Universities as Test Communities

Deliberative Democracy to Create a Climate for Change

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November 18, 2009
A reminder: GHGs are *not* like conventional pollutants.

Conventional pollutants like SO$_2$ or NO$_x$ have a residence time in the atmosphere of just a few hours or days. Thus, stabilizing emissions of such pollutants results in stabilizing their concentration.

*This is not true of carbon dioxide or most other greenhouse gases (GHGs).*

Because CO$_2$ lasts ~100 years in the atmosphere, stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of CO$_2$ will require reductions in current emissions *by at least 90%.*

Slide credit: Granger Morgan, Carnegie Mellon
Motivating, sustaining social change its own challenge

- 36% say global temperatures are rising due to human activity, down from 47% last year.
- 56% now think the US should join an international agreement to address climate change; 32% say the US should set its own policy.
- Fox: Registered voters saying they "believe global warming exists" fell from 82% in January 2007 to 69% in May of 2009.
Communication strategies for climate and social change

One communication strategy:

Deliberative dialogue (Regan)

Deliberative Polling (Fishkin)

Image courtesy Google Books
Qualities of good deliberation (Fishkin & Luskin)

(1) *Informed* -- based upon appropriate and reasonably accurate factual claims

(2) *Balanced* -- arguments are paired with contrary arguments

(3) *Conscientious* -- participants should agree to talk and listen with respect

(4) *Substantive* -- arguments are considered on their merits, not upon how artfully they are delivered or who is delivering them

(5) *Comprehensive* -- all points of view held by significant portions of the population receive attention
What is a Deliberative Poll?

Campus Conversations
Deliberative Poll Model

Random Sample → Initial Survey → Group Discussion → Expert Panel → Group Discussion → Exit Survey Poll

3-8 hour process

Campus Conversations (2009)
Good deliberation practices

- Comprehensive
- Balanced
- Informed

Campus Conversations (2009)
Discussion of peer review and arguments against climate change.

In their book, the Science and Politics of Global Climate Change, Andrew Dessler and Edward Parsons detail a number of skeptical positions that challenge the scientific consensus. Two are most prominent. First, while accepting that the earth is warming, some argue that human activities are not responsible. Second, some argue that future climate change will almost certainly be very small, and, as a result, will require humans to do very little to mitigate the effects or adapt their behavior to account for climate change. As Dessler and Parsons point out: "These skeptical arguments are rarely if ever advanced in scientific arenas, but in editorial pages, on the internet, or in policy arenas where more lenient standards for evidence and argument apply." Having been advanced in non-scientific arenas, skeptical arguments are then often uncritically recounted in the media to 'balance' against scientific arguments for climate change.
Welcome
What is a Deliberative Poll?
A Word About Scientific Knowledge
Section 1: What is climate change?
  Carbon dioxide and Climate Change
  How feedbacks might affect climate change
  Computer modeling and climate change projections
  The Assessment of the IPCC
Section 2: What scientists expect will happen as climate changes
  Impacts on people
  Economic impacts in wealthy countries
  Economic impacts in poor countries
  Agricultural impacts
  Impacts on nature
Section 3: Climate change and the university
  The roles of a university in the community
  Cooperation Among Universities
  What can be done about climate change
  Strategies of Mitigation
  Adaptation Strategies
  Coordinating strategies: “Stabilization Wedges”
  Making decisions about climate change
Glossary
Questions for the Deliberative Poll®

Universities in our region have begun to consider how they can function as more sustainable communities. In this booklet we identified four areas that universities should consider as they work to address climate change and become more sustainable communities: day-to-day practice, research, education, and outreach. We also introduced three things individuals should consider as they make decisions about climate change: How much you believe climate change will affect what you value, how much you think should be spent to address climate change, and the moral and political issues surrounding personal and institutional responsibility for addressing climate change. We ask you to consider all these as you review the questions below, which are the types of questions we expect to discuss during the Deliberative Poll®.

1. Considering the many roles a university has in a community—education, research, outreach, and a consumer of energy—how should the university manage its responsibility to address climate change?

   Should the university commit financial resources towards changing its day-to-day practices? (e.g., To purchase wind-generated power, Carnegie Mellon has had to increase the amount it spends for electricity.) Should the university encourage its community members to change their behavior to reduce their carbon footprint? (e.g., Encourage individuals to teleconference rather than consuming energy to travel to conferences.)

   Should the university encourage changes in the curriculum and research priorities throughout the university to promote an ideal of stewardship?

2. How should a university seek to enforce the decisions it makes about addressing climate change?

   Should the university reward individuals who adopt “green practices” (e.g., reduce parking fees for individuals driving hybrid vehicles to campus)? Should the university levy a fee against individuals who consume a large amount of resources (e.g., water, electricity)?

3. Do you believe you have a personal responsibility to help the university address climate change? Why or why not?

4. Given what you know about climate change, how willing are you to take personal actions in order to address climate change? (e.g. conserve personal use of resources, encourage friends and colleagues to adopt green practices, champion green practices from your employer, etc.)

5. What strategies for addressing climate change would you be willing to actively support? (e.g., a transition to more use of renewable energy sources, nuclear power, a commitment to green building practices in all construction, initiatives for student and departmental energy conservation, etc.)
Preliminary findings
Most agree
Your current views about global warming

- Already begun
- Will happen soon
- Will happen in my lifetime
- Will happen in future generations
- Will never happen
- Unsure

Percent

- Pre
- Post
Concluding thoughts

• For issues with important scientific and technical details such as climate change, the public is often ill informed
  – About scientific knowledge;
  – Details and trade-offs of policy options.
• Added to this lack of education is the lack of time that citizens have to review these details and the choices involved.
• Deliberative polls can create the conditions for a representative sample of a community to become well informed about an issue and thereby capture informed public opinion.
• Universities can be important catalysts for deliberations at the campus, local, and state levels
  – Pennsylvania “The Issue of Marriage in America” deliberative poll
  – Pittsburgh city council pilot project
Acknowledgments

The Campus Conversation on Climate Change was supported by

- The Center for the Advancement of Applied Ethics and Political Philosophy at Carnegie Mellon
- The Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research at Carnegie Mellon
- Professor Robert Cavalier
- Tim Dawson, PhD Candidate, Department of English
- Ken Mohnkern, Human Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon
- Joanna Dickert, Office of the Dean of Student Affairs at Carnegie Mellon
- Mike Bridges
- Shahzeen Attari

For information to start your own Deliberative Poll, see
http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/dean/conversations/resources.html
References


