

Lawrence Tech colleges work together to build

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House of the rising SUN

By DAVE GROVES
Of The Oakland Press

The colleges of architecture and engineering at Lawrence Technological University have long won acclaim for their individual successes, but winning national bragging rights in the U.S. Department of Energy's 2007 Solar Decathlon may hinge on how well the schools work together.

SOUTHFIELD

About 10 students from a host of academic disciplines have joined forces to conceive, design, build and showcase an 800-square-foot home that relies solely on solar energy.

Students who ordinarily focus on course work within their own career paths have spent months learning to communicate, cooperate and problem-solve in a project that has never before been attempted at Lawrence Tech.

"They're actually learning to respect each other," said Philip Plowright, an assistant professor in the College of Architecture and Design.

In addition to design and

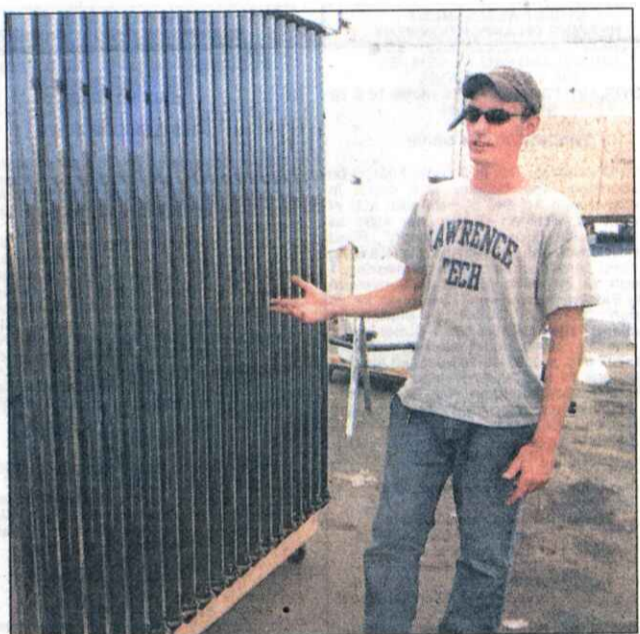
use of cutting-edge, green technology, the team's house will be judged on market viability, comfort, energy efficiency and other criteria.

Plowright said that while teamwork is not an item on the judges' checklist, "indirectly, it will get judged because it will benefit the overall project. When you're doing that well, everything gets stepped up a level."

Students began building the home last week and are now preparing to install the roof.

Before the completed project is transported to Washington, D.C., for competition in mid-October, it will be equipped with solar roof panels, a solar water heating system, a solar-powered ventilation system, a mobile energy storage unit, electrochromatic glazed windows and other technology.

PLEASE SEE **SOLAR HOUSE/C-2**



The Oakland Press/TIM THOMPSON

About 10 students have joined forces to conceive, design, build and showcase an 800-square-foot home (top) that relies solely on solar energy. Lawrence Technological University student Larry Bukowski (above) explains the solar water heating system in the house.

SOLAR HOUSE

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"When I get all those components, it will be like Christmas morning," said Chris McCarthy, a senior majoring in electrical engineering.

He and other team members noted that while these components are widely available, they are not yet commonly used in the construction industry. Some students will get their first exposure to the technology through this project.

"It's really learn-as-you-go. It's

all new," said Larry Bukowski, a senior studying construction management.

He reiterated that a major challenge is coordinating the technological and planning contributions of various team members. At the same time, he added, this challenge presents a learning opportunity that students won't find in a book.

"It's good for people of all majors to get involved," Bukowski said. "This isn't a classroom. This is actually putting it all together."

As far as building a house that will claim top honors at the Solar Decathlon this year, Lawrence Tech students say comprehen-

sive research, communication, cooperation and capitalizing on the university's history of engineering and architectural success will make the difference.

"I wouldn't mind getting to a point where (the University of) Colorado doesn't win for the third time in a row," McCarthy said.

Lawrence Tech is among 20 teams competing. Among them are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University and Cornell University.

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