



Energy Institute Communications: Editorial Calendar and Quality Control Guidelines

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Through various platforms and vehicles, the Energy Institute initiates a series of ongoing communications efforts designed to advance the organization's core mission:

The Energy Institute fosters interdisciplinary interactions among colleges and schools across campus, while serving as a portal for external audiences interested in learning more about energy research carried out at The University of Texas at Austin. The Institute leverages the expertise of faculty to study critical energy policy questions, and is dedicated to broadening the educational experience of students by creating a community of scholars around energy issues of importance to Texas, the nation and the world.

The various initiatives – from a monthly newsletter and placement of op-eds in prominent news publications to authoritative reports, special announcements and social media interactions – are driven by a strategic approach to communications that emphasizes the integration of content and outreach efforts in a coordinated manner. In keeping with the organization's mission, our objectives are to showcase the expertise of UT Austin faculty, staff and others engaged in important energy research; promote the Energy Institute (EI or Institute) as a conduit to energy research on campus; and to enhance the perception of the university as the premier energy university that is a credible source of information on a wide range of energy issues.

While new research findings frequently are a mainstay of communications content, the Institute assembles and reports on wide variety of activities outside the realm of any individual research group. Our intent is to be agnostic about the diverse array of energy related research that is conducted at the university, and reflect the work of a broad cross-section of educational units and research centers.

Energy Institute communications initiatives, roughly sorted by importance, include:

Research and Communications Initiatives	Typical Frequency	Importance
Prepare authoritative reports	Twice / year	Very high
Update UT Austin Energy Inventory	Annually	Very high
Publicize UT Energy Poll	Twice / year	Medium-high
Cover and post energy research	Weekly	High

Prepare and distribute Energy Institute newsletter	Monthly	High
Market UT Energy Symposium and other conferences, seminars and events sponsored by UT faculty or partners	2-3 / month	Medium
Gather and post news items from schools, colleges and energy centers to EI website	2-3 / week	Medium-high
Manage media relations (interviews for articles, etc.)	Ongoing (typically 2-3 / week)	Medium-high
Issue Special Announcements	2-3 / month	Medium-high
Promote conferences and other special events organized or hosted by the Energy Institute	2-3 / year	High
Distribute press releases to energy journalists	2-4 / year	Medium
Tweet and post news articles in which EI directors or staff are quoted; also publicize awards, honors and announcements and promote notable energy events involving faculty and staff.	4 – 6 / week	Low-medium

Whether items will be included in the various communications platforms and vehicles the Energy Institute employs depends on the urgency and relative importance of each item or initiative and the appropriateness or suitability for each of the outlets. In addition, each of the different communications products has a tailored quality control process commensurate with its importance:

- Authoritative Reports & Policy Studies (1-2 / year)**
Frequency: 1 -2 / year. The Energy Institute has a goal of producing two major policy studies per year.
Scope and Background: These reports are intended to be authoritative in nature. Research topics selected for these reports will have a focus on public policy, and will reflect topical energy issues of importance to Texas and the nation. Each study will feature an interdisciplinary approach that draws from the depth and breadth of expertise on the UT Austin campus and will require one to two years to complete. Topics will be selected by EI senior staff in consultation with the (Energy Institute Advisory Board (EIAB)).
Quality Control Process: These reports will undergo two different quality control processes, internal and external. Internal: reports will be reviewed by the Director and Deputy Director and at least one non-staff member, usually a member of the EIAB. In addition to the EIAB member, the Institute will utilize two qualified and impartial reviewers from outside UT. External: the intent for authoritative reports

will be built from segments of research that will be published as journal articles and will be scrutinized through the peer-review process. While the full extent of the reports is not expected to be peer-reviewed, it is anticipated that important methodological parts of the reports will be peer-reviewed. However, because of the timing of when journal articles appear on the web or in print.

Importance: very high

- **UT Austin Energy Inventory**

Frequency: once / year

Scope and Background: We have used data from an inventory of energy research at UT conducted by EI Assistant Director Dr. Carey King to produce charts illustrating total research dollars allocated to energy related research; an organization chart showing the schools, colleges, research centers engaged in such research; and an Energy Experts Guide, which provides contact information for 300-plus UT Austin faculty and researchers involved in various projects and programs. These new elements will provide on- and off-campus audiences valuable information about energy research at UT and will help further the Institute's goal of serving as a portal to audiences UT faculty and researchers.

