



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Student Perceptions of Global Warming

MA in Climate and Society Students Visit Local High School to Discuss Global Warming and the Movie, 'The Day After Tomorrow'

NEW YORK, NY (March 21, 2006) -- Students from Columbia University's Masters in Climate and Society program visited the High School for Environmental Studies (HSES) to discuss perceptions of global warming in the film "The Day After Tomorrow." The graduate students spoke about which aspects of global warming depicted in the film were feasible and which parts were fantasy. This lecture was part of an ongoing partnership between the High School for Environmental Studies and the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions (CRED) where individuals from the Columbia community speak to local high school students about current research in human responses to climate change. More than 50 students and faculty stayed after school as part of the school's 'Week of Water Education' to watch the action-packed blockbuster and participate in a presentation and Q&A session with the MA students.

The High School for Environmental Studies is a public school with a unique curriculum that combines environmentally infused college preparatory courses with applied-learning experiences and hands-on programs that incorporate the rich cultural, economic and social diversity of New York City. HSES draws its multi-ethnic student body of over 1,500 students from five boroughs of New York City and includes over 80% young people of color and more than 45% students on free or reduced lunch programs.

Ivan Ramirez, one of the graduate students who spoke at the High School for Environmental Studies, explained why it was so important to him to make the science of climate change relevant to a young audience, "Having worked in public relations and advertising for several years, I know the impact that film and media can have on many groups, particularly teenagers, and it is important to clarify fact from fiction in the film. At this young age these students are highly impressionable and will soon be embarking on the search for college and asking themselves 'What will I do with my life?' " Ramirez said. "I was hoping to leave an impression that global warming is a real and serious issue and that it is important to understand the dynamics of the world we live in. Who knows if the audience held future Climate and Society candidates?"

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CRED is an interdisciplinary center that studies individual and group decision making under climate uncertainty and decision making in the face of environmental risk. CRED's objectives address the human responses to climate change and climate variability as well as improved communication and increased use of scientific information on climate variability and change. Located at Columbia University, CRED is affiliated with the Earth Institute and the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP). Major funding is provided by the National Science Foundation (NSF) under Grant No. SES-0345840. For more information, visit www.cred.columbia.edu.

The M.A. Program in Climate and Society is a twelve month program that trains professionals and academics to understand and cope with the impacts of climate variability and climate change on society and the environment. This rigorous program emphasizes the problems of developing societies. Columbia is at the forefront of research on climate and climate applications, and is supported by an extensive network of research units and faculty. Drawing on the superb educational and research facilities of Columbia University, the M.A. Program in Climate and Society combines elements of established programs in earth sciences, earth engineering, international relations, political science, sociology, and economics with unique classes in interdisciplinary applications specially designed for the program's students. For more information, visit www.columbia.edu/cu/climatesociety.

Photo caption: Pictured left to right: Briane Sorice, Allison Hanson, Ivan Ramirez, and Asher Siebert. MA in Climate and Society students speak at the High School for Environmental Studies in New York City about climate change and the movie, 'The Day After Tomorrow' on March 21, 2006.