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The Midwest Renewable Energy Association and Second Nature Publish Case Studies to Guide Higher Education Investment in Solar Energy

CUSTER, Wisconsin and BOSTON, Massachusetts - (September 6, 2016) As part of the US Department of Energy's SunShot Initiative, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) and Second Nature announce the release of [three case studies](#) highlighting higher education investment in solar energy projects.

The purpose of the case studies is to showcase working financial models for universities and other higher education institutions to invest in solar energy on campus. Not only can onsite solar projects offer cost savings and greenhouse gas reductions to these institutions, they can also provide research and training opportunities, investment diversification, and a way to show their commitment to the next generation.

According to the MREA's Executive Director, Nick Hylla, "For most universities in the US it is not a question of if they want make investments that save money on energy bills or if they want to demonstrate their commitment to local, clean energy solutions but how they can do it in a way that provides the most benefit. In this regard, there are a variety of institutions that have developed projects that maximize benefits and show promise for widespread replication. We want to share those successes."

The case studies follow the decision-making and project development pathways of four different institutions and include models for foundation investment, use of student green fees, scaling commitments from small demonstration systems, and developing partnerships to maximize project financial returns.

"Colleges and universities addressing climate change have the leadership and desire to take on these topics" – says Michele Madia, Director of Education and Partnerships at Second Nature. "These case studies were put together to help guide their efforts and provide alternatives for financing these important projects."

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The MREA and Second Nature work together under the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Market Pathways grant, which assists student-led university teams in creating Campus Photovoltaic (PV) Roadmaps to guide university investment in solar energy. Current university partners – including the University of Minnesota, Purdue University, Illinois State University, and the Missouri University of Science and Technology – are nearing completion of their Campus PV Roadmaps and will be presenting their proposals to their university governance boards for consideration. Aside from guiding project investment on their own campuses, the roadmaps will be nationally disseminated to serve as working examples for other universities to deploy solar energy on campus and make investments that advance their foundation and sustainability goals.

This fall, the project and case studies will be presented at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Conference in Baltimore, October 9-12, 2016. Leading up to the conference, Second Nature will be [hosting a webinar](#) titled "Solar University Network: Innovation in Solar Energy Finance & Development" on September 22 at 2:30 p.m. ET. Featuring Nick Hylla of the MREA, the webinar will guide participants through the case studies' financial investment models as well as lessons learned from working with higher education institutions in the pursuit of solar energy through the Solar Market Pathways grant. For more information, please go to www.solarendowment.org/resources.

About MREA:

The MREA was founded in 1990 as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational organization promoting renewable energy and sustainable living through education and demonstration. Today, the organization still upholds those ideals as they work with universities, communities, and residents to advance renewable energy investment and deployment. For more information about the MREA, please visit www.midwestrenew.org. For information on university solar assistance, visit www.solarendowment.org.

About Second Nature:

Second Nature works to proactively build a sustainable and positive global future through initiating bold commitments, scaling successful actions, and accelerating innovative solutions among leadership networks in higher education. The Climate Leadership Commitments, a signature program of Second Nature, is based on the premise that bold commitments to climate action and resilience by higher education leaders yield positive changes at their institutions, and beyond. For more information, contact: Michele Madia, Director, Education and Partnerships at mmadia@secondnature.org

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