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Cornell Atkinson Topical Lunch:

Title: Higher Learning in the Anthropocene:
Reimagining University Pre- and Post-Disaster
Interventions in the Age of Uncertainty

Guests: Prof. Marla Pérez-Lugo (Environmental Sociology) and
Prof. Cecilio Ortiz García (Political Science)
from Universidad de Puerto Rico Mayagüez

Organizer: Lindsay Anderson
(BEE, Cornell Atkinson Faculty Director for Energy)

Date: Thursday, January 30, 2020; 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Location: 300 Rice Hall

Abstract: Institutions of higher learning face a paradox in lieu of what experts are calling the Anthropocene Era and its most notable symbol, climate change. While enormous amounts of scientific knowledge are constantly being produced within its confines, through climate, geographical, earth, engineering, and other scientific disciplines, universities are forced to engage and collaborate with their surrounding communities as first responders to more frequent and severe climate-related extreme weather events.

This reality is forcing universities to reconsider their institutional tenets, which position them as neutral observers of scientific reality (and static repositories of scientific research); they are being led to adopt the new (and sometimes, more complex) roles of policy entrepreneur and hub for community resilience.

These events are also challenging the ethics and behaviors not only of universities, but also the institutions which fund them. This presentation forces us to ponder these questions through the case of universities' interventions in Puerto Rico post-Hurricane Maria. That experience has led to the creation of RISE, a collaborative convergence platform that seeks to position universities as a "meso net of radars" of their landscapes' vulnerabilities; simultaneously, this creates a new architecture of relationships based upon humility, deep engagement, policy entrepreneurship, and co-produced knowledge and innovation.

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