

THE GARGOYLE

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Solar panels installed on Uni Gym

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There are now solar panels on the roof of Uni Gym, thanks to T.R.E.E. (Teens Representing Environmental Education) Club. The panels power Uni Gym. Now that Uni has them, there will be many opportunities to use the solar panels in science classes and special events.

Last February, T.R.E.E. Club applied for a grant that would give them money to install the panels. T.R.E.E. Club sponsor Sharlene Denos told them about the grant, which came from the [Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation \(ICECF\)](#) The ICECF is a private foundation that gives grants for schools and other organizations to develop solar and wind power.

Denos says that she has plans to use the solar panels as a learning tool for her classes. Hopefully, the



Sharlene Denos

output data from the panels will be posted on the ICECF website in real time, allowing students to study it and find patterns. The amount of energy produced may be different depending on the weather and position of the sun.

“There’s plenty you can do with it,” says Denos. Additionally, T.R.E.E. Club leaders Raphaelle Mboyo and Sruti Ekkirala may plan more club activities around the panels. Mboyo says that the club is planning a Solar Celebration Day to spread environmental awareness.

Currently, Uni does not get any money off their electric bill thanks to the solar panels, but Denos says that’s not the main reason they were installed. “I would like to be able to turn this into a benefit for Uni. But whatever it does for Uni, it does help the environment - there’s no question about that.”

The total cost of the project was about \$18,000. The grant covered \$7,000, and the club had to find a sponsor to match the rest. Denos found the sponsor, Ty Newell. Newell is a professor emeritus at the University of Illinois and now owns his own company focused on creating energy-efficient cooling systems.