

UCSB energy confab reviews alternatives

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Staff Writer

The University of California Santa Barbara is betting that an Emerging Energies Conference in early February will introduce the region's innovators in solar, wind power and other technologies to a national audience.

UCSB Technology Management Program spokeswoman Leslie Edwards said 1,000 save-the-date cards were sent out yesterday. Organizers hope to tap into a total of 5,000 to 6,000 potential attendees, investors, faculty, energy advocacy groups, policy-makers and technology companies from Los Angeles up to San Luis Obispo.

"It is a conference that I don't think you will find the flavor of anywhere else," Edwards said. "The objective is really to look at the potential of seed stage and emerging stage companies in the energy arena to develop and build and sell different approaches to energy that will change our current hydrocarbon-based energy world."

The conference was one of two related initiatives announced Dec. 8.

That evening, UCSB presented a workshop to students and community members introducing a new collaboration with a university in northeastern China. That collaboration will allow graduate and post-doctoral students from the two universities to study side-by-side and share ideas about the direction of chemistry and physics research. It will also form connections between technology companies in the United States and China.

Some of the collaboration's participants will also take part in the upcoming Emerging Energies Conference, a two-day event scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. on Feb. 10.

Local business interests represented on conference panels include Carpinteria-based Clipper Windpower, Thousand Oaks-based Ceres, Oxnard-based Catalytic Solutions and Santa Barbara-based NGEN partners, a venture capital firm.

"The companies that were picked were chosen because they had had a reasonable chance at doing well as standalone companies in different forms," Edwards said. "All of the companies are in active deliberations if not actively providing energy at this point."

In addition to Clipper, Iogen, a Canadian

biomass company, and Konarka, a Lowell, Mass.-based solar power company, will present on a panel at the conference, representing the two other major technologies seen dominating the alternative energy production industry.

Conventional energy producers will also have their say, and a chance to rebut any arguments presented by the alternative energy producers. Represented companies and interests include the American Gas Association and Sempra Energy.

"We are still looking to get somebody that has a policy background," Edwards said. "We want a policy and a venture person, someone that can explain what are the interdependencies that you must be aware of and informed of in order to really succeed in providing energy forms that are going to replace gas and oil and coal."

Organizers hope the Emerging Energies Conference will become an annual event that changes with the development of the alternative energy industry.

COLLABORATING WITH CHINA

After the opening session of the energy conference, an introduction will be made to the Partnership for International Research and Education in Electron Chemistry and Catalysis at Interfaces by UCSB Professor and Chair of Chemistry Alec Wodtke, that partnership's key organizer.

When fully evolved, this program will bring together seven UCSB scientists with seven Chinese counterparts. The Chinese scientists come from the Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Dalian is a Chinese province due east of Beijing on the Yellow Sea coastline.

Among the participating Chinese scientists is Can Li, a professor of chemical physics at Dalian Institute and a member of the Chinese academy of sciences. Immediately after Wodtke's presentation at the emerging energies conference, Li will give a presentation on the use of solar energy to produce hydrogen.

UCSB announced Nov. 29 that it has been awarded \$1.5 million by the National Science Foundation for the first three years of the five-year research and education partnership with China. The partnership officially began Oct. 15 and was scheduled to be presented to the campus community in a Dec. 8 workshop. The

workshop included speakers from China and UCSB.

Wodtke developed the program in cooperation with Susannah Scott, a professor of chemistry and chemical engineering at UCSB, and Xueming Yang. Yang, now a professor at the University for Science and Technology of China and assistant director of basic research at the Dalian Institute, has a doctorate from UCSB and was Wodtke's first graduate student.

"We thought we might have the nucleus for a successful program. We both put our heads together and we were fortunate enough to get it going," Wodtke said. "He's become something of a big-shot in China. We're looking for various ways to include members of the local business community in various activities we're planning."

In Aug. 2006, PIRE-ECCI will organize a summer school emphasizing surface science and catalysis. In 2008, another summer school will focus on grand challenges for chemical dynamics in heterogeneous catalysis. The two summer schools are expected to produce an edited book for young people in the physical and chemical sciences.

In late June of 2007 and 2009 PIRE-ECCI participants, including students, faculty and business partners will travel to Dalian for a four-day workshop to share results, bolster research collaborations and explore future directions for work in the field.

Each workshop will include a session examining international challenges to technology travel.

Participants will also have the opportunity after the workshops to take technology transfer tours through China. These would give students from the United States the opportunity to research Chinese companies. The workshops and tours would also be made available to local business leaders interested in exploring the Chinese business environment.

Two members of the business community already serve on the collaboration's steering committee: Catalytic Solution's founder and chief technology officer, Steve Golden, and Robert J. Pangborn, a former vice president of central and new business research and development at Dow Chemical.