PICS Internship: OEMR @ FERC

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During my internship with FERC:

- I drafted official regulatory orders issued by the Commission to respond to stakeholder requests in Eastern energy markets. 
  Assessed and approved policy that affects people’s lives, such as lessening air conditioning bills for low income customers in light of the COVID–19 pandemic.

- I conducted an independent research project and presentation explaining and recommending an action plan for future battery storage resources.
  Summarized and communicated technical concepts in a concise slide deck which may be used to brief others on the topic in future.
What is FERC?
FERC regulates the interstate energy industry—namely the transmission and sale of electricity, natural gas, pipeline oil, as well as hydroelectric, wind, solar, and other types of power. It also monitors energy markets, regulates the construction of new energy projects, and more.

It consists of economists, engineers, analysts, lawyers, and more who work to achieve energy reliability, energy security, affordability, and more.

In short, FERC helps keep the lights on and make sure that energy supply always meets demand.
What is OEMR? What do they do?

OEMR’s statutory purpose and stated mission:

“The Office of Energy Market Regulation (OEMR) analyzes filings submitted by public utilities and natural gas and oil pipelines to ensure that rates, terms, and conditions of service are just and reasonable and not unduly discriminatory or preferential.”

OEMR is also a community full of smart and kind people!
My work as an energy analyst intern: (1) processing filings

One of my responsibilities in OEMR was **processing filings**—

assessing submittals by utilities requesting to modify their terms or rates of service, reviewing comments and protests by stakeholders, and drafting orders approving, denying, or making a determination on the filing.

This made up much of my day-to-day responsibilities.

My favorite filing I worked on was a proposal for an economic relief program by the city of New York for low income electric customers’ air conditioning bills.

The program anticipated that these customers were in danger of heat stroke because they typically avoid using air conditioning because of the cost but this year could not access cooled public facilities or swimming pools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I valued that my work made a tangible impact helping vulnerable people cope with the twin threats of the pandemic and the summer heat.
My most valuable work experience was my research project which culminated in a presentation for the entire office. I was later asked to also present to the senior directors.

As I did my research, I learned a lot through discussions with my mentors about how the office regulates the complex ecosystem of the energy industry and enacts good policy.

At first I mostly followed the instructions given to me. Later on I took steps to ensure I had a better experience by asking to modify my independent project to narrow it down in a way that focused on a interesting topic which could be communicated in a narrative style presentation that also went into the technical details. It was a valuable experience of researching and communicating a complex idea to a challenging audience.

For my project, I chose to focus on a specific facet of energy storage resources, a topic I found very interesting because these resources, like lithium-ion batteries, are projected to be an important conduit for the future of the energy industry.
My presentation included: analysis of data, a decision tree summarizing possible regulatory history and possible outcomes, and my recommendation.
Discussion

- From my project, I took away valuable growth in my ability to craft visually appealing slides and deliver a presentation with clarity and concision, as well as doing research and working with a team. Much of my research involved discussing topics with colleagues in the office and synthesizing information.

- My work will help the office by leaving behind a useful guide to understanding the concept of minimum run-time requirements for energy storage resources. It also helped brief employees unfamiliar with the topic on the regulatory history and potential future outcomes of energy storage resources.
Challenges of a Remote Internship and Lessons Learned
Adjusting to working remotely –

● I didn't communicate as much as I should have in the beginning. It was also hard for my mentors to stay in contact with me too, since we weren't in the office together.

● I also later realized I wanted to change the format of my work to make it more interesting to me.

● I had to learn to over communicate, to go against my introverted personality and try to meet as many people as I can by just shooting them an email. I learned that everyone in the office was super friendly and happy to help.
Challenges I faced and lessons learned

- In the end, my favorite experience was creating and sharing a presentation on battery storage resources with the office, including the OEMR Director, interacting with many brilliant and friendly people in the office during my research, and learning so much about the regulatory and economic concepts involved with the energy industry in the process.
Thank you for reading!

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