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Climate Change Research

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Bob Brecha, director of the University's Sustainability, Energy and Environment (SEE) initiative, will study on a five-month Fulbright Scholar Grant beginning in September at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, where he has spent the last four summers.

Brecha will focus his research on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while avoiding serious economic consequences.

"A particular interest of mine is in tying together climate, economic and energy system models and thinking about the consequences of coming fossil-fuel depletion challenges," he said.

In 2008, *Energy Policy* published a paper by Brecha titled "Emission Scenarios in the Face of Fossil Fuel Peaking." In the study, Brecha examined the geological and economic effects of global oil production peaking. While depletion of fossil fuel resources might serve as a natural limit to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, a sudden shortage of these fuels would lead to increased prices and potential economic disaster, he said.

"As fossil fuels, primarily petroleum, become more expensive due to either scarcity or strong demand, infrastructure also becomes much more expensive, making alternative resources potentially far less profitable than would initially appear to be the case," he said. "Without cheap fossil fuel energy, it becomes much more difficult to make a painless transition to a whole new energy system."

Brecha, a physics professor who was trained in optics, shifted his focus about seven years ago to sustainability, energy and environment issues. Last year, he co-founded a small business in Yellow Springs, Ohio, that conducts home energy audits and recommends ways to reduce energy consumption.

The U.S. Department of State sponsors the Fulbright Program to provide funding for students, scholars, teachers and professionals to undertake graduate study, advanced research and university teaching. It is the flagship international educational exchange program of the U.S. government and designed to increase mutual understanding between people in the United States and other countries. The State Department will make an official announcement of Fulbright Scholar Grant recipients in August.

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