

Atkinson Center Topical Lunch on Policy Engagement

March 25, 2018

Opening Remarks by Jennifer Haverkamp

From the invitation: In this topical lunch, Ambassador Jennifer Haverkamp, a veteran of the U.S. government's environmental policymaking process and currently an Executive in Residence at the Atkinson Center, will lead a discussion with the Cornell sustainability community on what constitutes effective engagement by academia in policymaking and how the Atkinson Center might engage more actively in that process. The discussion will solicit participants' views regarding priority areas for policy engagement, how the Center can better support faculty in their policy engagement, and possible NGOs, companies, and other institutions with whom to partner going forward.

OUTLINE OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTIONS

Ask each to briefly state relationship to sustainability, Atkinson, experience in policy engagement?

Self: role with Atkinson this spring. March for our Lives – how to affect public policy on guns?

OBJECTIVES OF THE LUNCH

Questions to focus the discussion (have as a handout):

Priority areas for policy engagement?

Research university faculty's appetite for policy engagement?

How to strike correct balance between education and advocacy (which some in the research world consider inappropriate or unseemly, but which clearly is effective)?

Which levels of government to focus on?

How the Atkinson Center can better support faculty in their policy engagement?

Possible NGOs, companies, and other institutions with whom to partner going forward?

FRAMING: WHAT IS POLICY?

“Policy” can be governmental, business, NGO, or even individual

“Public policy”, the focus here, can be generally defined as “a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives.” [source: Dean G. Kilpatrick, Natl Violence Against Women Prevention Research Center]

Takes form of international treaties, constitutions, national laws, administrative regulations, same at state and local levels. Can also include voluntary guidelines, incentive/reward programs.

Non-governmental policies can also be very influential – voluntary codes of conduct within an industry, e.g.

HOW IS POLICY FORMULATED/SHAPED?

Via education, advocacy, mobilization of interest groups; competing groups vying for decisionmakers’ adoption of their perspective.

Some rather effective tools not on the table for today’s discussion: Campaign finance, bribery...!

US system (& other western style democracies) builds in formal avenues, opportunities that not all countries have (or honor)

Normal legislative process – bills introduced; hearings held; committee mark ups; debate; plenty of time to weigh in and debate what’s being considered. Not so much the case lately...

Administrative Procedure Act –

At the international level, UN environmental/sustainability forums generally supportive of stakeholder engagement. Generally transparent, allow for observer organizations, public comment processes.

Personal perspective/examples: government DEPENDS on outside stakeholders to help formulate policies, laws. CAAA1990, Waxman-Markey, etc.

SOME WAYS ACADEMIA CAN PARTICIPATE IN POLICY

Directly with government, or indirectly, via third party organizations and/or the media

Federal Register Notice opportunities to provide comments on regulations

Need to know the invitation has been posted, and meet the deadlines. But agencies are required by law to consider comments, and write explanations of how they have addressed those.

Testimony before Congress – by invitation of the committee holding the hearing

Advisory Committee memberships – by nomination

Serving on expert panels at international organization workshops – by invitation

Participating in international conferences like UNFCCC COPs

More extensive time commitment: take leave of absence to take a position in government (Ernie Moniz, Steven Chu); serve as a fellow (eg Jefferson Fellow at State, AAAS Congressional Science Fellow)

ROLE OF BOUNDARY ORGANIZATIONS LIKE ATKINSON CENTER TO FACILITATE THAT ENGAGEMENT

What is a boundary organization? Orgn whose central purpose is to create and sustain meaningful and mutually beneficial links between knowledge producers (aka academic researchers) and user (eg government decision makers).

Can inform (and help set) research priorities by keeping abreast of policy debates, communicating gaps in information and unanswered or actively debated questions facing policymakers.

Can serve essential purpose of “being there” – engaging at senior levels with policymakers and partner institutions, able to provide timely responses to external deadlines that don’t respect academic calendars and deadlines. E.g. talking points, comments, filing briefs.

Atkinson Center, and Cornell University overall, increasingly turning outward, with greater focus on public engagement.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM CORNELL'S WASHINGTON DC OFFICE (AND ALBANY?)

Support Cornell experts invited to testify before Congress (Doug his experience?); can help develop and tee up friendly questioning; set up media and related meetings.

Hired a consulting firm to help identify opportunities for university experts to serve on advisory panels.

Access to low cost conference rooms, venues for workshops, symposia seeing DC-based audiences. (Congress, Administration, embassy community, think tanks, NGOs, etc etc.)

DISCUSSION

Relist key questions