Students participate in real-time power trading simulation

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With the threat of recent massive power blackouts ever present, a small group of Freeman School MBA and MFIN candidates are reliving the nightmare of a darkened landscape, not as students but as the next operators of the Smart Grid.



Students in the course Introduction to Electricity Markets assume the roles of electricity producers, traders, dispatchers and analysts.

The course Introduction to Electricity Markets, taught by adjunct professor Gregory Thurnher, engages students in the challenges faced by power traders, electric utility analyst, independent power producers and utility dispatchers, whose job it is to keep America's lights on in the most cost-effective manner.

Students in the course assume the roles of these "power brokers," answering the call of the Obama administration to shore up the nation's electrical system by integrating renewable energy sources, optimizing transmission systems with smart-grid technologies, and participating in a fair and seamless wholesale electric marketplace.

In keeping with the Freeman School's expertise in experiential learning, the exercises the students participate in are "real" enough to be recognized by the North American Electric Reliability Corp., the Electric Reliability Organization delegated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to administer System Operator Training, as suitable for operator continuing education hours.

Students who have successfully completed the course have gone on to jobs in utility and commodity trading roles at firms including Entergy Corp., Florida Power and Light, Ameren Energy and JP Morgan.

On Friday, March 5, students will take their final exam in the course by participating in a simulated 12-hour energy dispatch shift. The exercise will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. and representatives from Shell and Entergy Corp. will be on hand to observe and act as judges.

Alumni and others interested in attending the simulation should contact Gregory Thurnher at thurnher@tulane.edu for more information.