



THIRD ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC POLICY COMPETITION

ENERGY POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Official Rulebook for the 2016 Conference



Rice University's Baker Institute
STUDENT FORUM

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document will serve as the official rulebook for the 2016 Baker Institute Student Forum (BISF) Undergraduate Public Policy Competition: Energy Policy in the United States, to be held at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy on April 9th, 2016. The document will serve as the official rulebook for the competition. The BISF has made every effort to make this rulebook as comprehensive and readable as possible. Please consult this document for any questions you might have prior to contacting the BISF directly. Please note, the BISF maintains the right to amend these rules as deemed appropriate prior to the competition but will only do so if absolutely necessary or judged to be in the best interest of the participants. If any questions remain that are not clearly answered in this document, please contact the BISF at bisf@rice.edu or the President, Kaylen Strench, directly at kes11@rice.edu. Additional details of the policy conference will be revealed to the selected finalists upon their notification of selection.

Please note, the BISF is a separate, though affiliated, organization from the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. Under no circumstances should entrants directly contact the Baker Institute. The BISF can be reached by email at bisf@rice.edu or at the President's email, kes11@rice.edu. The members of the BISF will respond as timely as possible but we ask for your patience.

II. ELIGIBILITY

The BISF Public Policy Competition is open to submissions from entrants meeting the following eligibility requirements:

- a. At least 18 years of age at the time of the policy conference
- b. Enrolled, either part-time or full-time, as an undergraduate student during the 2015–2016 Academic Year at Rice University

Additional Circumstances:

- c. Students enrolled in their final year of undergraduate study in the 2015-2016 academic year are considered eligible but should be able to attend the policy conference on April 9th, 2016 if selected as a finalist.
- d. International students currently attending Rice University are considered eligible..
- e. Students who have entered the competition previously may submit again, but they must present a paper that is substantially different from the paper they submitted previously. Entries from previous competitors should both address a problem and provide a proposal that are different than those which they presented previously. The BISF reserves the right to disqualify papers that are too similar to previous entries submitted by that competitor.

Team Structure:

- f. Interested participants may submit individually or in teams of two or three.
- g. Only one team member needs to submit the proposal, but all members' identification information should be included.
- h. All team members should meet eligibility criteria and be available to participate in the conference if selected as a finalist team.

Throughout this document, any stipulation applied to participants or finalists is intended to apply to all members of a team submission.

III. SUBMITTING ENTRIES

All entries must be submitted by 5 P.M. (central standard time) on February 1, 2016.

Entries may be submitted by emailing bisf@rice.edu with the following stipulations:

- The paper must be attached as a .doc or .pdf file
- The paper file should be titled:
[BISF Policy Proposal – Last name First name]
- The paper should meet all formatting requirements described in Section VI.
- The email subject title should be labeled:
[Policy Competition Submission Last name First name]
- The email should be sent from the entrant's personal email address and will serve as the sole means of communication between the BISF and the entrant
- The email body must contain the entrant's:
 - Full Legal Name

This information is strictly for identification purposes and will not be shared. This information will be withheld from the Review Committee at time of paper evaluation.

IV. POLICY PAPER OVERVIEW

What should submissions address? Entrants must select from one of the following five prompts:

1. On August 3, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency finalized “The Clean Power Plan for Existing Power Plants” to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. The new standards have both received praise and incited controversy. In light of this, choose a specific section or subsection and either:
 - a. address potential problems with this policy *and* argue for a new course of action (reject the policy, alter the policy, adopt a different policy) **or**
 - b. respond to criticisms of this policy *and* argue for why the policy should be kept as it is.

