# Building a Business Case:
# Energy and Sustainability Software in Higher Education

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# Let's build your case for success

We know higher education institutions face unique and complex energy challenges. Sprawling, decentralized campuses, rising utility costs, and ambitious sustainability goals mean colleges and universities must juggle operational efficiency with environmental responsibility. On top of that, public scrutiny is growing—from students pushing for climate action to faculty and government agencies expecting transparent progress toward carbon neutrality.

Managing energy and sustainability data on this scale is no small task, and spreadsheets alone won't cut it. Purpose-built software can transform how your institution handles utility data, uncover cost-saving opportunities, and meet sustainability goals—all while simplifying compliance. By centralizing everything in one platform, you'll save time, improve decision-making, and free up resources for other priorities.

This guide is here to help you. We'll walk you through building a solid case for energy and sustainability software. From highlighting the challenges you're facing to demonstrating the return on investment, we're here to make it easier for you to secure the tools you need to succeed. Let's work together to position your institution for meaningful change.

# Identifying the need: Why good data is critical

At the heart of every higher education institution's energy and sustainability challenges lies one key factor: data. Without accurate, accessible, and actionable data, it's nearly impossible to make informed decisions or meet ambitious goals. Institutions often face these common data-related challenges:

**Scattered and incomplete utility data:** Utility bills are stored across emails, spreadsheets, and siloed systems, making it hard to get a clear picture of energy use.

**Manual processes:** Wrangling spreadsheets or re-entering numbers from utility bills—introduces errors, wastes staff time, and prevents teams from focusing on strategic goals.

**Lack of proactive insights:** Reactive maintenance becomes the norm when there's no data-driven way to predict or prevent equipment failures or energy spikes.

**Limited stakeholder engagement:** Without clear, compelling data, it's difficult to rally students, faculty, and administrators around energy and sustainability initiatives.

**Difficulty tracking and reporting GHG emissions:** Sustainability reporting requires reliable data across multiple campuses, buildings, and meters—something manual processes struggle to deliver.

## Why 'doing nothing' costs more

The cost of ignoring these data challenges is high (**We have a calculator to prove it!** But more on that later...) Missed savings from billing errors, inefficient operations, and wasted energy add up quickly. Compliance risks multiply when reporting systems fail to meet mandates. Investing in robust energy software ensures your data works for you—not against you—by transforming it into the foundation for smarter decisions and measurable success.

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# Benefits of energy and sustainability software

Investing in energy and sustainability software unlocks transformative benefits for higher education institutions. By centralizing utility data and streamlining processes, campuses can achieve significant cost savings, time efficiencies, and sustainability leadership, all while mitigating risks.

### Cost savings

Most EnergyCAP customers report 10% or more in annual utility costs.

- Improved energy efficiency.
- Reduced utility billing errors and late fees.
- Optimized procurement and demand management.

### Time savings

EnergyCAP customers save on average 37 hours of employee time per month.

- Simplified reporting for multiple stakeholders.
- Automated compliance (e.g., ENERGY STAR, LEED, etc.).
- Quickly identify efficiency opportunities.

### Risk management

On average, ~5% of utility bills are flagged every month with actionable issues or errors.

- Catching billing errors before paying.
- Avoiding late fees
- Avoiding non-compliance penalties.

# Building the financial case

To secure buy-in for energy and sustainability software, it is important to present a strong financial case. Here are some tips for demonstrating measurable ROI and proving how this investment delivers both immediate and long-term value.

## ROI analysis

▸ **Demonstrate potential savings:** Energy software can generate savings in multiple areas, including reduced energy consumption, streamlined labor, and avoidance of non-compliance penalties. For instance, EnergyCAP clients typically save **10% on utility bills annually**, with some recovering over $130 million in cost avoidance, as seen at the **University of New Mexico**.

▸ **Highlight fast payback periods:** Many higher education institutions see ROI within 2–3 years, driven by reduced waste, better procurement, and error detection. This fast return makes energy software a low-risk, high-value investment.

## Budget justification

▸ **Compare costs to inefficiencies:** Show how software costs are offset by eliminating current inefficiencies like manual data entry, error correction, and siloed reporting. For example, automating utility bill processing can save staff dozens of hours each month.

▸ **Link to existing line items:** Tie software expenses to operational or facilities budgets to align with institutional priorities. Highlight how cost savings can fund other critical campus projects.

## Grants and incentives

▸ **Leverage funding opportunities:** Federal and state grants, rebates, and incentives for energy efficiency and sustainability projects can significantly reduce upfront costs. Programs like the Department of Energy's funding for sustainability initiatives are excellent resources to explore.

