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Solar-house project calls for broad effort from UK community

By: Kernel Editorial Board

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UK students and faculty have been given a tremendous opportunity with the university's inclusion in a solar-house competition.

UK is one of only 20 schools in the world to compete in the event as part of the U.S. Department of Energy 2009 Solar Decathlon, the Kernel reported Feb. 4. In this competition, students and faculty will design and construct a house operated solely by the sun.

The opportunity to build a house that is environmentally friendly and self-sustainable is a worthy project for the university to invest in. UK's selection indicates the university is taking positive steps in tackling environmental issues and raising environmental awareness.

This project is complex and requires interdisciplinary collaboration. It challenges the university's different colleges and departments to work together.

Already, colleges and departments have answered that challenge. Six of UK's colleges and 16 departments and centers are aiding in the planning and construction of the house, the Kernel article reported. We commend the departments and colleges already involved with the project.

In addition, the project should seek representation from all levels of campus on UK's solar house team. Professors, graduate students, undergraduate students and even alumni should be involved. While it is understandable and likely that professors and graduate students will take leading roles in the project, undergraduates should be given the chance to make their contributions as well.

The project also serves as an educational opportunity outside the standard curriculum the university offers. Students involved in the project will get invaluable hands-on learning experience in disciplines including architecture, engineering, economics and communications.

Much like student clubs, organizations and various other extracurricular activities, the solar-house project provides people with the opportunity to get involved at UK. If students interested in engineering, environmental issues or architecture are looking to become more involved on campus, the 18-month project, which will conclude in the Fall 2009 semester, is a perfect place to start.

Donald Colliver, the project leader, said in the Kernel article that he and others are still in the beginning stages of finding students to work on the design. The entire university should become aware of this project's importance and jump on board.

Alternative energy sources and sustainability are issues that are only going to increase in importance as we progress into the future, and now is the time for our university to join the movement. With its involvement in the solar house competition, UK takes another step forward in the green movement.