

THE DAILY  
**Collegian** ONLINE  
*Published independently by students at Penn State*

Posted on January 29, 2008 12:56 AM

## Solar Decathlon team preps for '09

By Allison Jackovitz   
*Collegian Staff Writer*

After placing fourth in their first worldwide competition last year, the Penn State Solar Decathlon Team is gearing up for the 2009 competition, in which the team will strive to create an even better solar house than their last one.

In September 2009, the team will once again journey to Washington, D.C., to show off its fully functional solar home. Last year's creation, called MorningStar Pennsylvania, won the group a \$560,000 grant from Gov. Ed Rendell to develop more prototypes of the home as part of Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority's annual investment in "innovative alternative and renewable energy projects."

The MorningStar Pennsylvania was constructed on the law school site and is currently at CATO Park, which is off campus on Route 26. In the next few months, the home will be on display and open for free tours at the Centre County Visitor's Center on Porter Road.

"We're really excited about our performance last time. We were up against seasoned veterans," said Sarah Klinetob (graduate-architectural engineering), a 'core' member of the team, as she listed off those they beat: Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Last year's team comprised about 17 core members and more than 900 students. The current core has only 10 members, but the team is in the process of actively recruiting more.

"We're working to integrate input from many different disciplines. It includes several colleges on campus," said Jeffrey Brownson, an associated professor of energy and mineral engineering. "It's an integrated learning experience."

This year's theme is "natural fusion," which indicates a streamlining of the home's development and use, said Gretchen Miller, the team's communications and public relations chairwoman.

"We're trying to mesh with the planet as opposed to dominating it like a virus," said team leader Kyle Macht (graduate-architectural engineering). "And to do this, we need to use energy and materials wisely."

The team says their home will not harm the environment but will actually be restorative and beneficial.

The home will be able to produce more energy than it needs, and the air and water that leave the house will actually be cleaner than when they entered the house, all of which is different from typical homes.

"We're using linear procedures. Our project eliminates the conflicts that arise due to the back and forth between architects and construction workers because everyone is involved in every part of the project," Brownson said.

Because of spectators' interest in buying the team's house at last year's competition, this year the team decided to integrate with industry so potential customers could purchase a customized, affordable version of the team's house.

"This isn't just a pretty exhibit on the mall. You can actually have a solar-powered home in Pennsylvania that's livable," Klinetob said.

This year, the Solar Decathlon Team is the only team competing from a Pennsylvania school. There are five other Big Ten schools in the competition, including Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota. Last year, the only school from the Big Ten other than Penn State was Illinois.

"[Santa Clara University] only beat us out for third by 4.5 points in the last 15 minutes of a two-year competition. There's major drama here," Miller said.