MBA students help Entergy understand clients' sustainability needs

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As part of their capstone project, Freeman School MBA students toured a solar farm with Entergy business operations analyst Gabriella Olivieri as

their guide. From left: Evan Christenson, Jagari Roy, Serena Deutch, Gabriella Olivieri, Lawrence Ofori-Som, Juwon Ishola.

Corporate sustainable energy initiatives are in flux. Recent policy reversals and regulation rollbacks have discouraged green investment, yet promising new technologies and increasing demand for reliable energy make sustainable power an attractive option for many corporations. For companies like Entergy, which delivers power to 3 million customers across the Southeast, these rapid political and economic shifts make it difficult to understand corporate clients' sustainability goals.

Last fall, a team of Freeman School MBA students set out to discover how these changes are impacting Entergy's commercial customers and recommend solutions that would allow the company to meet its customers' evolving sustainability needs. The project was part of the Freeman MBA Capstone, an experiential learning course that puts MBAs to work addressing real-world challenges.

"For this project, students really had to wrap their heads around the macroeconomic environment affecting Entergy's clients," said Carmen Weigelt, assistant professor of strategy and entrepreneurship. "They needed to understand whether Entergy's clients were still undertaking sustainability initiatives despite massive political and economic shifts."

"This was a big task," said Serena Deutch (MBA '26), a member of the capstone team. "We wanted to find out what sort of green products and sustainability offerings Entergy's commercial and industrial customers were interested in and what they'd be willing to pay for them. To answer that question, we had to look at the situation from multiple angles, taking into account local, state and federal policies."

To define the scope of the project and outline deliverables, the team held several meetings with Entergy representatives, including Gabriella Olivieri (MME '25), a business operations analyst.

"Working with the team was genuinely energizing," Olivieri said. "What stood out most was their willingness to engage with the complexity of the topic rather than trying to simplify it too quickly. The project raised difficult questions, and the team approached the work with a real interest in understanding the tradeoffs utilities face as they plan for the future."

“We really had to think about what Entergy wanted from us as consultants,” said capstone team member Juwon Ishola (MBA ’26). “We had a lot of back and forth where we were clarifying the objectives to make sure we were aligned on the solutions we were generating.”



The student capstone team presented findings to representatives from Entergy. From left: Evan Christenson, Lawrence Ofori-Som, Jagari Roy, Serena Deutch, Juwon Ishola.

Next, the team began researching the impact of federal policies impacting the energy market. Lawrence Ofori-Som (MBA ’26), who was responsible for the team’s external analysis, said that while the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 incentivized green energy investment through tax credits and grants, new legislation like 2025’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act slashed tax breaks and incentives for renewable energy projects.

“It’s complicated,” Ofori-Som said. “For instance, if Entergy wanted to build another solar farm, they would need to consider where they are getting their materials. The One Big Beautiful Bill says that those materials can’t come from China anymore. So, already they are facing a restriction. We had to come up with solutions that both the federal and state laws supported.”

A pivotal moment in the project came when the team visited one of Entergy's solar farms.

"When we got to the solar farm, we were able to see how these systems operated in real life," said Deutch. "Throughout the project, we were navigating all the jargon surrounding the industry, but all the terms and product possibilities started to make sense once we saw the location."

"Going to the field was so advantageous to us," agreed Ofori-Som. "We had a much better sense of how the company was operating."

The team also benefited from subject matter experts willing to share their knowledge and insights. As a Freeman graduate, Olivieri was eager to lend her support.

"My role was mostly to provide context and act as a sounding board as they developed their ideas," she said. "I also encouraged them to stay comfortable working through uncertainty. In energy, many of the most important questions don't have clear answers yet, and learning how to navigate that ambiguity is part of the work."

"Gabriella was a tremendous resource, as were our experts within Tulane," Deutch said. "We met with Pierre Conner, who is head of the Tulane Energy Institute, and he was able to offer guidance, and several business communication professors gave us advice about our presentation."

After site visits, client meetings and lots of research, the team was able to conclude that Entergy's commercial and industrial customers are still interested in green products and services despite market challenges.

"Because the market for green products and services still exists, we recommended Entergy look into some creative approaches taken by other companies," Deutch said.

The team's first recommendation drew on battery storage, an emerging technology that has the potential to give customers more control over how they produce and sell energy. This solution would enable corporate customers to purchase a battery whose energy comes from a renewable source and, crucially, sell excess energy.

“It’s empowering for commercial customers to be able to participate in the energy system by dispatching energy,” said Ishola. “I was responsible for understanding the customer perspective toward sustainability, and based on my findings, this is an excellent solution from a customer point of view.

“Our second idea was for a Smart Saver and Flexible Tariff solution,” Ishola said. “This solution would incentivize commercial companies to switch to super-efficient energy sources and benefit from a cost reduction. For instance, if a company switched from gas burners to super-efficient electric heat pumps during off-peak hours, Entergy would give them a 10-20% discount.”

The team said their recommendations were well received by Entergy representatives.

“We received positive feedback from the Entergy team,” Deutch said. “We got some good questions during our presentation, and it was great to know that the many hours we put into this project were worth it in the end.”

“I was really proud of what the team presented,” Ofori-Som agreed. “We presented something that really made sense and that Entergy could use in the future.”