

Communications

Communications may be a singular category in the competition, but it pervades every other aspect of the contest and defines how the team presents its accomplishments. Points are awarded based on the clarity of the website design, the effective use of social media, the quality of tours, the helpfulness of supplemental information provided to visitors, and the level of engagement with the judges in presenting the team's ongoing communications strategy.

Santa Clara has integrated and emphasized ethics in its approach to outreach. The Outreach section on the website asks for input from the community about solar power and explains why the team cares about engaging local students, residents, and business owners. Additional outreach efforts are focused on listening to a variety of community members and helping to spread the word about ways to conserve energy. Perhaps the most prominent mode of outreach has been the team's engagement with Plaza Vista School down in Irvine. Through a series of monthly video chats, members of each subteam have had the chance to talk about their role in the project while making their accomplishments relevant and engaging to fifth graders. The chats have received extensive media coverage and now other schools across the country are asking to be a part of them. The team is using the video chats to get young students excited about solar technology and integrate its value-based approach to the house in its monthly presentations.

Key to the team's communication strategy is identifying and highlighting ethical issues and decisions that have been made. In a presentation given at Woodside High School, the team integrated ethics into the overview of the project, such as mentioning concerns about materials when talking about construction. The Ethics section on the team website features work by both of the team ethicists along with an explanation of why ethical issues matter.

Perhaps the most important role of the ethicists this year has been ensuring that SCU's values are emphasized in the team's methods of communication. Ethical considerations have had the opportunity to be placed at the forefront of the competition, starting a dialogue that will hopefully continue long after the contest has concluded.