



Success Story: Twiggy Mendenhall

In 2020, right before the pandemic impacted the world, Twiggy Mendenhall was just a student at Harry S. Truman College. She saw a post on LinkedIn from one of her professors, advertising an info session on renewable energy. Now, she's a Policy Associate at Clean Capital.

Before Twiggy Mendenhall joined the FEJA (Future Energy Jobs Act) Solar Jobs Training program offered through Elevate, Safer Foundation, and Millenium Solar Training, she was working random jobs, mainly in restaurants and grocery stores, where she handled different types of food prep and customer engagement.

By chance, she saw a LinkedIn post by Truman College professor, John Brophy advertising the program. "The clean energy economy is appealing to me because the industry is, in general, talking about good-paying jobs and equity," Mendenhall says. The program brings together folks from various backgrounds who haven't had the opportunity to have great careers. The opportunities to work for a greater cause and clean our grid were really appealing to me," she said.

During her time in the FESIA Program, Mendenhall enjoyed many different aspects of the training. "I really wanted to learn some skills that could take me really far and were transferrable across industries."

The hands-on portion was particularly enjoyable for her. "We had various different trainings. Grid Alt. Came to the site one day. They taught us how to put on a harness and helmet and also how to read a ruler, which I hadn't really done before at length."

There was even a mock house built to help add depth of realism to the training. "There was a mock house inside the building that taught us



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how to safely climb a ladder and install panels on the roof -that was really awesome."

In addition to the mock house and general training, Mendenhall and the rest of her cohort were taught how to strip electrical wiring and how to bend conduit. "I used that hands-on training in my next role after the program," she says.



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But the 2020 pandemic brought things to a screeching halt - in person, anyway. “The cohort training was cut short and we had to finish the rest online.” Not all was lost, however. The bookwork she learned from the online classes was used in her next role when the world was ready to start hiring again. She worked as an Electronic Assembler at GE, where she says her skill of being able to strip wires and other hand training was what landed her that job.

It wasn’t just the hands-on training that she found beneficial as well. “There were aspects like career trainings, how to create a resume, how to look presentable for interviews and jobs; I found those types of things very helpful.” She attributes these aspects of the curriculum to her success post-training.

But perhaps the most influential part of the training program was the Energy Lobby Day. “They put us on a bus to Springfield, Illinois,” she says, “Our goal there was to talk about experience in the program and why it was important that those opportunities were available. It was the first time I’ve heard of it and the first time I’ve spoken with legislators. Ever since, I’ve been interested

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in policy. I started a career in renewable energy development then after the program I got my Associates Degree from Truman College, transferred to get my 4-year degree at State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry with a Bachelor of Science in Sustainability Management. I applied to a ton of internships in policy and research because I wanted to be a part of the change and effort to create legislation for jobs and projects. I’ve been in policy ever since,” she expressed.

As for advice for future cohorts, Mendenhall says, “Network and really put yourself out there. You’d be surprised at how many people want you to be a part of the team because of your different background. Specifically, my program sought out people who are normally left out of really good careers. Set up a platform, attend events and meet people, because you’ll be surprised to see how many doors can open for you.”

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