



Background:

The population in the lake Tahoe region has been steadily increasing and with such an increase comes a strain on the local environment. The Tahoe Regional Planning Association (TRPA) has attempted to regulate things such that the impact is minimized, but the impact is still there, nonetheless. For this reason, Sierra Nevada College, U.C. Davis and the Desert Research Institute have teamed up to provide a research facility capable of studying the effects of the local population on Lake Tahoe and the Lake Tahoe Basin. They wished to develop a “green,” eco-friendly, LEED platinum building in which to conduct their research and teach classes. The facility in question is the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences (TCES).

TCES is both a research facility and an educational facility. Lab, office, classroom, and lecture spaces are combined to provide professionals as well as students a place where research and learning can be accomplished side by side. The mixed use of this building, combined with the unique systems found within make it an extraordinarily interesting structure. Four spaces in particular caught my attention: the entry lobby, the case study classroom, the chemistry lab, and the exterior entryway.



Many “green” systems were also implemented in this building, the most notable of which are photovoltaic (PV) cells, a cogeneration unit, solar hot water heating, a greywater reclamation system, and radiant floor and ceiling panels to heat and cool the space. Every effort was made to achieve a LEED platinum standing, and prior to the building being commissioned it is currently attaining that standing.