2. Natural gas and crude oil from shale formations have become increasingly important sources of energy for the United States. Due to the difficulty of accessing shale gas, oil and gas companies must rely on a special process to reach it, called hydraulic fracturing. This method, however, has become controversial, due to claims that it may pose risks to public health and the environment. Federal and state policymakers must strike a careful balance between protecting citizens and the environment, yet also promoting efficient use of cheap, domestic energy sources. In your paper, do one of the following:
 - a. Identify an *existing* regulation that relates to shale gas and/or hydraulic fracturing, address problems with this regulation, propose a new course of action (reject the policy, alter the policy, adopt a different policy), and identify and address potential criticisms of this new course of action **or**

- b. Propose a new policy at the federal or state level that will help mitigate a *particular* environmental or public health risk associated with hydraulic fracturing and identify and address potential criticisms of the new policy.
3. Energy conservation is important for many reasons: lower energy use can decrease carbon-dioxide-emission output, reduce energy prices for consumers through decreasing demand, and help the United States enhance energy security. Some policies proposed to reduce energy use have promoted mass transit usage, lowered speed limits or automobile efficiency standards. Write a policy proposal at the state or national level that will promote conservation of energy through *one* specific method. Be sure to state how implementation will be funded, argue why this method is better than alternatives, and identify and address potential criticisms of the new policy.
4. As production of natural gas and crude oil from shale resources in the U.S. have increased, some have called for easing of restrictions on the export of oil and natural gas. The federal government has a process to review applications to export natural gas but the process is slow and cumbersome. Current federal regulations limit the export of crude oil from the U.S. Proponents of removing impediments to U.S. oil and natural gas exports argue this would lead to increased US oil and gas investment, jobs and production. Others argue that the U.S. should not be exporting scarce and carbon-based natural resources. In your paper, Identify an existing regulation that relates to the export of either natural gas or oil, address problems with this regulation, and propose a new course of action (reject the policy, alter the policy, adopt a different policy) and identify and address potential criticisms of the new course of action.

5. Choose your own topic. Either:
 - a. Choose a *specific* policy that is currently in place, identify problems with this policy, and recommend a new course of action (reject the policy, change the policy, adopt a new policy)
 - b. Argue for the adoption of a policy that would help address a specific problem in the realm of United States domestic energy policy at the state or national level. Identify and address potential criticisms of the new policy.

Regardless of the prompt chosen, all papers should contain the following content:

- They should address either state or national level policy, rather than local or international policy. Papers may discuss international or local implications or context, but the bulk of the paper should focus on state or national level domestic policy.
- They should address laws or public regulations.
- They should be written in a formal style, but assume minimal prior knowledge of the reader.
- They should utilize data and academic literature to support arguments made within the paper.
- If the course of action requires a cost, the writer should explain where funds will come from (within the state or national budget, a new tax, etc.).
- They should only contain analysis directly relevant to the policy being proposed.
- They should have a narrow focus and scope, relating to a specific law or regulation or a specific set of laws and regulations that are interconnected.
- They should take the form of a policy proposal, and thus include, at minimum:
 - a brief abstract
 - relevant background information about the subtopic being addressed
 - a statement of current policy and why it is inadequate (if against)/why it is beneficial (if for retaining the policy)

- a statement of at least two policy options available for addressing this inadequacy (if against)/at least two proposed changes to this policy; with a brief summary of the benefits and drawbacks presented by each option
- a recommendation for a specific course of action
- an explanation of why this policy is the preferable alternative, reinforced by evidence and strong argumentation that addresses possible counterarguments
- a bibliography

Entrants should utilize available data and academic literature to support arguments made within the paper. For a more detailed overview of evaluation, see Section V below.

V. PAPER EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Weight	Category	Criteria
10%	Background	<p>Does the writer effectively provide background information relevant to the topic at hand?</p> <p>Does the writer describe the relevant status quo for the topic at hand?</p> <p>Does the writer clearly identify plausible, significant inadequacies of the status quo <u>or</u> identify plausible, significant benefits of the status quo?</p>
20%	Proposal	<p>Does the writer describe at least two strong courses of action to resolve the aforementioned inadequacies <u>or</u> two strong proposals to change or eliminate the policies that help maintain the status quo?</p> <p>Does the writer convincingly describe the pros and cons of each alternative?</p> <p>Does the writer clearly and precisely convey what course of action is best?</p> <p>Is the course of action specific and detailed?</p> <p>If the course of action is a change in policy, is it significantly different from the status quo?</p> <p>Is the policy proposal directly relevant to the chosen prompt, or, if free choice, is the policy proposal directly relevant to the policy addressed?</p>
30%	Justification	<p>Does the writer effectively and convincingly argue why the policy proposal will correct the problem presented, or why maintaining the status quo is better policy than accepting a proposed alternative?</p> <p>Does the writer identify and discuss major advantages and disadvantages to adopting the policy proposed?</p> <p>Does the writer effectively address counterarguments?</p> <p>Does the writer identify costs of implementing this policy, and address how these costs will be funded?</p>
15%	Feasibility and Specificity	<p>Does the paper address a specific policy or set of policies that can be reasonably analyzed in a paper of this length?</p>

