



PROGRAM IN THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# Crossroads

Volume 14

Summer 2016

# Student Engagement

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PitE student Anna Johnson at One Island  
Sustainable Living Center, One Island, Hawaii

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# Letter from the Director

**Dear Members of the PitE Community,**



It has been another busy year for the Program in the Environment. We have launched the “Water and the Environment” minor and the “Energy Science and Policy” minor. As with the food minor launched last year, these new minors give students an opportunity to study in greater depth topics critically important to the environment. Eventually, we’d like to see minors in “environmental justice” and “environmental humanities” added to our list. I think it is important that PitE serve as a nexus for undergraduate education in environmental issues. To my mind, this goal entails creating curricular programs enabling students from a wide variety of disciplinary homes to extend their education on environmental issues, for instance, engineering students who want to learn about the social science and policy issues involved in converting energy generation to renewable sources.

One of the core courses in the new energy minor is Professor Adam Simon’s Environment 380 course, “Mineral Resources, Economics and the Environment.” This past fall students in Adam’s class came up with plans to obtain the University’s energy needs entirely from renewable energy.

At the end of the term, students publically presented their plans to a large group of university administrators, faculty, and students. Continuing the PitE tradition of hands-on engagement with energy issues, during this year’s spring break, a group of PitE students working with GRID Alternatives, a non-profit organization, installed solar panels on low-income housing on the San Pasqual Indian Reservation near San Diego.

PitE faculty continue to thrive. The promotion of Susan “Scotti” Parrish from Associate to Full Professor was approved by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. And, in recognition of her contributions to undergraduate education, Professor Aline Cotel has been named an Alfred F. Thurnau professor. The Thurnau Professorships honor those tenured faculty whose commitment to and investment in undergraduate teaching has had a demonstrable impact on the intellectual development and lives of their students. Our faculty continues to develop new courses, such as an interdisciplinary Great Lakes water course slated for the coming Fall Term and a Florida-centered water course to be offered in the Winter Term of 2017. In the fall, we will welcome new faculty members Professors Ben Passey, Naomi Levin and Paolo Squatriti as well as new Lecturer John Benedict.

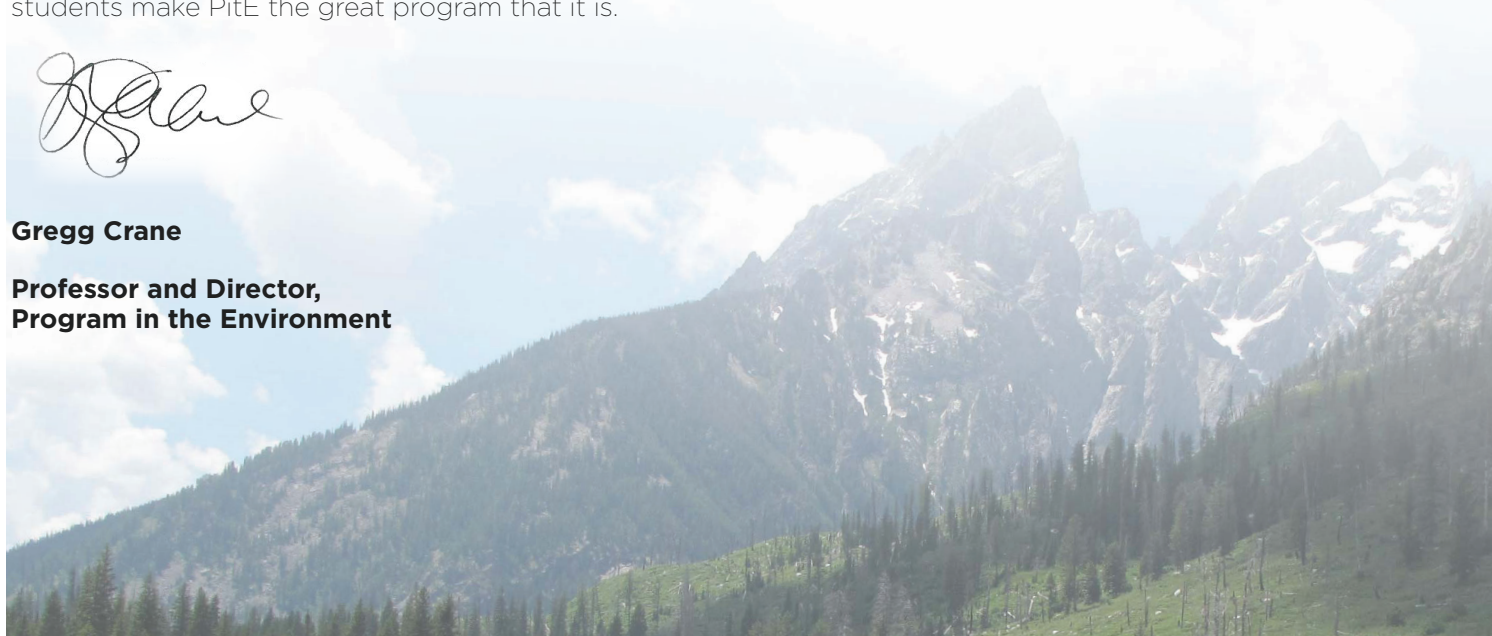
During the past year, PitE hosted presentations by Josh Fox, environmental filmmaker, whose documentary “Gasland” was nominated for an Academy Award and George Heartwell, former Mayor of Grand Rapids. Next year, we look forward to presentations by Stephen Palumbi, a marine ecologist, studying the genetics, evolution, conservation, and population biology of a diverse array of marine organisms, and Naomi Oreskes, a historian of science and co-author of Merchants of Doubt, a book recounting the efforts of a handful of scientists with strong ties to particular industries to stymie new policy initiatives addressing climate change.

