

Climate Change Panel Reflection: Prompt 1

The recent climate change panel was actually much, much more thought provoking than I initially expected. I went in expecting to hear a simple message that I had heard many times before: “this is what’s happening and this is what we need to do about it.” While yes that was the overarching premise of the panel, the answers I got, to questions I hadn’t even thought to ask, were quite interesting.

For example, one concept that stood out was the notion of “who gets to decide what we do?” That thought hadn’t even crossed my mind before—that “we” as the pinnacle of western academia society were not the ones to make decisions for the world as a whole in this battle with climate change. Climate change is a world wide problem, undoubtedly, but the issue with a single entity making and enforcing regulations on a global scale is that more concerning issues in third world countries will go unnoticed and unaddressed. Third world countries whose limited GDP relies on industrial production will no longer have the means to survive under strict regulation.

It really makes me think about whether the path I’m choosing is the best one to cause the biggest impact—and simultaneously bolster my resolve to pursue chemistry and climate science as my major and minor. It’s an odd conundrum, because if the world was completely scientific, it’d be a completely easy choice to make, which I can see I had in mind before the talk. Now, I’m wondering if my help and hands would be better put to use in a different field, in a different aspect. Quite a lot of thinking.

What I can do now in daily life is try to live ecologically friendly, following the many, many posters, infomercials, “What You Can Do Today!” signs, recycle, and compost. All of these I’ve done my best to follow since I could think coherently at a point I could understand climate change, but it really doesn’t seem enough anymore.

Something that really got me thinking was something David Battisti stressed—the science is already there. As a scientist he spends most of his time going to conventions of governance. What does this say about my life plan? Will I get to the pinnacle of my chemistry track and realize that everyone’s already figured out what we need to do, and spend my time advocating, which, if I had directly prepared for through a different field of study (like political science? public policy?)? Would I be able to make more of an impact in the grand scale of things than if I spent my life trying (potentially unsuccessfully) to successfully use hydrogen as a fuel carrier, or invent some new incredibly renewable biofuel—both of which were options I *could* easily see myself undertaking.

So what am I going to do to challenge climate change in my own life? Live environmentally conscious, taking part in the little things and pushing along the bigger movements when I can, advocate, educate, and spread the knowledge I have to inform others about the slowly oncoming danger—but beyond the daily, what will I do? I’ll either keep on this path to becoming a chemistry major (or something similar) or maybe even make a full switch around to a different major outside the natural sciences.

Luckily I have a few years to figure it out.