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### Wichita State News

The following is an article from [The Sunflower](#), Wichita State University's student-run newspaper.

## WSU engineering student to debut solar car on Earth Day

Wednesday, April 22, 2015



By Alex Perry / The Sunflower

When engineering student Richard St. Aubin purchased a 1998 Saturn SL2 for \$600 off Craigslist, he wanted to prove cars that run on electricity do not have to be prohibitively expensive or complex.

One year after starting the project, St. Aubin is all set to showcase his work at an Earth Day event from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday at the University United Methodist Church on 21st and Yale, across the street from the Wichita State campus.

#### RELATED INFORMATION

[View original article](#) (The Sunflower)

[Solar energy project to be dedicated by Wichita State, area church](#)

St. Aubin and his team at the [Computer Architecture and Parallel Programming Laboratory](#) devised a system, which involves solar panels on the hood, roof and trunk of the car that absorb electrical energy from the sun. This energy is then used to subsidize the car's electrical needs to save money on gasoline.

"When we do have a sunny day and you're sitting out in the parking lot, then your tank is being refilled while you're sitting in class," St. Aubin said. "So you're collecting energy all day long."

While the car cannot run entirely off of electrical energy, data from CAPPLab suggests the solar panels could generate approximately 21 percent of the energy used by an average car.

According to their numbers (which use a hypothetical gas price of \$3.45 per gallon), that would save around \$362 per year.

The total cost of the equipment required to generate this energy is just under \$1,000, according to CAPPLab. St. Aubin said the main goal here is to defuse myths about the price of electrical energy and ease people into the idea of purchasing a fully electric car.

"As we do that, we get people actively into buying electric cars, because that's what we really want," St. Aubin said. "We want more electric cars on the road, not these weird gas hybrids with solar panels on them."

Electrical [engineering professor Abu Asaduzzaman](#) is the adviser on this project. After having St. Aubin as a student, Asaduzzaman could see that his engineering skills made him the right man for the job.

"I had my confidence that Richard would do a really good job," Asaduzzaman said. "I had no doubt about it."

Asaduzzaman also said that in his native Bangladesh, solar power is a widely used alternative to traditional sources of electricity because it is affordable and dependable. For him, cars that are powered this way are ideal.

"For me, an electric car is the best solution I can think of," Asaduzzaman said. "As soon as it becomes affordable, I think there will be no problem finding customers."

Retired WSU professor William Wentz taught about renewable energy for 30 years, and his passion for it continues today. He sees St. Aubin's project as emblematic of the rapid process being made in this field.

"There's really momentum here that just wasn't here even five years ago," Wentz said.

Wentz also said the ease of installation and lack of maintenance required will make solar power an appealing prospect in years to come.

"They're just taking that energy right out of the sunlight and turning it into electricity on the spot, no moving parts," Wentz said. "It's exciting, I think we're going to see some really, really dramatic changes."

This story has been tagged [Students](#), [College of Engineering](#), [Technology](#), [Innovation](#), [Academics](#). See all RSS feeds [here](#)

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## Engineering student powers car with solar panels

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Illustration by Brian Ball

Posted: Tuesday, April 21, 2015 9:53 pm | Updated: 9:58 pm | Tue Apr 21, 2015.

2 comments

When engineering student Richard St. Abile purchased a 1996 Saturn SL2 for \$800 on Craigslist, he wanted to prove cars that run on electricity do not have to be prohibitively expensive or complex.

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### Solar car

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Electrical engineering professor Abi Asadzazzani is the adviser on this project. After calling St. Abile a "student," Asadzazzani could see that his engineering skills made him the right man for the job.

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Posted in: News on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 9:53 pm. Updated: 9:58 pm.

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