PitE continues to welcome increasing numbers of students to its majors and minors. These varied and exceptional students make PitE the great program that it is.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Crane'.

**Gregg Crane**

**Professor and Director,  
Program in the Environment**



# Events



## Josh Fox

### *Director and Narrator of Gasland I and II*

Josh Fox is the director and narrator of *Gasland*, which won six major awards at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, as well as its sequel, *Gasland 2*. During his talk, Josh featured clips from his films, shared anecdotes from filming, and explained his approaches to the creative process. He also talked about other projects since *Gasland*. This presentation showcased environmental issues and possible solutions. Insights generated from the discussion helped students and members of the community to generate ideas on becoming more effective environmental leaders.

Josh Fox is the 2015-2016 Goldring Family Foundation Distinguished Visiting Lecturer. Each year, this lectureship recognizes and invites a notable environmental leader, writer, organizer, or researcher to give a public presentation on campus about current issues and their potential solutions.

PitE Club Presents

## NO IMPACT CHALLENGE 2015

October 21-November 4

PitE Club initiated a new program this year, called the NO IMPACT Challenge. It is a two-week waste-reduction challenge for anyone on campus. The idea is that participants become more conscious of their waste and work to improve their individual environmental impact. The challenge is to use as few disposable goods (i.e. coffee cups, plastic utensils, tissues, etc.) as possible for two weeks, which will hopefully promote changes in daily living. After two weeks, those who use the fewest disposable items are the winners!

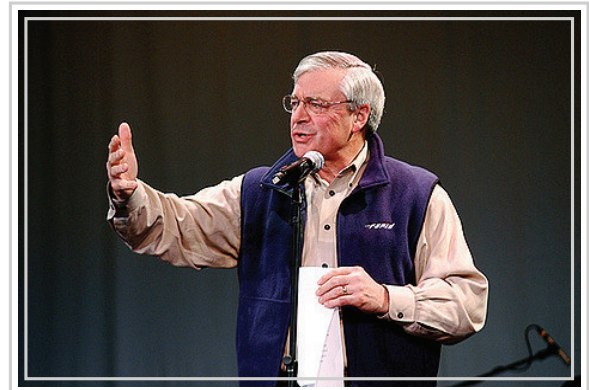
The winner of the PitE Club winter 2016 No Impact Challenge, Daniel Wu, had an average of 1 point per day. Some students were pretty consistent with their waste, but others showed dramatic differences in their amount of waste throughout the challenge, some by more than 10 points per day. The biggest improvement we saw was 22 points (from 26 to 4). Based on responses, students had the most trouble with reducing napkins, tissues, and printing pages for class. Many people reported changing daily habits, such as packing lunch in reusable containers and being cognizant of how many napkins, tissues, and paper towels they use. Many also reported that simply participating in the challenge made them think about daily waste, helping them to reduce it even if just by a small amount.

