

Thomas Aquinas College Off the Grid With Free Green Energy

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A unique arrangement between a California Catholic college and an energy management company has led to a momentous change that could become a model for colleges moving forward. Thomas Aquinas College (TAC) has recently freed itself from California's notoriously unreliable power grid to become fully self-sustainable, with practically no carbon footprint.

TAC reported in a press release that the arrangement came in thanks to a partnership with Brompton Energy, the company that runs operations of a neighboring oil field. Under the school's contract with the company, the firm may drill for natural gas on the property, which is turned into green energy through Capstone turbines. **The natural gas is expected to save the school an estimated \$600,000 each year.**

Lawrence Youngblood, director of Brompton Energy, commented that **he believes this arrangement will place TAC at such a high level that it will stand as a leading example to other colleges and universities** in the US. He commented in a press release:

"According to the Air Quality Management District, the Capstone turbine uses the most recent, best available control technology on the market," says Mr. Youngblood, who devised the energy independence plan and is the father of two TAC alumni and one current student. "Rather than flaring at high emissions, we can burn gas using that turbine's efficient combustion technology at much lower emissions."

As an extra layer of protection to their new-found energy independence, TAC has installed a high-capacity Tesla battery that can charge during off-peak hours and supply some extra juice to the college during peak hours. **The battery was acquired free of charge thanks to California's 2020 Self-Generation Incentive Program.** Located at the corner of the campus's property, far from the students, the entire setup was designed not to be intrusive in the daily life of the campus.

TAC did, however, have to pay for the Capstone turbine, which came at an estimated cost of 4.5 million. While this is quite the investment, **the school is confident that the previously mentioned savings and the money they will produce from sending excess energy back to the grid will cover the cost within six years.** The college also noted that they could have it paid off earlier than that if the cost of electricity continues its decades-long climb in California.



President of Thomas Aquinas College Paul J. O'Reilly hailed the arrangement for following Catholic teaching on the care of our shared environment, commenting:

"As a Catholic institution, we take seriously our duty to shepherd our resources responsibly, work with our neighbors, and be good stewards of Creation. By God's grace our new energy independence program reflects all these qualities."

