

SOLAR DECATHLON

BUILDING THE FUTURE



CHALLENGING. EXHILARATING. INSPIRING. LIFE-CHANGING.

The Solar Decathlon is all these things to the hundreds of students who take part in the competition. Since 2002, teams representing universities from around the world work endless hours to design and build solar-powered houses for this amazing competition held biennially on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Representing fields from engineering and architecture to communications and business, the students combine their skills and stretch their abilities to take part in this unparalleled learning experience. They push harder than they thought was possible as they work to make a difference in the way houses are built.

Once the competition begins, they serve as ambassadors for their homes, for their schools and for renewable energy—all the while gaining the ideas and insights and contacts that will benefit them later. And when the judging is over and the scores are in, the Decathletes celebrate as they have never celebrated before. They celebrate the solar homes they've constructed, the friendships they've forged, and the futures that they will start building tomorrow.

GENERATING POWERFUL BENEFITS FAR INTO THE FUTURE

There's no better way to demonstrate the long-term value of the Solar Decathlon than to share a few stories of past Decathletes whose lives were forever changed by this incredible event.



Launching a Successful Career

As a graduate student at the University of Colorado, Jeff Lyng knew he wanted to work in renewable energy. And when he became project manager for CU's 2005 Solar Decathlon team, he knew that he was likely to meet potential employers and mentors through the competition. But he never dreamed that the Decathlon would give him entree to the highest levels of government.

CU won the overall competition in 2005. At the closing ceremony, where Jeff accepted the first-place trophy on behalf of CU, he met Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman. Less than two months later, Jeff testified before the House Subcommittee on Energy. In early 2006, as a result of Secretary

Bodman's recommendation, he attended President Bush's energy-focused State of the Union address, where he sat next to First Lady Laura Bush.

Jeff, who is now the renewable energy program manager for the Colorado Governor's Energy Office, calls the Decathlon "the launch pad for my career." He strongly encourages students to get involved in the competition. "Hands down, you are more attractive to an employer if you participate in the Decathlon than if you put that time solely into coursework. You can talk about something real that you've done."

You might even have some fun, Jeff adds. "It was an absolute blast. There was a lot of running around and there were a lot of 20-hour days, but I wouldn't trade it for anything, and I don't think anyone else would, either."

"The Solar Decathlon experience was fantastic—challenging, exhilarating, exhausting, and transformative, particularly for the students."

Sandy Stannard, California Polytechnic State University faculty advisor, 2005

"The Solar Decathlon reinforced my passion for green buildings and renewable technologies."

Claudia Torres Arriaga, Penn State, 2007



Taking a New Direction

David Shieren put his new company on hold to work on the New York Institute of Technology's (NYIT) Solar Decathlon 2005 team. He was a graduate student in energy management at the time, and he knew the competition would be a challenge. Challenge, indeed. It dominated more than two years of his life—but it also inspired a new direction for his business and introduced him to his girlfriend.

As energy team leader for the Decathlon, David was responsible for overseeing all energy systems for the NYIT project, which involved up to 60 people at various times. "We were all devoted and committed to

"The Solar Decathlon was by far the most mentally, physically and emotionally challenging thing I have ever done."

Chad Corbin, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2007



University of Missouri-Rolla (now the Missouri University of Science and Technology) has competed in four Solar Decathlons. The team's competition homes form a Solar Village that provides on-campus housing for students. Photo credit: Missouri S&T/ Bob Phelan

“The Solar Decathlon opened my eyes to the importance of sustainable design and energy efficiency.”

Christina Span, Lawrence Technological University, 2007

this project beyond anything else that was going on in our lives. We knew it was something important,” he says.

The long-term benefits of participating in the Decathlon are still paying off. David is now the chief executive officer of EmPower CES, the company he cofounded in 2003 in Island Park, New York. Several of his Decathlon teammates are part of the business.

He is also a leader in the Solar Decathlon Alumni Association, which is being established to give former Decathletes a way to share information, network about job opportunities, and advocate on important issues. And yes, David and his girlfriend, a Decathlon alumna whom he met at the 2005 competition, are still together.

“Thanks to the Solar Decathlon, I got a master’s degree and I’m working in a field I truly enjoy.”

