



Princeton Energy and Climate Scholars Group a Siebel Energy Grand Challenge Initiative

Mission statement and operating guidelines

1. Background

Energy and climate concerns are having an increasingly important influence on the research agenda of Princeton University. This is reflected most strikingly in the considerable number of Ph.D. students already focusing their doctoral research on a piece of the energy and climate change puzzle.

Climate change and its mitigation constitute a remarkably broad research domain. A large variety of departments and disciplines are involved, ranging from natural sciences, to engineering, social sciences and the humanities. Ph.D. students tend to work within the boundaries of their disciplines, and there are limited opportunities to interact with scholars working on other aspects of energy and climate research.

To encourage the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas on energy and climate change, the Princeton Environmental Institute is sponsoring the *Princeton Energy and Climate Scholars (PECS) group*. Created in the spring of 2008, PECS aims to provide a platform for Ph.D. students working on any aspect of energy and climate research to interact, collaborate, gain first hand understanding of research areas outside of their own discipline, and ultimately broaden their horizons both as scholars and as citizens.

The group is student led, though a core group of faculty provides supervision and sponsorship. The modest funding required comes from the budget of the Siebel Energy Grand Challenge program, a collaborative initiative among the Princeton Environmental Institute, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, and the Woodrow Wilson School.

Following two years of existence, this note presents PECS' new operating guidelines, proposed by the student coordinators of the group.

2. Focus

The broad academic focus is energy and climate. The 'and' in the group name should be interpreted as the union between these two fields. The expectation is that the group will include students whose research topics range widely within the energy and climate domain. However, members' research interests should be sufficiently closely related to generate interaction and discussion, as well as to ensure students benefit from constructive insights of other members of the group. A balance between synergy and diversity must be struck.

3. Group composition and turnover

PECS consists of a student body of between 10 and 14 Ph.D. students. Group membership will be for a maximum of a two-year period. Every year the turnover should affect about half of the group to ensure some continuity among group members.

A faculty board comprising 6 to 8 faculty members is also associated with PECS. In addition to interactions through the various group activities, the faculty board members are there as sponsors of the group and to provide guidance and advice to the group when needed.

4. Group activities and responsibilities

The PECS student body meets over lunch or dinner once a month for student led talks. At each meeting a group member will briefly present his or her research, or discuss an associated topic. Depending on the level of advancement of the student's Ph.D., this may be the presentation of a research prospectus, of a dissertation chapter, or of the student's concerns with a certain aspect of their research. The presentation will be followed by open discussion, ideally seeking to identify linkages with other students' research areas or to discuss the policy and political implications of the talk topic. Generally, some material (such as an abstract, a short paper, or figures) will be circulated to the group ahead of time.

On at least two occasions during each semester, PECS will also convene dinner conversations with faculty. This will bring together PECS students, members of the faculty board, as well as invited guests from within and outside of the university community. These will be dinner meetings where a distinguished guest speaker will be invited to introduce a given topic of discussion with a short presentation or introductory remarks.

On other occasions during the semester social events at local venues will bring together students, faculty, and PECS alumni, for informal conversations over beverages. As a general guideline, there should be at least one event per semester to promote interaction between current and alumni scholars.

At the end of the year, PECS members are expected to produce a 'deliverable', to which the entire group should contribute. This could take the form of a paper or report describing a conference attended by PECS members, or addressing and discussing an energy/climate topic of interest. It could also involve organizing a climate/energy workshop or conference on campus, or an outreach event within the greater Princeton community.

Finally, the group will have at its disposal a small fund to finance group activities such as joint projects, student-run workshops, scholarly trips, etc. Proposals will need the approval of the faculty board.

By accepting membership to PECS, students commit to attending at least 80% of PECS events, and to take part in all other group activities. In the event that a student member reneges on this responsibility, the student committee (see below), in conjunction with the faculty board, will decide upon the best course of action. Mitigating circumstances will always be taken into

consideration, but PECS retains the right to ask a student member to step down from the group in order that a new member can be elected.

5. Group coordination and logistics

The PECS coordination tasks are shared by a student committee of four members:

- A committee chairperson is responsible for supervising the overall group coordination efforts and for liaising with the faculty coordinator and members of the faculty board. This person is also responsible for overseeing the committee selection process (see below). He/She will organize the initial meeting at the beginning of the academic year for general organization of the new group. The chairperson will also be responsible for chairing all PECS events and calling meetings to order. Finally, this person will also be responsible for coordinating the social events.
- A dinner event coordinator will be responsible for identifying and inviting speakers to the dinner conversation events, inviting appropriate guests and scholars to attend (in addition to the students and faculty board members), finding the venue for dinner events, dealing with menus or food orders when needed and managing attendance. Guest speaker selection and invitation should be done in cooperation with the faculty coordinator.
- A student event coordinator will be responsible for scheduling the sequence of student talks, ordering food, borrowing projector, making room reservations, and managing attendance.
- A special events coordinator will be in charge of coordinating possible outings, as well as collaborative efforts such as papers. This person will also be responsible for ensuring the PECS website is up to date and for managing the online blog, and will work in conjunction with PEI's webmaster.

The student committee will be elected as follows:

- To promote continuity within the group the chairperson must be a rising second year member. The incoming chairperson will be chosen at the last student meeting of the academic year. The outgoing chairperson will ask for volunteers. If there is more than one interested student, the group will hold a vote.
- The dinner event coordinator, student event coordinator, and special events coordinator will be elected at the initial organizational meeting of the new academic year, which, ideally, should occur before the start of the fall term. The coordinator positions may be held by either first or second year members. The chairperson will ask for volunteers. If more than one student volunteers, the chairperson will organize a vote.

For student-led events, dinner events, and social events, the appropriate coordinator will borrow the PEI credit card from Susan Allen (PEI), inform her of the type of event taking place, and return the card with receipts to her immediately after the event. For other types of events, the student committee should contact the faculty board to seek approval for funding.

6. Application and selection process

The student body will be elected through faculty recommendation. The group's faculty coordinator will contact Ph.D. students from all departments to inform them of the PECS recruitment process and to invite them to apply. The application process consists of two components: The first is a recommendation letter from their faculty supervisors or program director explaining how the student in question would contribute to the group, and why the student would benefit from being in PECS. The second component is a motivation letter from the applicant, explaining why their research and background makes them well-suited for PECS membership.

The selection process will be undertaken jointly by the faculty board and members of the student committee. The selection criteria are threefold:

- Research quality
- Level of engagement and interest in broader aspects of the climate and energy problem
- Diversity of students in the group

Last revised on May 11, 2010