Simulation will teach students about energy transition

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Pierre Conner, professor of practice and executive director of the Tulane Energy Institute, demonstrates the Energy Transition Game, a simulation exercise that teaches students the economic dynamics of the shift from fossil fuel to renewables.

Imagine a game that combines the strategy of chess and the complexity of Risk with one of the most critical challenges of our generation – and you've got the Energy Transition Game.

Pierre Conner, executive director of the Tulane Energy Institute (TEI) and faculty director of the Master of Management in Energy program at Tulane University's Freeman School of Business, recently spent two days at the Centre for Systems Solutions (CRS) in Wroclaw, Poland, for one-on-one intensive training to become a moderator of the Energy Transition Game, a simulation exercise that challenges students to create innovative solutions to the complex process of the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

The game is a role-player simulation in which students assume the roles of stakeholders throughout the energy delivery system, including producers, consumers, and officials from government and non-governmental organizations. During the game, which takes several hours to complete, students play out the implications of their decisions while learning the connections within the energy system process.

"I can't wait to give our students hands-on experience in the energy transition through this game," Conner says. "They will have fun and at the same time learn about the complexity of the system-wide change to renewable energy sources in our simulated world, which I think we'll call 'Tulandia.'"

But first, Conner needs to recruit and train additional moderators to guide students through the game. He hopes to tap into TEI's partnerships within the university, including faculty in the School of Science and Engineering and the Tulane Center for Energy Law, as well as Tulane's extensive alumni network.

Conner's travel was made possible by the Duren Professorship Grant, an annual award from Newcomb Tulane College which supports faculty activities that enrich the scope of undergraduate education. He is the only person in North America who has been trained to oversee the game.

Learn more about the game on the Centre for Systems Solutions web site.