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Research

Outdoor Solar Charging Unit

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RENEWABLE ENERGY: A group of CPUT students and their counterparts at the Munich University of Applied Sciences (HM) have joined forces to provide their peers with an outdoor solar charging unit

A group of CPUT students and their counterparts at the Munich University of Applied Sciences (HM) have joined forces to provide their peers with a bespoke outdoor solar charging unit.

The project forms part of a broader collaboration between CPUT lecturers Dr Wilfred Fritz and Deon Kallis, and the German based entities World of Eve and Training Development Consulting. The collaboration commenced last year and will see CPUT electrical engineering students partner with students from German based institutions on various projects over a period of five years.

Fritz says the project is relevant to the South African and German context.

“Anywhere you go people need to have media devices such as a cellphone or a laptop charged,” he says.

Fritz says the brief calls for students to develop an outdoor solar charging unit that is

constructed mainly from waste materials and that makes use of renewable energy technology.

The CPUT electrical engineering students are looking at the technical aspects of the project, while graphic and industrial design students from Germany are focusing on the design elements of the unit to ensure it is user friendly.

Fritz says the first leg of the project kicked off last year and saw students participate in intercultural workshops and project management at their respective universities, which was facilitated by Andrea von Gleichenstein of Training Development Consulting.

This month, the students met at CPUT's Bellville Campus to share ideas and finalise the design of the unit. The next two months will see the students construct outdoor solar charging units at their universities.

Prof Peter Naumann, Dean of the Faculty of Design at HM says the project is beneficial to the development of students, as it presents them with a project, on par with industry requirements.

“In the working world designers and engineers work together, so what better way to prepare them for the real world.”

The challenge has been welcomed by the students, who have hailed it as an opportunity to develop new skills.

“The project is extremely interactive,” says CPUT student Dhiveshan Munien.

Dhiveshan says the collaborative nature of the projects benefits the entire group as they are being exposed to concepts they have not yet encountered.

His German counterpart, Katharina Elleke, a third-year industrial design student, is positive about the outcome of the project.

“I hope that what we develop will spread to universities and communities in other countries.”

- The outdoor solar charging unit constructed in Germany will also be exhibited at the 20th year celebration of collaboration between Bavaria and the Western Cape, which takes place this July in Munich.

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