		Is the proposal realistic and is its implementation conceivable? Is this policy cost-effective?
25%	Evidence	Does the writer present relevant data to illustrate claims? Does the writer effectively use academic literature to support arguments? Are there many unsupported claims? Are there unnecessary, irrelevant, or inaccurate citations? Are there obvious gaps in research relevant to the policy? How informed does the writer appear to be on the subject matter chosen?

VI. PAPER FORMATTING

- a. All papers should be formatted according to the following criteria:
 - 3,000 – 6,000 words in length, excluding citations. Any paper exceeding the word limit will be subject to disqualification.
 - Times New Roman, 12 pt. font
 - Double-spaced
 - Page number centered in footer
 - Standard 1 inch margins on all sides of page
 - Consistent formatting for subsection titles (Letters, numerals, etc.)
- b. Page 1: Cover Page displaying entrant's
 - Name
 - University Attended, Expected Year of Graduation
 - Title of Policy Paper
- c. Page 2:
 - Title of Policy Paper
 - Abstract (250 – 350 words)
- d. Page 3 – : Body of Paper
- e. Last Pages: Bibliography
- f. Citations: APA, Chicago/Turabian, MLA, and Harvard Styles will be accepted.
- g. Footnotes: 10 pt Times New Roman Font, single-spaced

Please do not include any headings or footings beyond the requested page number. Do not include any personal information (name, university, etc.) on any page beyond the cover sheet. An example paper is included in Appendix B.

Failure to adhere to the formatting described above may result in point deductions from the Review Committee's evaluation score.

VII. PAPER EVALUATION PROCEDURE

1. **All entries must be received by February 1, 2016.**
2. All entries received will be assigned an identification number and stripped of their personal identification information. Cover Pages will not be printed.
3. The Review Committee will read and score anonymous papers according to the criteria established in Section IV. Members of the Review Committee will have been trained in how papers are to be graded and will report their evaluations to the BISF.
4. 6 - 10 entrants will be selected as finalists based on the paper evaluation scores. All finalists are invited to participate in a formal conference at the Baker Institute.
5. Finalists will be notified no later than March 1st of their selection to participate in the 2016 policy conference. Those who are not selected as finalists will not be notified.
6. Students will have until March 9th to notify the BISF of their intent to participate in the competition. The BISF maintains the right to replace finalists who decline with alternates at its discretion pending circumstances at the time of occurrence.

VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FINALISTS PRIOR TO CONFERENCE

After accepting their invitations to participate in the policy conference, finalists will be asked to prepare a PowerPoint to accompany a 20-30 minute presentation of their proposal to be presented to a panel of judges. This style of the PowerPoint is left to the discretion of the finalists but should be kept strictly professional. PowerPoints should be finalized and emailed to bisf@rice.edu by April 2nd. The BISF will try to accommodate changes made after this deadline prior to the first judging panel, but does not guarantee PowerPoints submitted after this deadline will be accessible for the presentation. The BISF is not responsible for providing computer access to any finalists.

