



Class Session with Secretary Chu

Two of my colleagues, [Jennifer Granholm](#) and [Steve Weissman](#), offered an exciting new course this semester, culminating in a visit with the chair of FERC and with Energy Secretary Chu.

Each student examined the renewable energy programs and opportunities in one particular state and then worked as part of a regional team to design an initiative to attract a hypothetical pool of federal grants to their region. The result was series of state-specific reports and five comprehensive regional plans. In addition to more traditional lectures, the students had an opportunity to hear from and interview a number of high-level participants in the renewable energy policy debate. These included Al Gore, Assistant Secretary of Energy and ARPA-E chief Arun Majumdar, a key state legislator, Congressional aides, corporate chief executives, and venture capitalists.

The course culminated with a trip to Washington D.C. where students presented their proposals to Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and FERC Chairman Jon Wellinghoff. Chairman Wellinghoff's reaction was emblematic of the students' overall reception. He called their work perhaps the finest example of a comprehensive policy proposal in this area that he had ever seen, and encouraged the students to show their findings to key Senators such as Bingaman and Wyden. Secretary Chu engaged in a back-and-forth conversation with the students for an hour and a half.

I have to admit that this was *way* cooler than any of my own classes. But it was a great experience for the students.