▸ **Future-proof investments:** Demonstrate how aligning with these programs not only reduces costs but positions the institution for ongoing funding opportunities.

# Addressing stakeholder concerns with proof

To build a strong business case for energy and sustainability software, it's essential to address the priorities of different campus stakeholders. Each group has unique concerns, and showing how the software aligns with their goals can drive consensus and support.

> *Implementing EnergyCAP was a game-changer; it allowed us to transition into a more dynamic and responsive way of managing our utilities."*
>
> **Program Manager-Operations Utilities // Sound Transit**

### Facilities/operations teams

Facilities teams prioritize ease of implementation and seamless integration with existing systems. EnergyCAP is designed to work with tools like building automation systems (BAS) and utility accounting platforms, ensuring minimal disruption during rollout.

**Proof:** The University of New Mexico used EnergyCAP to manage utility data across 165 facilities, reducing bill processing from 4 hours to just 30 minutes while centralizing all energy information.

> *With EnergyCAP we've been able to accomplish energy savings across the institution as a whole."*
>
> **Program Dir. Of Utility Operations // University of Texas Medical Branch**

### Finance teams

Finance leaders focus on balancing upfront costs with long-term savings. EnergyCAP offers measurable ROI, with institutions typically seeing payback within 2–3 years due to reduced energy waste, streamlined processes, and avoided penalties.

**Proof:** EnergyCAP clients save an average of 10% on utility bills annually—some achieving significant cost avoidance.

> *The program would not have the success it has without EnergyCAP. Reporting and analysis are the bread and butter of the program."*
>
> **Senior Energy Manager // Oklahoma State University**

### Campus leadership

Leadership seeks clear visibility into progress and results. EnergyCAP provides intuitive dashboards and reports, offering a clear view of sustainability milestones and energy savings to align with institutional goals.

**Proof:** Oklahoma State University uses EnergyCAP to track and showcase savings, driving visibility across departments.

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> *Without the information that we're able to pull from EnergyCAP UtilityManagement, we just wouldn't be able to have the conversations that we need to have across campus.*

**Sr. Energy Manager //
Oklahoma State University**

## Sustainability teams

Sustainability teams require tools to meet carbon neutrality goals and simplify complex reporting. EnergyCAP automates Scope 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas tracking, facilitating compliance with climate mandates.

**Proof:** Oklahoma State University has used EnergyCAP since 2007 to reduce energy costs by 18.6%, which has resulted in a reduction of 155,000 metric tons of $CO_2e$ in the atmosphere.

> *EnergyCAP software is extremely user friendly and reliable system. With every version or release, the quality of the product and functionality improves."*

**IT Projects Lead //
Government Administration**

## IT departments

IT teams value security and scalability. EnergyCAP's cloud-based infrastructure ensures robust data protection while scaling easily as institutional needs grow.

**Proof:** EnergyCAP employs advanced security measures, including end-to-end encryption and regular independent audits, ensuring data protection and system resilience. EnergyCAP obtains SOC 2 Type II certification and FedRAMP Low-Impact SaaS authorization. (**source**)

# Common objections and how to counter them

In the landscape of higher education, challenges can often seem insurmountable. Here we list some common concerns you may encounter when introducing an energy and sustainability software, and effective responses to address them.

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**(!) *"It's too expensive."***

ROI is key to addressing cost concerns. EnergyCAP typically delivers payback within 2–3 years, with clients saving an average of 10% on utility bills annually. By automating processes and reducing waste, the software pays for itself quickly.

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**Proof:** The University of New Mexico avoided $130M in utility costs using EnergyCAP.

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**(!) *"We don't have the resources to implement this."***

EnergyCAP offers robust implementation support, including project management and training, to ensure a smooth transition with minimal disruption. Additionally, cloud-based deployment eliminates the need for on-premises IT resources.

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**Proof:** EnergyCAP's customer support and managed services have helped over 850 organizations implement and succeed with the platform.

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**(!) *"We're already doing fine with spreadsheets."***

Spreadsheets may work for small-scale tasks, but they're prone to errors, lack scalability, and consume staff time. EnergyCAP automates processes, ensures accuracy, and provides insights spreadsheets can't deliver.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