David Click, University of Virginia, 2002

Inspiring an Environmental Future

Gretchen Miller joined the Penn State Solar Decathlon 2007 team at her boyfriend’s suggestion. “He kept complaining that the team needed members with my skills. So, instead of listening to him any longer, I got highly involved.” She never regretted it. The experience changed her perspective, her attitude, and her career.

Scheduled to receive her B.S. in industrial engineering in May 2007, Gretchen found that her new knowledge about renewable energy made it virtually impossible for her to consider accepting a traditional engineering job. She went through a period of soul searching and decided to enroll in graduate school to pursue a career in what she calls “environmental manufacturing engineering.”

“I decided to develop something that, in the future, industries around the world can implement when they realize the importance of the synergy between themselves and the environment,” she says. “My goal is to make a significant impact in my industry by incorporating the environment and industry in a holistic approach.”

Gretchen, now a graduate engineering student at Penn State, is working with BP Solar to establish a program for solar power research on the campus. She’s writing her master’s thesis on the impact of manufacturing on global warming. And she’s once again involved with the Solar Decathlon.

In her spare time, she’s serving as the project manager of communications and public relations for Penn State’s 2009 Decathlon team.



“Thanks to the Solar Decathlon, I gained experience, knowledge and personal growth that probably would have taken years to develop if I had not been a Decathlete.”

Ingrid Arocho, Puerto Rico, 2005

“The solar industry is growing rapidly, and the Solar Decathlon serves as a unique resource for qualified graduates.”

Todd Foley, Director, Business Development & External Affairs, BP Solar

BECOME A SOLAR DECATHLON SPONSOR

Inspired by the enthusiasm and achievements of the Decathletes? Join the Solar Decathlon team by becoming a sponsor of the event or of an individual team.

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SOLAR DECATHLON TEAMS

The following teams have competed in one or more Solar Decathlons since the inaugural event in 2002.

- Auburn University – 2002
- California Polytechnic State University – 2005
- Canadian Solar Decathlon (Concordia University and Université de Montréal) – 2005
- Carnegie Mellon – 2002, 2007
- Cornell University – 2005, 2007, 2009
- Crowder College – 2002, 2005
- Florida International University – 2005
- Georgia Institute of Technology – 2007
- Iowa State University of Science and Technology – 2009
- Kansas Project Solar House (Kansas State University and University of Kansas) – 2007
- Lawrence Technological University – 2007
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology – 2007
- New York Institute of Technology – 2005, 2007
- The Ohio State University – 2009
- Penn State – 2007, 2009
- Pittsburgh Synergy (Carnegie Mellon, University of Pittsburgh, and The Art Institute of Pittsburgh) – 2005
- Rhode Island School of Design – 2005
- Rice University – 2009
- Santa Clara University – 2007
- Team Alberta (University of Calgary, SAIT Polytechnic, Alberta College of Art and Design, and Mount Royal College) – 2009
- Team Boston (Boston Architectural College and Tufts University) – 2009
- Team California (Santa Clara University and California College of the Arts) – 2009
- Team Missouri (Missouri University of Science and Technology and University of Missouri) – 2009
- Team Montréal (École de Technologie Supérieure, Université de Montréal, McGill University) – 2007
- Team Ontario/BC (University of Waterloo, Ryerson University, and Simon Fraser University) – 2009
- Technische Universität Darmstadt – 2007, 2009 (Overall Winner, 2007)
- Texas A&M University – 2002, 2007
- Tuskegee University – 2002
- Universidad de Puerto Rico – 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009
- Universidad Politécnica de Madrid – 2005, 2007, 2009
- The University of Arizona – 2009
- University of Cincinnati – 2007
- University of Colorado at Boulder – 2002, 2007 (Overall Winner, 2002)
- University of Colorado, Denver and Boulder – 2005 (Overall Winner, 2005)
- University of Delaware – 2002
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – 2007, 2009
- University of Kentucky – 2009
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette – 2009
- University of Maryland – 2002, 2005, 2007
- University of Massachusetts Dartmouth – 2005
- University of Michigan – 2005
- University of Minnesota – 2009
- University of Missouri-Rolla – 2007
- University of Missouri-Rolla and Rolla Technical Institute – 2002, 2005
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte – 2002
- University of Texas at Austin – 2002, 2005, 2007
- University of Virginia – 2002
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee – 2009
- Virginia Tech – 2002, 2005, 2009
- Washington State University – 2005