

2021.10.25 Scott Curtis

- As COP 26 begins this week - what will the world leaders be discussing -what is going on - good news?Or all bad?
- Unfortunately, nothing much has changed since the last COP. The parties will continue to work towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. This time the US will play a larger role. This conference also comes on the heels of the release of the latest IPCC report on climate change.
- Public-private partnerships - please elaborate
- The Near Center for Climate Studies is looking to partner with private businesses and industries that have a stake in climate change. We want to be a resource for scientific information, conversation, and action. Students could also intern with these companies, bringing to bear their climate knowledge for principled decision making.
- Each of the three activities - national defense, coastal, and health - what hands on activities are there for students
- We are enhancing learning opportunities through course modules and new classes (potentially leading to a minor). We plan to bring in guest speakers and workshops around these topics to generate interest and ideas. Finally, we are funding students to participate in research related to these topics.
- Are you actively recruiting students for this field? How so?
- We need to do more on this. Without a dedicated degree or minor it is a challenge and is left up to individual departments and faculty. I believe once our space is ready and we can "show off", we will make a concerted effort to bring students into the Center as part of tours and open houses.
- Who funds the CRSG grants?
- The CRSG is funded through the NCCS endowment. I hope to sustain this annually, but it may require seeking additional funding/donations.
- What is the number one piece of misinformation that you have to deal with?
- I am very concerned about how politics trumps science in our country. The data is there, and models are accurate (they've been validated) on a global scale that temperatures have risen and this trend will continue. Unfortunately, the messenger is often more important than the message. The good news is that The Citadel has the clout to communicate the message in new ways to new audiences.
- Are you working with local high school students for school year or summer programs? Can you partner with Cof C in this regard?
- Yes, this is part of the plan and I would love to consider partnering with CofC in this regard. I am working with Dr. Jen Albert and Dr. Merrie Koester currently. One vision is to have a summer workshop for teachers to help them understand and communicate climate basics.
- How has the pandemic affected the work of the Center?
- As with everyone else, it has slowed down some of our plans, especially engaging with groups. However, I have had lots of phone conversations and Zooms since I've arrived in Charleston.
- The studies about the impact on human health are fascinating. What else have you found? What else can you study?
- Most of the Center's work focuses on health impacts due to flooding and heat. I mentioned the heat studies that occurred this past summer. I am also working on an EPA grant about how extreme precipitation and temperatures affect well water quality. Dr. Weinstein's lab is looking at the transport of microplastics in flood waters and Dr. Rocha's lab is looking at bacteria.
- What are the larger, more international based concerns for national security for our country - what are the threats from abroad?
- A brief answer is that climate extremes will affect military readiness if they degrade installations or the health of our military. Climate related conflicts may arise more frequently straining our ability to react. Finally, the melt of the arctic sea ice will lead to changes in commerce and extend the naval theater of operations.
- How are we sharing our Center results with the rest of the US?
- We will publish for the scientific community, but also send out press releases through our excellent office of marketing and communications.
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- Where will the funding come from for the Charleston climate control projects?
- Good question. I would contact the city about that, but as individuals we can do things to reduce our carbon footprint and SAVE money at the same time.
- What projects are there that will foster collaboration with the rest of South Carolina (beyond the Lowcountry)?
- I am part of a SC resilience think tank and I participate in calls regularly with climate experts at USC. I hope that these activities will lead to climate projects with applications across the state. Charleston can be a model for other cities in terms of climate action.
- Is there a rating of the Citadel campus on its climate management?
- Not that I know of, but I know The Citadel could do more in terms of climate sustainability
- I recall that Charleston had some visitors and advice from experts in the Netherlands. Did we learn anything from them that we can use?
- The main thing is that we need to try to work and live with water and not try to fight against it. I am working with the city and the Netherlands to look at climate adaptation options and scenarios of the future.
- How do you work with science “denyers” to open communication?
- Great question. As with anyone who you see differently from, you need to understand them as a person first. What is important to them? Screaming and shouting (as done on social media) gets you nowhere. Also, I think if they see the co-benefits of climate action, they will be more likely to be responsive.
- How do you insure that the Climate Center at the Citadel will continue over the long-term regardless of the political climate in Washington and elsewhere?
- As you know the effects of climate change are here (in the Lowcountry) and now. I think there will always be a need for the Near Center for Climate Studies for that reason. Also our Center focuses on climate studies, climate change is just a part of that.
- What does a climate Ambassador do?
- Good question. As a Climate Ambassador I present the city's Climate Action Plan to groups and talk about ways we can make the city more healthy and livable. If you are interested in a more detailed presentation or would like to be a Climate Ambassador yourself, please contact Katie McKain:mckaink@charleston-sc.gov or 843-724-3789
- How do you envision Charleston's future over the next 25 years with respect to climate's effects on our quality of life?
- Considering the projections we will need to deal with more flooding and hotter summers , thereby reducing quality of life. These problems will likely impact the underserved and communities of color more.
- What do you recommend course-wise and experience-wise for high school students who want to pursue climate science as a major or occupation after graduation?
- Students need a background in science and math to understand how the atmosphere and ocean give us the climate we have. However, it is also good for students to learn about politics, economics, and psychology if they want to apply their understanding of climate science to societal decision making.
- Are there volunteer projects that our members might be interested in that relate to climate action activities?
- Yes! Please see the city's climate action plan for recommendations. <https://www.charleston-sc.gov/904/Climate-Action-Plan> One item is the Adopt a Drain program to reduce flooding from storm water.
- What is your recommendation to our members about what to read on the subject of climate change/control?
- I was recommended this book recently and I believe it was selected for the College of Charleston reading program: The Story of More by Hope Jahren (2020). Merchants of Doubt is also a classic.
- What websites do you recommend for our members to monitor to stay up-to-date on climate change/control advances?
- [climate.gov](https://www.charleston-sc.gov); for more local information: <https://www.charleston-sc.gov/1972/Sustainability>;
- <https://www.charleston-sc.gov/1971/Resilience> Consider joining the Charleston Resilience Network