**Proof:** Texas State University eliminated manual processes and transitioned to automated data collection, saving over 40 hours per month.
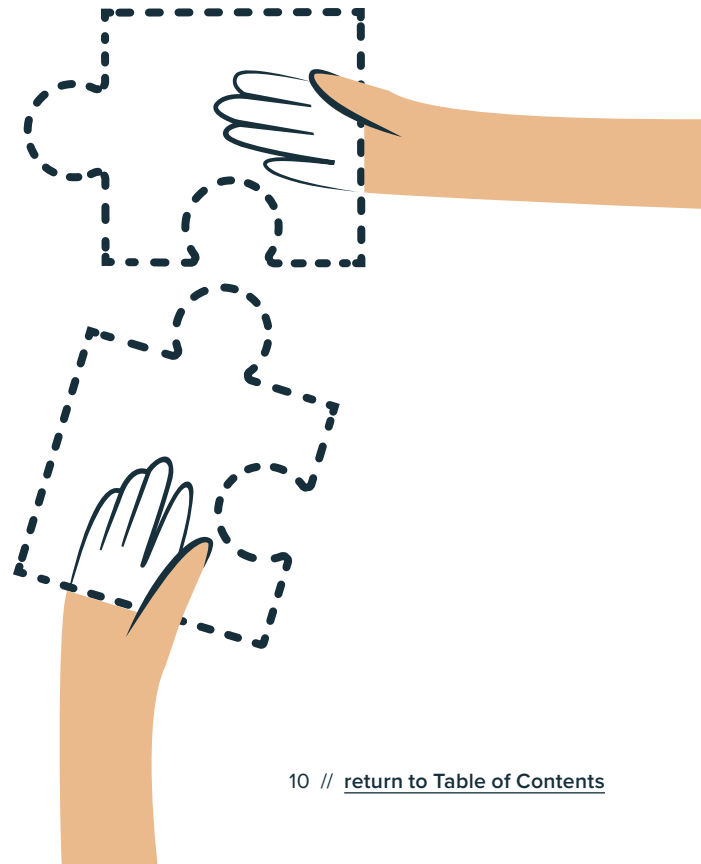
# Tips for gaining consensus

▸ **Build a coalition of champions.**
Identify stakeholders across departments—facilities, finance, IT, and sustainability—and involve them early in the decision-making process. Highlight how the software addresses each group's unique priorities.

▸ **Present a clear, unified vision.**
Highlight the time currently spent on manual processes and demonstrate the projected cost and time savings achievable with energy software. Show how your team plans to reinvest those savings—both financial and operational—into energy reduction projects, creating a cycle of continuous improvement and additional cost reductions.

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# Crafting a winning proposal

Writing a winning proposal requires a strategic blend of clarity, persuasiveness, and convincing insights. At its core, a successful proposal demonstrates a deep understanding of challenges, offers a compelling solution, and provides a clear path forward. A well-structured proposal not only makes a case for action but also instills confidence in its feasibility and impact. Keep it focused, data-driven, and reader-friendly to stand out.

We've compiled a detailed proposal PowerPoint template to help you walk stakeholders through the key challenges, proven solutions, and tangible benefits of procuring EnergyCAP.

**Download the proposal template**

# Top 10 reasons to buy EnergyCAP

**1    Savings, savings, savings**

Reduce utility bills, save time, and instead invest in the energy projects that will change the way you do business. Most customers save at least 10% year-over-year on utility bill costs after implementing EnergyCAP, and free up more than 20 hours a month of employee time—with Bill CAPture Services customers saving almost double that amount.

**2    Simplified processes**

Repeatable tenant billing and cost allocation. Instant bill audits. Simplified budgeting, forecasting, and accruals. Automated bill processing. Real-time alerts. Hands-off ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager® submittal, just to name a few. EnergyCAP's platform takes every single department's biggest pain points and turns them into wins, freeing up time and resources to focus on strategic initiatives and organizational goals.

**3    A single source of truth**

Get a 360° view of all your energy data, from utility bills and real-time performance to carbon emissions, all within a single, integrated platform. Energy, sustainability, and accounting teams work together with seamless data sharing, eliminating manual entry, silos, and spreadsheets.

**4    Unparalleled insights**

Combine granular building-level insights with portfolio-wide analysis and live-streaming data to identify hidden savings opportunities and optimize energy performance across your entire organization. Empower all stakeholders, from energy managers and finance leaders to sustainability teams, with the data they need, when they need it.

**5    Maximize ROI**

Leverage comprehensive data and powerful analytics to justify energy efficiency investments, track project performance, and accurately demonstrate the financial impact of your sustainability initiatives.

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## 6   Enhanced reporting

Effortlessly generate audit-ready reports for mandatory disclosure programs and voluntary sustainability initiatives, saving time and resources. Customize and share powerful dashboards to communicate energy performance to stakeholders and support decision-making.

## 7   Data accuracy

Eliminate data silos and manual entry errors by integrating utility bill data, real-time metering, and carbon emissions factors within a unified system. Best-in-class utility bill auditing ensures use, cost, and demand data is accurate and reliable. Statements from varying utilities, billed in different currencies, and even written in different languages are parsed into consistent, accurate, reliable data that is instantly analyzed.

