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## UT's power plant efficiency surprises tour goers

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Published on October 31, 2017 at 12:15 am

Last update on October 31, 2017 at 11:35 am

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More than a dozen computer screens lit up the faces of tour attendees in the control room of the Carl J. Eckhardt Combined Heating and Power Complex, UT's primary source of electricity and heating.

The motherboard of the network that brings power to campus was one stop on a power plant tour hosted by UT Utilities and Energy Management on Friday, rounding out Campus Sustainability Week.

"We try to take a very holistic look (at efficiency)," said Juan Ontiveros, associate vice president of UT Utilities and Energy Management. "We look at how we produce the power (and) how we distribute all the energy. We look at our building designs, and we look at our cooling and heating. All of those things together ... contribute to fuel and water savings."

The plant produces all of UT's heating with steam, and all of the buildings are cooled with chilled water, which is cycled through nine miles of tunnels under campus, Ontiveros said.

Through increased fuel efficiency, current UT fuel usage levels match those from 1976, despite the campus nearly doubling in size, Ontiveros said. UT's chilling stations also produce a combined 60,000 tons of cooling through chilled water pumped throughout campus, something that is at world-class standards, Ontiveros said.

"We are able to make chilled water at about 40 percent (greater efficiency) than what the rest of the world does," Ontiveros said.

Greg Jewett, UT Green Offices Team member, said he passed by the plant many times on his way to work but never thought much of it until he attended the tour. Jewett said he was surprised by the efficiency of UT's independent power source.

"It's absolutely incredible," Jewett said. "I had no idea that we were that efficient. I just thought it was a power plant, I had no idea that there was steam involved or reclaimed water. I was very, very, very impressed."

Aerospace engineering senior Bryce Morris joined the tour with his mind on the future of sustainability. Instead of trying to come up with complex new ways to create energy, Morris said society should focus on becoming more efficient in its current use.

“As human beings, we are ... already maxing out the planet on energy use,” Morris said. “We (will) have to make a lot harder decisions with regards to (managing) our resources down the line if we don’t figure out how to be more efficient with them now.”

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