Quality Control Process: Over time, this inventory will become more important as it tracks trend lines year-to-year for total externally supported research dollars and manpower. Before going public, the inventory will be presented to the entire EI staff at a staff meeting for feedback, and reviewed by the Communications Director, the Director and / or Deputy Director. It will also be sent out to the main UT stakeholders comprised of the EI Deans and major center Directors at CEM, CEER, and BEG for review / feedback.

Importance: high

- **UT Energy Poll**

Frequency: twice / year

Scope and Background: The EI provides staff support to this national online survey of U.S. consumers, conducted each spring and fall by the Energy Management & Innovation Center in the McCombs School of Business. The **poll** strives to provide an impartial and authoritative look at consumer attitudes and perspectives on key energy issues, and is designed to help inform national discussion, business planning and policy development. The survey is a collaborative effort of academics, polling experts, non-governmental organizations, large energy users and energy producers. Launched in 2012, the UT Energy Poll regularly garners considerable news coverage from local, statewide and national media, and is gaining a reputation as a credible source for statistically verifiable, longitudinal data on consumer perspectives of energy issues. While difficult to measure its influence on policy-makers and other decision-makers, the Energy Poll helps further the image of UT Austin as a credible source of information to the public, in keeping with the Institute's mission of promoting university expertise and knowledge.

Quality Control Process: EI staff, in particular the Communications Director, provide feedback to the poll's design, priority topics, question selection, and press releases for the poll's findings. The quality control for the poll is administered by EMIC, and

the quality control for the press releases is managed by the Communications Director with review by either the Director or Deputy Director.

Importance: medium-high

- **Campus energy research coverage**

Frequency: weekly

Scope and Background: In an effort to publicize new energy research findings from faculty and other researchers on the UT Austin campus, the Energy Institute posts to its [website](#) virtually any new published report, study, white paper, or journal article relating to energy research. In some instances, we post a brief item highlighting publication of the research and link to source material; on other occasions, we craft a feature about the research that includes observations and quotes from the lead researcher. As the ‘face’ of the Energy Institute, we view the website as a vitally important platform for communicating to audiences on- and off-campus. We are continuously looking for ways to improve the site so that it is seen as the primary conduit for internal and external audiences seeking information about energy research conducted at UT. We do not use the website to promote items that are not relevant to energy. Items for the website must be affiliated with UT, though in some cases we will promote conference or events that are organized by non-UT groups (e.g., in Austin), but only if the Energy Institute is a sponsor. Feature items also will be coordinated with the Communications Director from the lead researcher’s home department/center.

Quality Control Process: The quality control of the website is managed by the Communications Director with input from other EI staff. For potentially provocative or controversial items, the Director or Deputy Director will review pieces before they are posted. For possible contentious items, an external communications officer from the President’s office will also be asked to review the piece.

Importance: very high

- **Energy Institute news bulletin**

Frequency: monthly

Scope and Background: The news bulletin and website have similar intent. Many of the items posted to EI website are included in our monthly digital newsletter, which is emailed to approximately 2,400 subscribers. The newsletter, which is featured prominently on our website, is free and easy to subscribe to (or unsubscribe) and forward by email or social media to friends and colleagues. In addition to articles related to new research, we use the newsletter to publicize energy conferences and seminars, major awards and special events, guest lecturers, etc. These items frequently include links to published white papers or journal articles, press releases, events listings, and other sources of information. The news bulletin distribution list is comprised of an informed audience of academics, industry, NGOs, regulatory and legislative staff, entrepreneurs, and others. As with the website, the newsletter is restricted to UT-related energy items, with exceptions being made for non-UT events for which EI is a sponsor. Feature items will also be coordinated with the Communications Director from the lead researcher’s home department/center.

Quality Control Process: The newsletter is prepared by the Communications Director and reviewed by the Director and Deputy Director. As with the website, possible contentious items will also be reviewed by external communications staff from the President's office.

Importance: very high

- **Media relations**

Frequency: ongoing (typically two – three / week)

Scope and Background: Journalists frequently contact the Energy Institute for expert commentary or insights on a wide variety of energy stories. The EI Communications Director screens such queries and coordinates interviews for faculty and researchers with journalists representing local, statewide, regional and national media organizations. Reporters increasingly view the Institute as a connection to expert sources on campus, further enhancing the perception of UT Austin as a credible source of information. With the advent of social media and search engines such as Google, faculty mentions in news stories spur additional contact, creating the opportunity for additional coverage. These interactions are coordinated with communications officers at departments/centers as necessary.

