Organization
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Project Title
Analyzing the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission’s finances and regulatory fees to adequately fund the work of the Commission.

Organizational Background
The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is a three-member commission appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. Our Mission is to protect the people of Washington by ensuring that investor-owned utility and transportation services are safe, available, reliable and fairly priced. Regulated businesses include electric, telecommunications, natural gas, and water. The commission also regulates in-state household movers, solid waste carriers, private ferries, and inter-city busses, as well as safety issues affecting charter buses, railroads, limousines, and nonprofit senior/handicapped transportation services. Washington State law requires that utility and transportation rates must be reasonable to customers, giving regulated companies a chance to cover legitimate costs and earn a fair profit, so they can stay in business. What is fair to the company, and at the same time fair to the people and businesses it serves, is what the commission must decide many times over. Cases are heard in a formal, legal setting, with the commission hearing evidence from all sides before issuing a decision. For most of our state’s history, private utilities and carriers providing public services usually have been monopolies. If they had been left unregulated, without the restraints of the free-market system, they would have had unchecked power over the state's most essential services.

Project Description
Over the past several years, revenues to Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission have been stagnate while expenditures have been increasing. We are interested in Evans Student Consulting analyzing our historical financial data (revenues, expenditures, and cost drivers), evaluating our current regulatory fee structures, and providing options to fully fund the work of the Commission now and into the future. The analysis will provide support and justification for a legislative proposal to increase UTC regulatory fees in the 2021 legislative session.

Desired Deliverable
This is an opportunity for the Evans School Student Consulting Lab to analyze the Commission’s regulatory fees, revenues and expenditures, and associated cost drivers, for each regulated industry. The deliverable of the Student Consulting Lab-led project will be a report that provides specific recommendations for regulatory fees levels for each regulated industry. The report will support the legislative proposal to increase regulatory fees in the 2021 legislative session.

Key Tasks
Among the core competencies the team will demonstrate on the job include quantitative analysis, informative inquiries, spreadsheet development and presentation, written analysis and recommendations, and working professionally with Commission staff. This is an opportunity to explore and gain a comprehensive view of a regulatory agency’s finances and unique funding structure. In preparing the final report, we want to be collaborative in translating the financial analysis into specific regulatory fee recommendations.