



## Shepherd Union Photovoltaic

*By the Energy & Sustainability Office*

The next time you walk into the Student Union building - look up! The installation of 148 solar panels on the Shepherd union in the fall of 2011 was a big step forward for Weber State. If you tell students we want to become a sustainable campus, there are two things they expect to see; solar panels, and recycle bins. ***WSU has completed some significant energy saving projects, but none are as visible as the Union solar array.*** The final touch on the project was an interactive water fountain by the south entrance powered by a PV panel. It is widely reported by many installers of solar panels that their visibility alone has an added effect of making the building occupants more energy conscious. "When people see where their power is coming from, they tend to use less" (Jim Evanoff, NPS)

The \$230,000 project was funded by money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). While the power from the installation is enough to run the equivalent of 3.5 houses (569,000 kWh per year); without help from stimulus or rebates the payback period would still be about 15 to 20 years.

***So will we see more of those beautiful blue squares popping up on WSU rooftops?*** Unfortunately not in the short term. The energy office is hoping that global PV manufacturing will benefit from economies of scale as supply catches up to demand. If the trend in price decline continues, and based on projections of increasing grid power prices, in about 5-6 years we expect to see a pricing "sweet spot" in which the feasibility of PV installations will be an easy sell to all decision makers.

