



### The Green SLP: Going for the Gold

The recently opened Student Life Pavilion (SLP) will be USD's first LEED-certified green building. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a rating system that is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability in the US. But what makes the building "green"? There is a long list of features; some are easy to see, others more behind the scenes. Here are just a few examples:

**The mechanical stomach:** One of SLP's most interesting green features is the dining hall's food decomposition unit, which uses a highly specialized formula of microorganisms to break down food waste. The end product of this rapid biochemical process is mostly water that can be safely disposed of down the kitchen's drain. Environmental advantages of the unit, distributed by BioHitech America, include reduced landfill use, decreased fuel consumption associated with trash transportation, and decreased emissions of greenhouse gases like methane that often are a byproduct of trash decomposition. According to BioHitech America, operating the company's 1200 model at full capacity for 1 year will reduce emissions of 470,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> and 58 MTCE of greenhouse gases. Although the units are being adopted by a growing number of hotels, restaurants and hospitals, USD is one of the first universities to use this new technology.

**Windows that open:** To take advantage of USD's location in a marine climate zone with year-round moderate temperatures, most windows in the Student Life Pavilion actually open, a rarity in modern commercial buildings. This dramatically reduces energy consumption for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC). The SLP's HVAC system is controlled by high-tech sensors that determine if windows are open in certain zones, then turn off units in those areas. Air quality also tends to be better than closed systems.

**Green roof:** A green roof is one that is planted with vegetation to reduce heat absorption, offset vegetation loss and reduce the urban heat island effect. At SLP, much of this vegetation is vegetables! More than half of its rooftop planters are currently filled with spinach, tomatoes, peppers, strawberries and a wide variety of herbs that will be used as fresh ingredients in the SLP's Tu Mercado and dining hall. The remainder of the space is planted with drought-resistant succulents that require very little water. The view is pretty impressive too.

In addition, USD will seek gold certification for its first green building. Once plans for a solar panel system on campus are finalized, the increase in LEED points will help to improve the Student Life Pavilion's rating from silver to gold.