**The winners of the challenge were:**

**1st place: Daniel Wu, Environmental Engineering major**

**2nd place: Irene Hochgraf-Cameron, PitE major**

**3rd place: Zachery Conley, Kinesiology major**



## George Heartwell

### *Mayor, Grand Rapids, MI*

Mayor Heartwell shared his experiences on the challenges and successes of implementing sustainable practices and how Grand Rapids gained wide recognition as one of the most sustainable cities in America.

During Mayor Heartwell's tenure, the City of Grand Rapids has implemented a variety of environmental measures, including purchases of renewable resource energy, use of alternative fuels in city vehicles, continued attention to water quality in the Grand River, and widespread implementation of energy conservation measures.



## Student Feature: Field Experience



### **Cory Froning - Sustainable Food Minor, Class of 2016**

“My experience at The Detroit Food Academy and Feedom Freedom community garden enabled me to discover the world of sustainable agriculture for social justice and the brand new PitE minor, Sustainable Food Systems. Northwest Connections’ Landscape and Livelihood Program allowed me to study the production and consumption of food in a rural community, completely the opposite of Detroit. Thanks to these two life-changing programs, I am currently in the process of writing my STP senior thesis, comparing and contrasting food access issues in rural and urban communities in attempt to find common, systematic solutions.”

### **Julia Goodhart - PitE Major, Class of 2016**

“In my studies at PitE, I was really interested in learning more about conservation and how organizations and differing groups are making decisions about the land and wildlife around them. Our teachers at Landscape & Livelihood covered the ecological concepts, but unlike many other programs I had investigated, emphasized that the human influence upon the landscape would be the determining factor, and this whole-systems lens helped to guide our discussions. Living communally with a small group of fellow students, forming strong relationships with our teachers, and working rigorously with local professionals in the Swan Valley proved to be the most fulfilling and robust way to round out my PitE degree.”



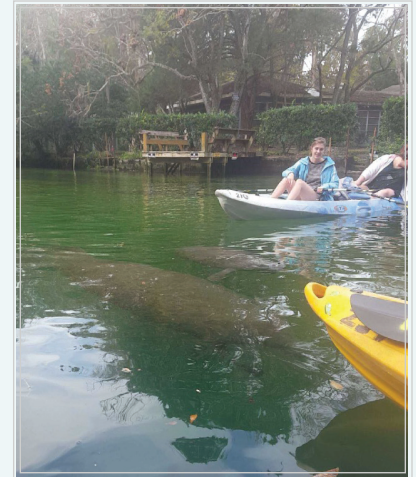
## Isabelle Abrams - PitE Major, Class of 2015



Isabelle completed her internship with the Campus Farm in Winter 2015 term. She was asked to create a business plan for the farm. *“Our goal was to find a way to make the campus farm more self-reliant and profitable, without compromising its mission to provide education, create community, and promote the local food system. This internship experience taught me you need to believe in what you’re doing. There were so many changes and obstacles to creating this business plan. You have to keep pushing until you see the outcome you’re looking for. This idea helped me during my internship with Qualtrics this past summer.”*

## Angelika Kurthen - PitE Major, Class of 2017

“As a student studying marine conservation and oceanography, it is certainly difficult to find an ocean out in the Midwest. While the Great Lakes are a wonderful substitute, receiving the PitE Practical Experience Merit Award allowed me to travel to the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory and take a course about sirenian biology and conservation. It is a dream come true. Manatees are one of the most benevolent and charismatic of the endangered megafauna. Not only are they adorable, they are also an important conservation case study. As a future conservation biologist, I feel like my practical experience course will help me understand what it truly means to work with a community and an organism in the field. In order to observe manatees in the field, we went kayaking many times. Here, a mother and calf exhibit synchronized surfacing as they come up to the surface to breathe.”



## Claire Roos - PitE Major, Class of 2016



“As part of 2016’s MLK Symposium, a diverse coalition of student groups and faculty projects on campus came together to organize a Food Justice Panel discussion addressing the racial inequities in our food system. The event was able to host a panel of some of the most relevant and inspiring community leaders and researchers on these issues. sought to help spur discussion on the ever growing concern for systemic social justice issues facing our community. While there is already much interest in sustainable food systems on campus, we have often found that the social justice issues intertwined in such topics were often left unaddressed. By catering to an audience of diverse interests and backgrounds, we attempted to reach those who, while environmentally conscious, might not normally be exposed to the social inequities entailed in their interests.”

