

WAS*IS Workshop 2009: Statement of Interest

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My desire to integrate social science into meteorology began to take shape during the summer of 2007 when I interned for the Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program at the National Weather Center. My summer project was to help my mentor write a National Science Foundation proposal for the development of materials that would educate the public about advancements in the radar field. As I began searching the literature to find what meteorologists already knew about “what people understand about radar”, I quickly realized that no such studies had been conducted. At that moment I thought to myself, “Well, how can we be effective teachers if we don’t already know what people understand?”

That realization led me on a path to where I am today. After my summer REU, I finished my undergraduate degree in meteorology at Iowa State University where I continued work on “public understanding of Doppler radar.” My passion for integrating social sciences into meteorology began to run deep. I knew that traditional career paths in meteorology would not satisfy me. I wanted to combine my passions for weather and helping people and I wanted to attend graduate school to pursue a degree that would allow me to combine the two. Thankfully, I was accepted to pursue an interdisciplinary master’s degree at the University of Oklahoma. With this degree, I am taking courses in meteorology, communication and journalism. My primary focus is communicating severe and hazardous weather threats to the public through media outlets. I am interested in their understanding of radar graphics, how/if they make decisions based on these graphics, and communicating uncertainty (i.e., whether it *should* be communicated and if so, the most effective way to do so).

Throughout the past year, I have really begun to realize the importance of working across disciplines in order to address problems with weather and society. I have also realized the need to develop a common language so that people from different fields can communicate with one another. I have heard wonderful comments about the WAS*IS workshops and I strongly believe they are a great springboard for social science integration into meteorology. Complete integration is sure to be a slow process, but with the greater number of people involved in the workshops, the greater number of ideas exchanged, and the more likely it is that progress will be made. I would be honored to participate.