Last summer, the Archimedes Plaza underwent a significant transformation, thanks to a $5 million gift from Daniel J. and Phyllis Epstein and their family. The results are not only beautiful—they have created a central space that draws crowds of students for studying, talking and relaxing with each other. The newly renamed Epstein Family Engineering Plaza features an expanded lawn, new tree plantings and a cascading waterfall fountain. A statue of Neil Armstrong now stands near the east end of the Hédro Chemical Engineering building. The plaza is equipped with electronic outlets, a laptop “bar,” as well as comfortable chairs, shade umbrellas and benches.

“We are grateful to the Epstein family for their tremendous support of our mission and to this wonderful improvement in our students’ experience,” said Dean Yaniv C. Vortman.

Los Angeles has a shortage of drinking water. The city’s western neighbors, the Pacific Ocean, could help solve this problem. But salt water needs to be purified first through the process of desalination, which can be energy-intensive, expensive and harmful to the environment. But Amy Childress, professor in the Sonny Astani Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, is working on a concept to make desalination more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly.

Childress’s work has global implications, as her doctorate. “Southern California is at the epicenter of environmental decision making. Many water agencies are looking to research such as Childress’s to help expand their water portfolios. The West Basin Municipal Water District wants to reduce its imported water more than one-third by 2020.”

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