Cal State LA Opens Sikand Center, Hosts Seminar on Urban Sustainability

India-West Staff Reporter

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — California State University, Los Angeles marked the opening of a new center on urban sustainability with a symposium that explored key issues in the field.

The new Sikand Center for Sustainable and Intelligent Infrastructure (Sikand SITI Center) was established through a five-year, $1.25 million gift from The Sikand Foundation to the university's College of Engineering, Computer Science and Technology.

Cal State LA president William A. Covino said the gift and the center will expand the university's research in urban sustainability and its leadership in the field. Emily Allen, dean of the College, also echoed the sentiments.

With the launch of the center, The Sikand Foundation continues the legacy of Gunjit Sikand, an Indian American entrepreneur and professor who taught in Cal State LA's Department of Civil Engineering for more than two decades. Sikand valued the university's role in providing first-generation college students an outstanding education. In tribute to Sikand, who passed away in 2014, the center was established in 2015.

Mark Sikand, president of Sikand Engineering Associates in Van Nuys, Calif., and son of Gunjit Sikand, an Indian American entrepreneur, said his hope was that research at the Sikan SITI Center will spark innovation that enables "us to live, work and play in more sustainable ways." (Robert Huskey/Cal State LA photo)

The Sikand SITI Center will be responsible for administering the faculty endowment, which supports advanced technical research while educating the next generation of sustainability leaders. The new center's director will be Mehran Mazari, assistant professor of civil engineering.

Mark Sikand, the son of Gunjit Sikand, said, "Our vision now is to create a center that provides opportunities for greater numbers of faculty and students to engage in urban sustainability research. This research will spark innovation that enables us to live, work and play in more sustainable ways."

The center's kickoff event brought together researchers, policymakers, students and industry leaders. It featured keynote speakers Mark Pestrella, director of Los Angeles County Public Works; Cris Liban, executive officer, environmental compliance and sustainability for LA Metro; and Lauren Faber O'Connor, chief sustainability officer for the city of Los Angeles. The speakers presented the latest sustainability plans and visions in Southern California.

"We are reimagining our current public infrastructure and building in new ways. It is time to rethink and rebuild. It means investing in solutions that serve multiple problems. No single project should be single focused. It should be multi-purpose," said Pestrella. "So the approach now is to look to the future for a green Los Angeles, one which imagines an infrastructure being integrated for multiple purposes."

The symposium included panel discussions on developments in urban sustainability and ways to integrate innovative concepts into everyday life. The moderator for the panel was Raphael Sonenshein, executive director for the Pat Brown Institute at the university. In addition, faculty and students displayed their research in urban sustainability through poster presentations.

Sara Gideon's Shuttered PAC Fined $500 Over Reimbursements

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — The Maine Ethics Commission has imposed a $500 fine on House Speaker Sara Gideon's now-shuttered political action committee over reimbursements made to her in 2016.

The panel's chairman, William Lee, said Oct. 30 the fine underscores the importance of following election law, even if there was no attempt to deceive the public.

Former state Sen. Edward Youngblood, a Republican from Brewer, filed the complaint after learning the Gideon Leadership PAC reimbursed Gideon for two $250-donations to two other political action committees. Those reimbursements were disclosed in state filings.

The fine, imposed on a 3-0 vote, ends the case that arose as Gideon seeks the Democratic nomination to face Republican Sen. Susan Collins in 2020 (see **India-West** article here: https://bit.ly/34ePvyc).

Gideon's spokeswoman said the commission agreed to close the matter that was driven by "national Republicans."

The shuttered political action committee of Indian American Maine U.S. Senate candidate Sara Gideon has been fined $500 over reimbursements. (Twitter/SaraGideon photo)