



## UCSD Warming to Sun's Energy Another Campus Building Goes Solar

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Interview by Ed Joyce

For Audio Clip:

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The UC San Diego continues its effort toward generating its own energy using green sources such as solar and wind. A major solar project on a campus parking structure is one of many planned in coming months. KPBS Environmental Reporter Ed Joyce has more.

A giant crane hoisted dozens of steel-and-concrete tubes, called "solar trees" to the top of the six-level Gilman parking structure on the UC San Diego campus.

The tubes are designed to hold solar panels.

David Weil works for UCSD's sustainability program.

He says when the installation is finished, the system will provide shade while generating electricity.

**Weil:** The goal is to try to make our campus as energy efficient as we can. We're never going to go completely off the grid. We don't want to necessarily go off the grid. But we do want to generate the energy, own own, as much as possible and make it as efficient as possible.

He says this project helps get the school closer to its goal of getting about 15 percent of its power from their own sources.

Weil says the latest installation is cost-free to the university through a partnership with three companies.

**Weil:** We're using third party financing. So that means that the campus has not had to put the money upfront which we don't have.

Instead, the university buys power the panels generate through long-term contracts with investors.

The investors construct, install and maintain the photovoltaic panels on campus property.

San Diego-based Envision Solar designed the solar structures placed on top of the parking area.

Founder Bob Noble says the project is one of the company's largest.

**Noble:** Displaying your massive solar project right on the roof of an important building, you can't do better than that.

Borrego Solar of El Cajon is installing the panels.

The company's Dave Thompson says solar firms are scrambling to finish projects before the year ends.

That's because a federal rebate for solar installations is scheduled to drop from 30 percent to 10 percent.

**Thompson:** So there's a lot of people pushing to get their projects through and finished by the end of '08.

UC San Diego plans to install more solar panel systems on other campus parking areas and buildings.

The school says along with saving on power bills, producing green energy reduces the university's use of greenhouse gas-generating fossil fuels which are linked to global warming and air pollution.