

Student Donation Brings Charge to Electric Vehicles on Campus (Video)

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Josh Aviv '14, currently a graduate student in the iSchool, stands next to the electric vehicle charger he donated to the University.

As a student entrepreneur who runs the clean-tech company SparkCharge, Josh Aviv '14 (and a graduate student in the School of Information Studies) says he was surprised to learn there were no locations on campus to charge an electric vehicle. Electric cars are equipped to be charged using a wall socket, but that takes longer than the charging stations themselves. Thanks to Aviv, this is no longer the case.

“We had previously been working to install charging stations along the Thruway when we realized they would be put to better use here on campus serving our community,” says Aviv.

And now they are. Installation was recently completed on two charging stations, one located in the Booth Garage, the other in the University Avenue Garage, located near the entrance of each. For people who drive electric cars, it will go a long way in reducing something known as range anxiety. Namely, the fear of a car battery running out.

“I was very happy Josh donated the charging stations to Syracuse University, as I have an electric vehicle and drive about 50 miles into work each day,” says Sean Scanlon, vice president of advancement and external affairs. Scanlon is a big believer in electric vehicles in terms of both the savings on fuel, and reduction in carbon emissions in the environment. “Considering the environmental, financial and political costs of oil and gas, why use it when you don’t have to?”

Aviv developed his idea while an undergrad at Syracuse, during his environmental economics class. His skills as an entrepreneur were further enhanced as a graduate student currently in the School of Information Studies.

“I’m so pleased that Josh has provided us with these charging stations to use on campus,” says iSchool Dean Liz Liddy. “We’ve helped prepare Josh to be successful as an entrepreneur through his involvement with initiatives like the Student Sandbox and the RvD iPrize event, and I’m thrilled to see him making an impact in the market and giving back to the University in a way that will benefit the community.”

From a sustainability standpoint, the charging station donation is a win-win for the environment and the University.

“It is rewarding to have a donation like this, as it shows the interest our students have in climate change, lowering emissions and discovering innovative products to help reduce greenhouse gases,” says Nathan Prior, director of Energy Systems and Sustainability Management. “Being able to use data from the charging stations will also help the University utilize the campus as a lab, which is one of our goals.”

For now, the charging stations are offered in two garages, but Aviv hopes there may be more.

“We’re pleased to offer this service in Booth and University Avenue garages, but we’re especially grateful that a student made this happen,” says Joe Carfi, director of parking and transit services. “It provides for flexibility for those who use these types of vehicles.”

While Aviv was happy to make the donation, the charging stations will be gathering information to be used by SparkCharge to help the electric car industry grow.

“We believe that Syracuse University could be a leader in electric vehicle and electric vehicle charging station research, says Aviv. “The cold weather in Syracuse gives electric vehicles quite a challenge and we hope to find out more about how electric vehicles charge in the harsh climate. The charging stations will also help reduce the need for fossil fuel, but the carbon footprint of Syracuse University as an organization. We hope that these charging stations will spark an interest in electric vehicles that will carry on for years to come.”