# Student Feature: Peer Advisor



**Melanie Kinnan, PitE Major, Class of 2017**

Melanie is a junior PitE major and peer advisor. She is specializing in human health and behavior, and is also on a pre-physical therapy track. Last summer she studied abroad in Ferrara, Italy where she completed her LSA language requirement. She will be completing her practical field experience requirement this summer studying abroad in New Zealand with EcoQuest.

*"PitE is an amazing program that is uniquely customizable to every individual, which enables a student to pursue many different interests they may have and integrate them together. I chose PitE as my major because I was looking for a program with a holistic approach to health, the environment, and other natural and social issues. PitE has allowed me to study food, sustainability, public health, and more, which have complimented and enhanced my pre-physical therapy curriculum."*

## PitE Honors

These students completed and presented an honors thesis at the April 29 PitE Honors Symposium, and graduated with honors.



**Trevor Dolan**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"Reducing Food Waste Through Crop Donation Tax Credits"



**Garen Leung**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"University Students' Perception of the USDA Organic Label"



**Kimberly Higgins**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"Landscape and Character: Understanding America's Attachment to Sprawl"



**Rachel Richman**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Outreach in Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution"



**Rachael Lacey**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"Entomophagy in America: Promoting Cricket Flour Foods"



**Natasha Sood**

**Thesis Topic:**  
"Effects of Trichloroethylene on Cytokine Production by Placental Cells"

# Featured Course: ENVIRON 421: Restoration Ecology

The course, taught by Lecturer Sara Adlerstein and Graduate Student Instructor Zachery Gizicki, offers an introduction to ecological restoration, a new field relying on ecology fundamentals, together with concepts from engineering, landscape architecture, social sciences, economics, education and the humanities, to assist recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. At the heart of the course is the question “can we repair some of the damage done to ecosystems and biodiversity?”

Students practice acquired skills working in teams to develop restoration management plans for sites at Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum (MBGNA). Students do course-related activities at MBGNA and contribute to ongoing wildlife and habitat restoration efforts (native plants seed-collecting/cleaning, removal of invasive plants, controlled burns, stream bank stabilization, dam removal and monitoring). The activities offer opportunities to explore and assess restoration projects that demonstrate prairie, wetlands and riparian restoration, and agriculture and open space initiatives. Students also participate in other local restoration projects and learn about the role of volunteers. Finally, students conduct lab exercises, use methods to assess restoration progress, complete a team project, and learn about spatial data resources using GIS mapping software.



**Sarah Adlerstein,**  
Research Scientist and Lecturer



## Student Thoughts

*“The course introduced us to a variety of restoration concepts; allowing students to explore these concepts through actual field experiences. This course was instrumental in dispelling many restoration misconceptions without bias; we actively participated in a controlled burn - one of my most memorable experiences.”*

**- Heather Johnson**

*“Restoration Ecology was one of the highlights of my undergraduate studies. The class was very accessible and challenged us as students to consider and engage with a variety of practices and disciplines within the field.”*

**- Robert Luzynski**

*“Some of my favorite moments from this class include participating in a prescribed burn in Nichols Arboretum, surveying for Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnakes at the botanical gardens, and taking inventory of fish species in Fleming creek.”*

**- Steven Smitka**

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## Student Feature: Practical Experience Internship



### Anna Johnson - PitE Major, Class of 2015

During the summer of 2015 I interned as an Assistant Farm Steward at One Island Sustainable Living Center (One Island), a nonprofit organization located in Honaunau, Hawaii. One Island is a farm based education program that utilizes various sustainable features such as solar energy panels, a rainwater catchment system, composting piles, organic gardening, and permaculture techniques. In addition, One Island partners with fellow nonprofits working in the Hawaiian Islands to improve food access and community well being.

As the Assistant Farm Steward, my primary role was to help maintain the various fruit orchards, greenhouses, and medicinal herb gardens, as well as assist with the implementation of One Island's latest grant funded project, the Same Canoe Local Food Challenge. I was also given the opportunity to partake in community council meetings, attend farm tours and specialized learning opportunities (Including a great banana growing workshop!), and represent One Island at our booth at various Farmer's Markets.

*"My internship took me from the shelter of the classroom and into a practical, hands-on experience of working in the field. I would encourage everyone to pursue a practical experience internship as it can be an invaluable learning opportunity and a chance to connect with potential future employers in your field of interest."*

