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Students compete to create most energy-efficient house

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In October, an energy-efficient, solar-powered house designed and built by UK students will be taken to Washington, D.C., for a national competition.

UK will participate in the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon competition, in which 20 schools from around the world compete "to design, build, and operate the most attractive, effective, and energy-efficient solar-powered house," according to the event's Web site.

The house, which is being constructed in the Agricultural Machinery Research Lab on campus, must be between 450 and 800 square feet. UK's entry will be 786 square feet and will run entirely on solar energy. The project will be due in June.

Students and faculty from several different UK colleges and departments are participating in the project including members from the Colleges of Agriculture, Design, Communications, Medicine, Arts and Sciences and Engineering.

Twenty schools worldwide were selected to compete in this solar decathlon, including Cornell University, The Ohio State University and Virginia Tech.

"It's probably equivalent to the Sweet Sixteen of NCAA basketball for engineering and architecture," said Donald Colliver, a professor in the Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering department at UK. "... Being selected to participate is a great reward in itself."

The people working on the project aren't just in it for short-term rewards, but wish to have an ongoing impact.

"Although a strong design is currently being developed and constructed, in a larger perspective, this endeavor would lead to the development of a process and system that will have an ongoing presence long after the 2009 Solar Decathlon has been completed," according to the UK Solar Decathlon project's Web site.

Chike Anyaegbunam, a professor in the School of Journalism and Telecommunications and one of the leaders of that school's involvement in the decathlon said being a part of the decathlon is a prestigious accomplishment for UK.

"This competition has already placed us in the top 20," Anyaegbunam said referring to President Lee Todd's plan to make UK a top-20 public research university. "That shows we have what it takes to be top 20."

For more information on the project, visit the Solar Decathlon project's Web site, (www.uky.edu/solarhouse/).

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