Highlights from the CIRES Education and Outreach Group
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Introduction

What is new in Outreach?
Outreach is defined by CU as “the various ways in which the University extends its expertise for the direct benefit of Colorado communities and other external audiences.”

The CIRES Education and Outreach program has developed new theme areas over the last year, including projects in support of climate change education and videography of current research projects for use in the classroom.

Supporting Climate Change Education

Scientists can help the public understand the nature of science.

“...CIRES is committed to...fostering public awareness of these processes to ensure a sustainable future environment.” [Excerpted, CIRES Vision and Mission Statement]

A correct understanding of the nature of science and the professional culture of science helps learners accept the scientific view of climate change science. This is especially useful to address any perception of controversy.

Research on Colorado Classroom Practices
Sarah Wise is researching the influence of public controversy on the attitudes and classroom practices of Colorado teachers on topics such as climate change and evolution. Preliminary data indicates teachers may experience pressures both for and against teaching these topics from students, parents or colleagues. This survey is the first survey of U.S. teachers to examine patterns of climate change instruction, and the first study to compare the teaching of climate change with instruction on evolution. Preliminary results indicate that teachers, including secondary science teachers, have a surprising mix of non-scientific and scientific attitudes and concepts of climate science.

Supporting Climate Change Education

Communicating Climate Change Workshops
Geoscientists are increasingly asked to speak about climate change, with students, family members, media and the public. Sarah Wise and Susan Buhr have developed a travelling workshop to instruct participants on best practices science communication, common public climate misconceptions, and strategies for addressing controversy. See the CIRES website for spring and summer offerings.

The Climate Literacy Framework
Over the past year, CIRES Outreach has led or participated in other climate related events, such as Ice Fest (March 2008) and CU Focus the Nation (January 2008). CIRES also assisted with the development of the NOAA – led Climate Literacy Framework, a peer-reviewed framework outlining the essential principles required for a robust understanding of climate sciences.

New Videography Capabilities
Recently we have learned to use videography to communicate about current research and fundamental science.

Ryan Vachon filmed and produced “Polar Visions”, a documentary of Arctic climate change shot in Alaska and Greenland. The film is targeted to high school and college classrooms, viewable in segments or in its 78 minute entirety.

Newly Funded Projects
CIRES Outreach was also awarded recent funding to work with after-school groups on geomagnetism topics. This project is in collaboration with NOAA ESRL researchers Stephan Maus and Susan McLean.

How to Work With CIRES Outreach on Proposals
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