

## **Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future – Topical Lunch Summary Report**

**Title:** Achieving climate change and sustainability literacy

**Organizers:** Mike Hoffmann, Tim Fahey, and Jeff Tester

**Attendees:** Kate Bedding, Lindy Williams, Katherine McComas, Bongghi Hong, Peter Woodbury, Peter Hess, Susan Riha, Hannah Rudstam, Bruce Monger, Zellman Warhaft, Teresa Jordan, David Wolfe, Margaret Smith, James Landi, Frank DiSalvo

### **Brief Summary:**

The global challenges we now face are daunting, in particular our rapidly warming climate and all of the associated ramifications. Cornell's Climate Action Plan Acceleration Working Group "believes that every Cornell student, faculty, and staff member must understand both the challenges raised by climate change and ways to generate and participate in solutions." During the lunch we focused the discussion on Cornell students and considered ways to ensure that every graduate of Cornell is literate in matters of sustainability and climate change and consequently a better global citizen in their ensuing professional and personal lives. They would also carry with them a deeper respect and appreciation for what the Cornell experience has meant to their lives.

The following summarizes some of the key points from the discussion including potential ways we can promote climate change literacy.

- **Naming the effort:** There was a general sense that the emphasis should be on climate change literacy, given that climate change is making it more difficult to deal with sustainability issues related to food, water, energy, income inequality, development inequality, loss of biodiversity, etc.
- We also considered what educational and experiential opportunities currently exist for students, what gaps, and what learning outcomes should be developed. We learned that there is an appetite for this information by some students, yet others like incoming freshman often have a poor knowledge of climate change. Climate change information is provided in many courses for environmental majors but there is a need to assess what is covered and how literacy is evaluated. We have about 25 students pursuing the climate change minor.
- **Gaps and opportunities:**  
The central role of energy in sustainability [and climate change] needs to be stressed. There are lots of additional opportunities to integrate climate change into existing courses, especially big introductory courses. Other opportunities include revisiting the freshman reading project with a focus on climate change, creating an honor society award for climate change leadership, and expansion of student involvement in climate change efforts on campus.
- The following individuals agreed to serve on a climate change literacy working group: Natalie Mahowald, CoE; Peter Hess, CALS; Bruce Monger, CALS; Jeff Tester, CoE; Tim Fahey, CALS; Mike Hoffmann, CALS