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## Ohio universities expand programs to train students for green collar jobs

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Ohio business and political leaders are working to position the state as a leader in the renewable energy field, from creating energy sources such as ethanol to manufacturing parts for wind turbines.

The state's Third Frontier Project, for example, is funding several research projects that will lead to more jobs in the renewable energy field.

But if the state is indeed to become one of the leaders in creating "green

collar" jobs, it will have to educate and train people to work in those industries, and that movement is already underway.

"As a state we've already had students at universities studying renewable energy sources, through engineering programs, developing fuel cells. A lot of it is already in place, but it's looking like a lot of Ohio schools and universities are developing more programs," said Marlon Cheatham, brand manager for the Ohio Business Development Coalition, a nonprofit organization that provides marketing

strategy and implementation to support Ohio's economic development efforts.

One of the schools that has committed to training workers for the renewable energy industry is the Hocking College Energy Institute in Nelsonville, which offers two associate degree programs in advanced energy.

Several Ohio universities also are participating in an advanced energy masters degree program.

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Degrees will be awarded by the University of Dayton and Wright State University, and classes also will be held at Central State University and the Air Force Institute of Technology. Students can enroll in the two-year program on a full-time or part-time basis starting next month.

"This will provide the opportunity for maybe 20 to 40 students to go through this program," said Cheatham. "We're working toward being a pioneer in creating a green collar workforce."

The state's long history of manufacturing excellence and

large pool of skilled workers create an ideal environment for the growing number of jobs related to advanced energy, said Cheatham.

"In advanced energy, what we're trying to do is transition from the old manufacturing industry to renewable energy manufacturing, which is similar, like making wind turbines," he said. "We just have to make sure that we train the workers and have enough of them."

The creation of the new master's degree program comes on the heels of the creation of the University Clean Energy Alliance of Ohio that was formed last year.

Under the alliance, the state's 15 largest universities, including Ohio State

University, signed a memorandum of understanding to work together on clean energy research and development.

Other participating institutions include University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, Miami University, University of Toledo, Wright State University, University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, University of Dayton, Ohio University, Central State University, Bowling Green State University, Kent State University, Shawnee State University, and Youngstown State University.

Ohio's proximity to renewable energy consumers and state-sponsored programs are helping companies develop and launch the next genera-

tion of advanced energy technologies and compete even more effectively in a global economy, said Ed Burghard, executive director of the Ohio Business Development Coalition.

"Ohio is at the heart of next-generation, advanced energy industry success," he said. "In addition to the development of a highly skilled workforce to meet the ever-growing green collar industry demands, Ohio-based companies benefit from the state's continued effort to focus on creating a profit-friendly business environment through revamped tax and tort laws. Companies in Ohio also enjoy the bottom-line benefits that come from better employee work-life balance."