

Team prepares house of ‘Blues’ for solar decathlon in D.C. | The Kentucky Kernel

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Architecture graduate student Josh Ayoroa fabricates the structures on the house that hold the solar collectors for the Solar Decathlon on Tuesday afternoon. Photo by Adam Wolffbrandt | Staff

By [Leslie Bentley](#)

A student-built Lexington home will soon be on display amongst the likes of the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument.

UK is competing in the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon competition in Washington, D.C. Named the “Blues” Team, UK’s team is made of students, staff, and faculty from six colleges and 16 departments.

A Louisville energy company, E.ON U.S., announced last week it would be sponsoring UK in the competition with a \$250,000 scholarship.

Cliff Feltham, spokesperson of Kentucky Utilities Company, a company within E.ON U.S., said the money that was given to UK was money that was set aside for university research projects.

“(UK) had the program out there... we explore lots of alternative energy programs and possibilities and decided which would be better for us,” Feltham said. “So we decided to be the major sponsor of this effort.”

The S-KY BLUE home is about the size of a small mobile home at 800-square feet, and from the air conditioner to appliances, everything is completely solar-powered. The solar panels adorn the sides and roof of the home.

The home will be taken to the National Mall in Washington on Oct. 5 to compete in the decathlon. In this competition, the home will be judged on 10 categories: engineering, hot water, architecture, market viability, communications, lighting design, comfort, appliances, energy balance and home entertainment.

Gregory Luhan, associate dean of research for the College of Design, said students are preparing for the more than 250,000 people that will be asking them questions in October’s competition.

“(Students will be) able to convey the information for what they’ve been passionate about in terms of doing their own

research and turning it into a 90-second spot,” Luhan said. “There’s going to be 19 other teams that are going to be looking for solutions and we know they’re all going to be going to the same place.”

Luhan said each building would be unique to each team’s culture and background.

“We wanted to embody in this house something that is Kentucky and that would represent the Commonwealth of Kentucky but also the leading edge research ideas that we’re producing here at the university,” Luhan said.

The home is outfitted in wood from the Lexington area and has custom-built cabinets by students. The home is also fitted with a deck surrounded by Kentucky-native plants and 100 percent of the home has access to natural sunlight.

Ross Grant, an architecture graduate student, said he has worked on almost every single part of the home and can not wait for the competition.

“I’m ready for no all-nighters, I’m ready for some sleep,” Grant said.

The home will be leaving its current residence of Stadium View Road in the morning of Sept. 26. Until then, there is some testing and “debugging” to go through, said Donald Colliver, professor of Biosystems and Agriculture Engineering in the College of Agriculture. Colliver, who is working on his 30th year at UK, said his appreciation of students has grown more this year than in previous years.

“This has been a labor of love, emphasis on the labor,” Colliver said.

