

From Public Scholarship to Political Practice

Andrew Light

George Mason University & World Resources Institute

This informal discussion will focus on providing practical advice on how faculty and graduate students can move their work outside of the boundaries of the academy into the public realm. This is not activity that all academics must engage in, but for those who wish to, and do it well, it can be individually rewarding, inspiring for students, and supportive of the public outreach mission of most colleges and universities. Most importantly, it can sometimes contribute to improving anything from one's local community to finding solutions to difficult global problems. The key hurdle however is that most academics are not trained in skills needed to take their work public. I'll start with a personal story of moving from a fairly traditional, though interdisciplinary academic career to actively participating in the creation of the new 2015 global Paris Agreement on climate change as one of the lead U.S. negotiators. From there we'll discuss a few generalizable ideas of what is needed to move from scholarship to practice, including determining the kind of commitment needed depending on one's goals. We'll workshop some ideas together with those participants who are willing to share their aspirations for broader public engagement.