

## **GAUGING CLIMATE LITERACY OF METEOROLOGY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

\*Wilkinson, Kristiana, \* R. Lyons, L. Doner and M. McGarry

*Department of Environmental Science and Policy, kwilkinson1@plymouth.edu*

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lisa Doner

Despite scientific consensus, recent polls (i.e. Maibach et al., 2011) report that 50% or more of broadcast meteorologists are skeptical of global climate science. This is significant for public awareness of climate change because a large majority of the public perceives meteorologists to have expertise in climate science (i.e. Leiserowitz et al., 2011).

Here we report on a collaborative effort of Plymouth State University (PSU) and Bentley University (BU), to test the validity of two hypotheses that might explain this high level of professional skepticism: 1) a majority of U.S. meteorology degree programs fail to provide a sufficient number of courses specifically on climate change; and 2) meteorology students graduate with an inadequate level of climate literacy. Our approach is to assess climate literacy among broadcast meteorologists and to determine to what extent undergraduate meteorology programs prepare students to serve as informal science educators on climate topics. BU will conduct surveys of professionals who are currently working as broadcast meteorologists, regarding their understanding and attitudes about climate science. PSU will develop, administer and analyze a US-wide survey of first year and graduating undergraduate meteorology majors in order to gauge their climate literacy. In spring 2013 we conducted a pilot version of this survey at PSU. During the 2013-2014 school year, the survey will be administered to students in undergraduate meteorology programs across the United States.

This work is funded by a 2-year, National Science Foundation Pathways Award (DRL-1222752): *Enhancing climate change communication between broadcast meteorologists and their viewing audience.*