, thus lessening reliance on traditional sources of electrical power. For this particular demonstration project, the photovoltaic cells will be used to operate farm pumps, but if it's successful in showing that this is an affordable, reliable way to provide power, then it could be used in a number of applications." Rudgers noted that the Agricultural Energy Pilot Program awards grants to eligible individuals, corporations, not-for-profits, partnerships, associations, cooperatives, or educational institutions for projects that employ alternative energy power production. AU's grant is a result of a competitive solicitation conducted last fall. A new round of grants will be solicited this spring.