To celebrate the successful solar panel installation on the roof of the FPG Student Union, the UNC Renewable Energy Special Projects Committee (RESPC), the Carolina Union, Strata Solar, SMA America, and University faculty, staff, and students attended a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 20 in the West Lounge of the FPG Student Union.

"Welcome to a more energy-efficient Carolina Union," said Crystal King, director of the Carolina Union.

This summer, UNC representatives, the Carolina Union, RESPC, Strata Solar, SMA America, Shoals Technologies, and City Electric Supply collaborated to install 64 solar panels onto the roof of the FPG Student Union.

RESPC co-chairs, Charlie Egan and Jessie Robinson, spoke on behalf of their organization about the project details and history of renewable energy on Carolina’s campus.

"It's a great energy opportunity and it helps show the importance of renewable energy and how important it'll be for the future," Robinson said.
As part of the Carolina Union project, a display monitor was installed in the West Lounge to show the amount of energy currently being generated by the panels as a way to make the solar panel project more interactive for students.

Previous RESPC projects include: LED lights along Stadium Drive and South Road; solar thermal panels on top of Morrison Residence Hall; and solar umbrellas at the FPG Student Union, Carolina Dining Services, and Connor, Morrison and Parker Residence Halls.

RESPC stated that they wanted to continue their strong connection with Strata Solar and hope to collaborate to bring more renewable energy projects to campus in the future.

Egan commented that a number of projects are in the works, including a collaboration with the UNC art department to create a visually appealing display of renewable energy.

?This would be a great opportunity for us to reach the broader student population and really spread awareness,? Egan said.

Cindy Shea, director of the UNC Sustainability Office, is the faculty advisor behind the project.

?This project is the sign of a new day at Carolina,? Shea said. ?Over time, I hope this monitor will also display many other renewable energy projects around campus.?

Shea expressed that this project is a way for students to apply classroom lessons directly to their backyard at Carolina.

?This project is also a part of transforming UNC into a living laboratory for sustainability ? a place where the campus becomes an extension of the classroom,? Shea said.

Several leaders from the Carolina community also shared remarks at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

?It is events like these that really drive home the mission of a student union ? to allow students the opportunity to let their passion shine and manifest their ideas into something truly wonderful,? said Jaelyn Coates, chair of the Carolina Union Board of Directors.

UNC-System President Tom Ross said that this project is important not only for the environment, but also to the future of the students and society at large.

?Paying attention to energy conservation and looking for new ways to use renewable energy is something this state must do and the University must do,? Ross said.

Ross stated that it is a goal to have all 17 campuses of the UNC system become carbon neutral by 2050.

In his closing remark, Winston Crisp, vice chancellor for Student Affairs, said that he is very proud of the project and student involvement toward a better UNC.

?If you keep desiring, if you keep wanting to see change, if you keep being willing to go to work for it, it does happen,? Crisp said.

View photos from the ribbon cutting celebration on our Facebook page.