## 8   Proactive energy management

Utilize real-time alerts and machine learning to identify pressing issues, optimize building performance, and prevent energy waste before it occurs.
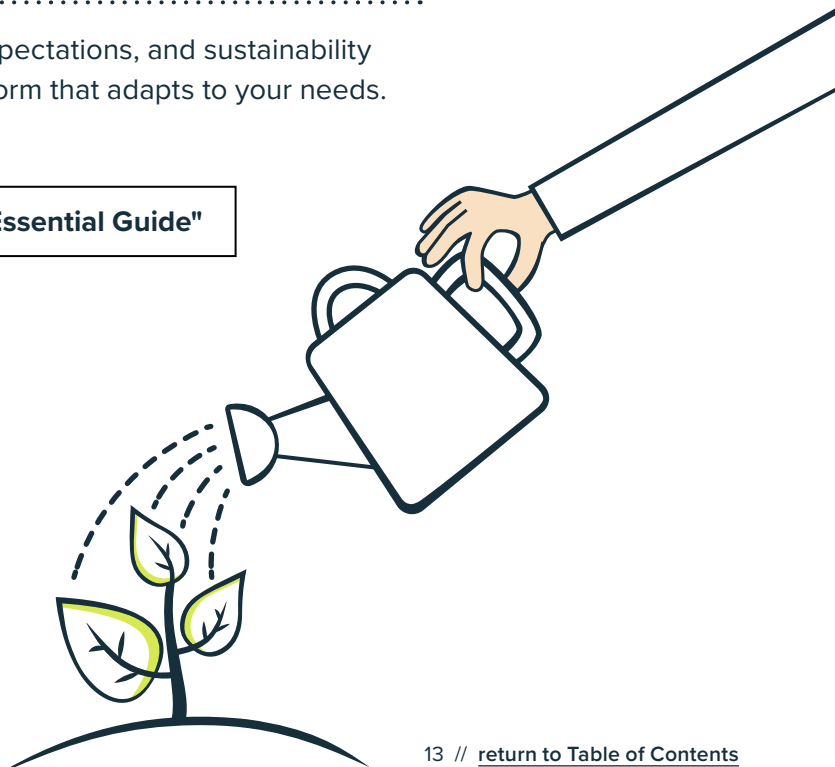
## 9   Simplified carbon accounting

Automate Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions calculations, track progress towards reduction targets, and confidently communicate your environmental performance. Monitor greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, and other key sustainability indicators.

## 10   Future-proof your organization

Stay ahead of evolving regulations, investor expectations, and sustainability goals with a comprehensive and scalable platform that adapts to your needs. EnergyCAP grows with you.

**➡ Read more about EnergyCAP in our "Essential Guide"**

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# Conclusion

Energy software is no longer a luxury for higher education—it's a necessity. As institutions face rising energy costs, increasing regulatory demands, and ambitious sustainability targets, EnergyCAP provides the tools needed to manage resources efficiently and meet goals effectively.

Building a strong, data-driven business case is essential to gaining institutional buy-in. By addressing stakeholder concerns, demonstrating measurable ROI, and highlighting real-world successes, you can secure the tools your institution needs to lead the way in energy and sustainability management.

Ready to take the next step? Schedule a demo of EnergyCAP to see firsthand how it can transform your campus's energy management.

**Visit EnergyCAP.com**

# Where to learn more

EnergyCAP is more than just software; it's a partnership. Our team of experts is committed to helping you achieve your energy management, utility billing, and sustainability goals. We offer comprehensive training, support, and consulting services to ensure your success. Save time, maximize savings, minimize emissions, and accelerate impact.

- See inside all of EnergyCAP's solutions on our **self-guided tour**.

- See the impact EnergyCAP has had on others in your industry in our **case studies**.

- Learn more about each of our solutions

    - **EnergyCAP UtilityManagement**

    - **EnergyCAP CarbonHub**

    - **EnergyCAP SmartAnalytics**

    - **EnergyCAP Utility Company Platform**

    - **EnergyCAP Bill CAPture services**

- Read about the **ROI of EnergyCAP UtilityManagement**—the source of all the statistics in this document, with savings and ROI information directly from the mouths of our users.

- See how we stack up to the competition by **reading our many reviews**—the source of many of the customer quotes in this document.

- Use our **ROI calculator** to quantify the savings you'll see after EnergyCAP implementation.

- Ask your Account Executive to demo any of the features or use cases you'd like to learn more about, or **contact us anytime**!

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