

Solar Pioneer Joins UC San Diego

New Director of Strategic Energy Initiatives Set World Record for Solar Conversion

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Jim Gogek

UC San Diego's reputation as one of the "greenest universities" took a giant leap forward with the appointment of solar pioneer Byron Washom as director of strategic energy initiatives.

Washom led an entrepreneurial firm he founded to set a world record in 1984 for efficiency of 29.4% conversion of solar energy delivered to the grid, and it remained unbroken for 24 years until it was eclipsed by Sandia National Laboratories earlier this year. Washom has been a strategic advisor on a wide range of clean energy technologies to the World Bank, the International Energy Agency, U.S. Department of Energy, national laboratories, and numerous regulated utilities and corporations. Washom is a four-time Rockefeller Foundation grantee and Heinz Foundation grantee.

"We are delighted that Byron Washom has joined the UC San Diego leadership team to help implement a cutting edge vision and shared aspirations for quantum advancements in sustainability," Chancellor Marye Anne Fox said. "Beginning with the launch of the Keeling Curve in 1958 measuring the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere, UC San Diego has blazed a leadership path in climate change science and research. Today, our entire campus is dedicated to climate solutions through cooperative action by faculty, administration and students. The current efforts to create a world-class sustainable energy infrastructure to serve a de-carbonized digital age are worthy of the rich UCSD tradition." Fox presented the 2008 Community Leader Award for Sustainability to Washom earlier this year.

Washom joins UC San Diego as it is completing the installation of 1 megawatt (MW) of photovoltaic systems and beginning construction of a 2.4 MW advanced fuel cell system powered by methane from the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Facility. In total, the university expects to produce 7.4 MW in green energy from photovoltaic, biogas fuel cell and wind energy procurement. Washom will provide strategic leadership in the establishment of a highly innovative energy plan that will not only ensure that UC San Diego is able to meet both its current and future energy requirements in the most environmentally sustainable, cost-effective manner, but also serve as a premier example to institutions internationally.

Future projects include energy storage systems that adjust to the intermittency of renewable energy and provide permanent load shifting; strategic purchasing of renewable energy from the grid during periods of surpluses; co-production of hydrogen from its fuel cell system; utilizing cold ocean water from the adjacent La Jolla Trench; and converting the campus vehicle transportation fleet into cleaner, alternative fuels.

"In my entire career and global travels, I have never witnessed such a combination of visionary leadership, opportunity and legacy infrastructure to build a global model of a sustainable and efficient energy infrastructure as we have here at UC San Diego," Washom said.

Washom has a BS in Management and Finance (1971) and an MBA (1972) from the University of Southern California, and he completed his postgraduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1975-76).

Media Contact: Jim Gogek, (858) 822-3736

