White House Champions of Change for Climate Education and Literacy
Roundtable on Supporting and Preparing Educators

The educators' roundtable was one of three side event sessions held in conjunction with the White House Champions of Change celebration to honor 8 champions working in the area of climate education and literacy. Participants included educators and administrators working in the K-12 and higher education realms, representatives from non-profit organizations working on issues of environmental and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, Federal agency representatives and program managers, and researchers engaged in climate-education projects. The White House was represented by Dr. Jo Handelsman, Associate Director for Science at the Office of Science & Technology Policy, and Judge Alice Hill, Senior Advisor for Preparedness and Resilience at the National Security Council.

Brief introductory comments from agency representatives provided context on the President's Climate Action Plan, STEM education priorities, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and Federal efforts to improve climate education and literacy. Of particular relevance were efforts to: advance the research base on how to improve teaching and learning about climate science and climate change; identify and develop effective learning resources and tools for assessment; translate current scientific knowledge into useful educational materials; provide effective professional development for educators regarding climate science and educational tools; develop and test model educational programs, including those aimed at workforce development; and build capacity among underrepresented communities. The challenge of how to scale up effective programs and build synergies across multiple entities working to improve climate literacy was posed as a major focus of the discussion.

The discussion considered the following topics: 1) the most effective approaches for making climate change relevant to students, so that they become interested in learning more or taking action; 2) what resources educators need to provide students with high-quality STEM knowledge and skills related to climate change; 3) effective strategies for keeping teachers current on the evolving science; 4) professional development needs related to teaching climate; and 5) helping educators prepare the future climate workforce.

Big ideas emerging from the discussion included:

- The importance of integrating climate and climate change across the entire curriculum, not just in STEM classes.
- The need to leverage opportunities offered through Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards.
- The importance of promoting a variety of partnerships, including those between scientists and educators, between public and private stakeholders, and between educators and decision makers.
- The importance of finding mechanisms to help educators use the educational process to unleash the energy and enthusiasm of their students, who will have the biggest impact now and on future generations.