



Media Contact:

Julian Foley
jfoley@gridalternatives.org
510-731-1188

“Solar Spring Break” Connects Students with Clean Power In Underserved Communities

GRID Alternatives hosts ten colleges around the nation to install solar for low-income families that need the savings most.

OAKLAND, CA; February 29, 2016 –Over 100 college students from ten schools across the country will spend their spring break installing solar for low-income families and getting hands-on workforce training in the solar industry through GRID Alternatives’ [Solar Spring Break](#) program.

GRID Alternatives, America’s largest non-profit solar installer, will lead the students in 17 installations across California and Colorado from February 29 through March 25. Now in its third year, the alternative break program creates an opportunity for students to experience solar first-hand and learn about the energy and environmental issues facing low-income communities while gaining a foothold in one of America’s fastest-growing industries. Solar Spring Break has grown from six schools and teams in 2014 to 10 schools and 11 teams in 2016.

“Solar Spring Break gives college students who are passionate about renewable energy the chance to turn passion into action doing projects that have a tangible impact on families’ lives,” said Erica Mackie, CEO and Co-founder of GRID Alternatives.

2016 participants include Arizona State University, Beloit College, Claremont McKenna College, UNC Chapel Hill, Duke University, University of Michigan, Northeastern University, University of Nevada – Reno, North Carolina Central University, and the University of California – Berkeley.

“The GRID staff taught us more in two days than we had learned in months at school,” said Abhishek Rao, a graduate student at Arizona State University who participated in 2015. “We put into practice all we had studied from textbooks about residential solar systems, from surveying the site, to using tools to determine shading, designing the system, and actually installing it with our own hands. Solar Spring Break definitely added a much-needed real-world perspective to my experience studying solar energy engineering at school.”

Teams of 10-12 students from each school will travel to different project sites around the country and spend the week on a combination of solar installations, renewable energy industry tours, and neighborhood outreach. Two teams of students from the University of Michigan, returning for its third year in the program, will kick off the season from February 29 through March 4 installing solar for three tribal families on the La Jolla Indian Reservation near San Diego and learning about tribal culture.



The group from North Carolina Central University, a historically black university, will install solar on the home of a Sacramento family from March 14 through March 18 in what will be the first trip outside of North Carolina for many of the students. It is one of three schools from North Carolina participating this year.

“North Carolina Central prides itself on requiring undergraduate students to provide service to the community as a pre-requisite for graduation,” said Chris McGinn, Assistant Professor at North Carolina Central University. “As a professor, as well as a chaperone, I look forward to using this trip as a catalyst to develop the students’ understanding of the social and political ramifications solar power and clean energy can have on a community.”

Other highlights include an all-woman engineering team from the University of Nevada, Reno headed to Chico, Calif. March 21-25. [Click here](#) for photos from Solar Spring Break 2014-15.

About GRID Alternatives

GRID Alternatives is America’s largest non-profit solar installer bringing clean energy technology and job training to low-income families and underserved communities through a network of community partners, volunteers, and philanthropic supporters. GRID has installed over 6,500 rooftop solar systems with a combined installed capacity of 22 megawatts, saving \$170 million in lifetime electricity costs, preventing nearly 500,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, and providing more than 25,000 people with solar training. For more information, visit www.gridalternatives.org.