Quality Control Process: the EI Communications Director handles these inquiries using the research inventory and experts guide as a guide, but also with feedback as necessary from senior staff to identify suitable representatives on campus.

Importance: medium-high

- **Energy Institute director op-eds / guest columns**

Frequency: four – six / year

Scope and Background: Opinion-Editorials, or guest columns, provide a great opportunity for EI directors to reach a national or international audience to express an educational, dispassionate point of view on emerging trends, technological advances, pressing policy issues or other relevant energy topics. Our goal is to place these pieces, typically 600 – 750 words in length, in major regional publications (*Houston Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, or *San Antonio Express-News*) and national publications such as the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*. In addition, opportunities to submit feature articles of 1000-2000 words for general interest or scholarly magazines (*Scientific American*, *Popular Science*, *Earth Magazine*, etc.) also will be pursued. Op-eds and feature articles concerning newsworthy energy topics published in credible news organizations often are read by legislators, regulators, energy industry professionals, investors, NGOs and other influential stakeholders. As such, they can be a valuable way to elevate the profile and further the perception of UT as a thought-leader on major energy issues.

Quality Control Process: Pieces written by Assistant Directors will be reviewed by the Communications Director and Director or Deputy Director. Pieces written by the Director (or Deputy Director) will be reviewed by the Communications Director, the Deputy Director (or Director), and external communications staff in the President's office. For especially provocative or contentious pieces, external input will be sought from at least one member of the EIAB.

Importance: very high

- **Special Announcements**

Frequency: two – three / month

Scope and Background: We typically reserve Special Announcements, which are digital newsletters comprised of a single item and emailed to our list of monthly newsletter subscribers, for events the Energy Institute hosts or sponsors; a high-profile guest lecturer; visit from a prominent figure in the energy world; or some other topical event of interest that arises with little advance notice. Announcements typically are very brief and include one more links for additional information, such as directions, speaker bios, etc. Since the audience for these items also receives our monthly news bulletin, we are quite selective with content.

Quality Control Process: This process is managed by the EI Communications Director with input from the Director and / or Deputy Director about which items are deemed worthy of Special Announcements.

Importance: medium-high

- **Conferences hosted by the Energy Institute**

Frequency: once or twice / year

Scope and Background: At the urging of its EIAB and President Powers, the Institute has begun planning an annual weeklong event focusing on energy each spring. Preliminary goals for UT Energy Week 2015 are to raise visibility of UT Austin as a world-class energy campus by showcasing energy-related research to potential stakeholders in industry and government; to discuss key issues for future research; and to highlight the university's graduates to potential employers. The overriding objective is to present UT research as *world class, innovative; interdisciplinary; and involving students.*

Quality Control Process: A steering committee, comprised of representative faculty, administrative leadership, students and staff from different parts of campus, is responsible for all quality control on the intellectual scope and design of UT Energy Week. An EI staffer is the main point of contact for managing logistical details and pushing the event's planning process forward.

Importance: medium

- **Press releases**

Frequency: two – four / year

Scope and Background: The EI issues press releases infrequently – for example, to announce a new director or other staff addition, or to release a new policy study. In those instances, the Institute uses the university's communications distribution network, as well as directly contacting energy journalists. In addition, EI Communications Director writes and pitches the UT Energy Poll press release each

spring and fall. Press releases often result in positive news coverage in a variety of news media at the local, regional and national level.

Quality Control Process: The EI Communications Director manages the quality control process with review by the Director/Deputy Director. For high-profile or contentious items, an external Communications Director in the President's Office or the relevant department/center also will be included in the review process.

Importance: medium-high

- **Social media**

Frequency: four – six / week

Scope and Background: The EI actively manages its Facebook and Twitter accounts. Both initiatives are designed to extend the Institute's contact among a growing number of stakeholders who use social media platforms to monitor news and other developments in the energy world and interactively engage in energy issues. Facebook has a very sophisticated analytics system that yields information concerning what kind of people view our page, what posts they are most interested in and have the most reach, etc. Twitter allows the Institute to add its voice to an ever-widening network of people interested in energy issues and appears to be the social media platform of choice among journalists.

Quality Control Process: The EI Communications Director manages the quality control process for these communications with occasional feedback from Institute staff.

Importance: medium-low