IX. CONFERENCE COMPETITION PROCEDURE

1. Each finalist will be assigned a time slot on the afternoon of April 9th, 2016 to present their policy proposal to a panel of judges from the Houston community.
2. Each finalist will have a maximum of 30 minutes to present their proposal using PowerPoint as a visual aid. This will be followed by 20 minutes for judges to ask questions.
3. All panel judges will be required to state any familiarity with finalists prior to the presentation. Those with stated relationships will be excused for the round.
4. **Each finalist's final score will be weighed 50% paper 50% presentation.**
5. In the case of a tie final score for two or more finalists, the judges from the presentations will convene to rank the tying finalists. No two finalists will tie for a final placement or prize.
6. Cash prizes will be given as detailed in Section XI.
7. At the award ceremony the evening of TBD, the top 3 placing finalists will be recognized. Each will be given 5 minutes to inform the audience of their proposal.
8. Following the awards ceremony, there will be a reception featuring professionals in the energy industry in Houston. Participants and other Rice University undergraduates will have the opportunity to speak to the entrants about their proposals and network.

X. OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION EVALUATION

Weight	Category	Criteria
25%	Depth of Knowledge	Does the speaker demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter being analyzed? Does the speaker demonstrate an understanding of the literature on the subject matter? Does the speaker effectively respond to questions proposed by the judges following the presentation?
25%	Completeness of Presentation	Does the speaker discuss the most important relevant aspects of the policy area being analyzed? Does the speaker effectively explain his or her proposal?
25%	Originality and Relevance	Is the speaker's proposal original or unique in some way? Does the proposal directly address a specific policy or related set of policies relevant to one of the prompts? Is the presentation focused on background, research, and analysis relevant to the policy area or proposal?
25%	Presentation	How effective is the speaker? Does the speaker maintain professional demeanor? Does the visual aid provide appropriate and useful visual support for the presentation? (Graphs, Plots, etc.)

Final score to determine competition winner = $0.50 \times \text{Paper Evaluation} + 0.50 \times \text{Presentation}$

XI. PRIZES

- a. 1st Place: \$1,000
- b. 2nd Place: \$750
- c. 3rd Place: \$500
- d. All finalists will have their Abstracts published in *The Cultivator*, Rice University's James A. Baker III Institute Undergraduate Public Policy Journal.
- e. In the case of a tie, the paper evaluation score will serve as the tie breaker. Only one finalist will receive each prize.

APPENDIX A. TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES

November 1	Open Submission Window
February 1	Close Submission Window at 11:59 PM Central Standard Time
March 1	Deadline finalists notified of selection
March 9	Deadline for selected finalists to Confirm Attendance
April 2	Deadline for submitting PowerPoints for presentation
April 8	Registration
April 9	BISF Undergraduate Public Policy Competition: Energy Policy in the US

APPENDIX B. EXAMPLE OF PAPER FORMATTING

First Name Last Name

University Attended, Year of Graduation

Paper Title

Paper Title

Abstract:

This is where a participant should write the abstract. The abstract should be 250 – 350 words in length. It should state the policy area to be analyzed and the proposal being made. The abstract should function as a complete thesis that guides the reader in what follows in the paper. The Abstract should be separated from the body of the paper itself by a page break. This page will function as the cover page during paper evaluations by the Review Committee.

I. Introduction

Papers may format subsection headings as desired. There is no standard format proposed in this rulebook, however participants should be consistent in whatever format is chosen.

II. Section Heading

The paper should be written in 12 point Times New Roman Font, Double spaced, and use 1 inch margins. The entire paper should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words in total, excluding citations.¹ The Bibliography should begin on a separate page from the last paragraph of the paper's body text.

¹ Footnotes may be used at the discretion of the writer but are generally discouraged, with the exception of citation styles utilizing partial citations in footnotes throughout the essay. Participants may use APA, Chicago/Turabian, MLA, or Harvard Citation formats.

Bibliography

Consult a formal guide on citations such as the Chicago Manual of Style for details regarding proper formatting of references.

APPENDIX C. CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

April 8

5:30 – 6:00 PM	Registration for participants
6:00 – 7:30 PM	Opening dinner for participants, transportation will be provided
7:30 PM	Close for Evening

April 9

8:00 – 9:00 AM	Check-in at the Baker Institute, Breakfast provided
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Presentations by finalists
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Lunch provided in the Grand Hall, Keynote Speaker
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Awards presentation, closing by Kaylen Strench, President of the BISF
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Coffee and networking with professionals from Energy Industry