



UC Solar

UC Solar and MID bring clean-energy education to community

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Merced Irrigation District and the University of California Advanced Solar Technologies Institute (UC Solar) are partnering to establish the Renewable Energy Learning Center at the Stephen Leonard Youth Center in Merced. The Steven Leonard Center is run by the Merced Soccer Academy at Stephen Leonard Park

In 2011, MID became the first publicly owned utility to offer its financial support to UC Solar, a multi-campus effort headquartered at UC Merced aiming to develop efficient and affordable solar technologies. The institute is also working to educate tomorrow's solar energy leaders and entrepreneurs.

The Renewable Energy Learning Center aims to bring science and renewable energy education to youth and the local community through a one-year pilot program. Youth and their families will have the opportunity to learn about the science of renewable energy and attend various classes throughout the year. The room will showcase information from both UC Solar and MID about solar and other renewable energy sources.

Don Ouchley, Deputy General Manager of MID Energy Resources, said that UC Solar's commitments to affordability and technological improvement are consistent with MID's views on renewable energy.

"Since the first generators began turning on Exchequer Dam, MID has been committed to emission-free energy," said Ouchley. "The UC Solar Institute is working to develop tomorrow's technology and is working to keep the cost of renewable energy affordable. This partnership marks a tremendous benefit to our entire community – and especially our local youth."

Through collaboration with the solar industry, UC Solar researchers are working to develop technologies that can quickly be brought to the marketplace. The institute began in 2010 with a \$2.25 million grant from the UC Office of Research and includes faculty and students from UC campuses in Merced, Berkeley, Davis, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Riverside, Irvine and Santa Cruz.

UC Solar is led by UC Merced professor and world-renowned solar energy researcher Roland Winston.

“We are delighted that MID presented us with an opportunity to partner in sponsoring this educational facility at the Stephen Leonard Youth Center,” said Winston. “The Renewable Energy Learning Center is a great platform for reaching out to the community’s youth. We’re excited about bringing the solar energy innovations that we’re developing at UC Merced, and our fellow UC campuses, to the local area through workshops and lessons that are tailored to a K-12 audience.”

Winston added: “MID has been a great supporter of UC Solar over these past six years, and we are very pleased to team with them to support the good folks who are making the Stephen Leonard Youth Center a vibrant and valuable community asset.”

In addition to the new pilot project, MID has previously provided hydroelectric tours to visiting South Korean students through UC Solar. MID has additionally worked with students through the UC Merced School of Engineering Capstone course. In that program, students partner with local entities such as businesses, government agencies and nonprofits. Working closely with the community partners and UC faculty members, the students propose solutions that will work in the real world, giving them hands-on experience they wouldn't receive otherwise.

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