The Energy Learning Exchange (ELE) held an in-person meeting in June, hosted by ComEd at their Oakbrook Terrace facility. Members gathered to discuss company and organization programs for education, energy curriculum, and plans for moving forward.

At the meeting, Christopher Van Haren of ComEd, Margi Schiemann of Nicor Gas, and Mary Zitek of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives each presented on their company’s or organization's involvement with education in schools and communities, including K-12 educational initiatives, school partnerships, energy efficiency outreach, community college programs, and more.

The Illinois Energy Workforce Consortium’s mission is to ensure a strong utility infrastructure in the state of Illinois, by building and sustaining a pipeline of qualified candidates that addresses the current and future needs of the industry. Members of the Consortium presented, Kathy Thigpen of Exelon Corporation shared details on the Education Task Force, and David Wielgus of AGL Resources presented information on the Career Awareness Task Force.

Three high school students presented energy-related research projects that won awards during a recent student challenge, the 13th Annual High School Research Symposium in April, an event coordinated by the Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology at Illinois State University. Maximilian Hill, Komal Khoja, and Benjamin Kuznets-Speck of Niles North High School presented.

Other topics discussed included a new Smart Grid for Schools program presented by Dr. Willy Hunter of Illinois State University, Development of Next Generation Science Standards Curriculum by Matt Aldeman of Illinois State University, Renewable Energy for Schools by Jolene Willis of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University, plus Inspire Illinois, statewide student challenges, and the Center for Energy Workforce Development’s Energy Industry Fundamentals course information by Dr. David Loomis of Illinois State University.

Other companies and organizations with representatives that participated in the meeting included Advance Renewables Sustainability Consulting, DuPage Workforce Board, Education for Employment Region 065, Exelon Generation, Homewood-Flossmoor CHSD 233, Illinois Community College Board, Mainstream Renewable Power, Northern Illinois University, Office of Governor Pat Quinn, Sustainable Strategies, Three Rivers Education for Employment, Trane/Ingersoll Rand, and University of Illinois at Chicago.

The next in-person meeting is being planned for November.
Student Challenges Highlight Energy Research

The ELE participated in hosting two student challenges involving energy-related research projects in the last few months. Judges were provided for Illinois State University’s 12th Annual High School Research Symposium in April. ELE also partnered with the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Learning Exchange for a Student Challenge at the IL FFA State Convention in June. ELE provided judges for energy-related projects at the AgriScience Fair at the convention, and the winners were be provided with travel stipends to later compete at the national event.

Careers in Energy Week Starts on October 13th

Mark your calendar to participate in Careers in Energy Week, October 13-19, 2014, when students across the state will be encouraged to learn how energy companies operate, types of careers available and what may be expected in the future, and the importance of energy companies in the local economy. ELE assisted in the coordination of the first event for Illinois, held last year, with the Illinois Energy Workforce Consortium, as part of a nationwide effort led by the Center for Energy Workforce Development that created the event to increase public awareness of careers in the energy field. Energy industry representatives will again be invited to host tours and present on energy topics at schools that week.