



Utilities Challenge

Objective:

The Utilities Challenge will provide students the unique opportunity to gain access to the data about the residence halls here at Texas A&M University. Students will use this information, and draw upon the expertise of the staff from Utilities and Energy Services and Residence Life, to learn about the current proficiency of the buildings and propose ways to increase the buildings' efficiency to a panel of staff, faculty, and administration. All majors and classifications are encouraged to participate.

Goal:

Facilitate a learning experience for students and increase understanding of the internal systems at TAMU.

Program Outcome:

At the end of the project, teams of students will give a 10-15 minute presentation about their findings. The presentations will discuss the utility systems of the halls (HVAC, water, etc.) and methods for improving those systems. Strong presentations will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the utility systems in addition to habits students can adapt to make a difference. Suggestions from these presentations have the potential of being implemented, impacting the operations of the largest university in Texas.

Skills students will utilized during this project includes but is not limited to:

Research	Professional presentation
Critically analyzing large amounts of information	Persuasion
Extracting pertinent information	Experience with Teamwork
Creative problem solving	Proposal writing
	Coordinating within a large system

Process:

Applying:

Students who wish to apply will fill out the application on the Residence Life webpage NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 1st, 2017.

Students' applications will be reviewed by the Powers that Be. Students can apply for any of the halls, but preference will be given to students living in the residence hall being applied for.

Teams will be announced by February 8th.

If applying for course credit:

Students will need to confer with their instructors about deadlines to earn credit as a part of their degrees. Please note that research proposal deadlines for degrees will likely have deadlines separate from the deadlines presented here. Confer with your academic advisor to learn about those specific dates. Staff of Residence Life and Utilities and Energy Services would be willing to discuss the desired outcomes of the project and how it will be a valuable addition to your education. However, this challenge will remain under the supervision and jurisdiction of UES and Residence Life.

Creating teams:

Teams of 5-7 students will be created for each residence hall. Duties of team members will be assigned within the group to meet the research objectives of the group. Each group must have a team leader. The team leader will be responsible for contributing to research while also directing the efforts of the team and ensuring that the group meets submission deadlines. The team lead will be responsible for communicating with the Residence Life and UES about what meetings they need to set and for submitting the drafts and final version of their project. It is up to the discretion of the group how they select a team leader.

If more students join the group than is necessary, then the Powers that Be will shift members to another hall/team. When choosing teams/which halls students are assigned to, the principle of “first come first serve” will apply.

Teams formed/initial meeting:

Once students have applied and been accepted, they will attend an initial meeting (February 8) hosted by Residence Life and the Utilities and Energy Services. At this meeting, students will have the opportunity to meet members of their team and establish roles.

This meeting will also show students where and how to access the information they will need and what people will be useful for them in researching and creating solutions. We will discuss the rubric by which their projects will be evaluated. Residence Life will explain the rules and deadlines for this program and UES will provide a brief description about the utility systems in the residence halls and how to interpret data.

After this meeting, teams will be responsible for creating their own schedules; they will decide the frequency of their meetings, where, etc. in order to meet the requirements and deadlines for this project.

Initial Findings/Project Outline Submitted:

We encourage students to submit their projects’ preliminary findings and outlines to jamin_goecker@housing.tamu.edu to receive feedback early in the process. Work presented before the first round of presentations will not factor into a team’s final evaluation but this provides a good opportunity for teams to gauge their progress.

First Round of Presentations:

In this first round of presentations, teams will deliver their findings in a business casual setting to staff of Residence Life and UES. The staff of these departments will serve as judges in this first round. They will confer in the days after the presentations and select four teams that will advance to the final round. They will receive comments from the judges on how to improve their presentations.

Teams who did not advance will be given feedback on how they could improve and will be invited to the U-Challenge Banquet for their hard work and contributions to energy/utility conservation in the residence halls. They will need to RSVP through a link that will be provided.

Final Round of Presentations/Banquet:

In the final round of presentations, teams will deliver their revised projects. They will then present to a panel of TAMU administration and staff from Residence Life and UES.

The panel of judges will confer to discern which team is most deserving of the grand prize. In recognition for the excellent work of the teams, UES and our partners will host a banquet immediately following the presentations to highlight the outcomes and contributions of the students.

At this banquet, the winners will be announced and congratulated.

The finalists will also receive prizes and recognition for their outstanding work.

Note: just because a team did not win the grand prize does not mean their recommendations will not be adopted.

Sources of Information:

Students are encouraged to access the data provided by UES. UES staff will be willing to consult with students to interpret the data. However, students can also interview staff and students residing within residence hall as they search for solutions to the findings they discover. Students are encouraged to creatively seek sources of information such as the utility services of other universities, the Department of Energy, and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

If you have questions or concerns, contact us at Jamin_goecker@housing.tamu.edu

Timeline:

Application deadline: **February 1, 2017**

Initial meeting/teams formed: **February 8, 2017**

Optional feedback on initial findings/presentation: **no later than March 15, 2017**

First Round of presentations: **March 22, 2017**

Final Round of presentations/banquet: **April 19, 2017**