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Ithaca College, Caroline represented at U.N. climate conference

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Tompkins County will be well represented at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15), Dec 5-18 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Caroline deputy supervisor Dominic Frongillo will be helping to coordinate 500 youth participants from the United States as part of a 25-member delegation from SustainUS, a nonprofit organization advancing sustainable development and youth empowerment.

Among them will be 20 students from Ithaca College's International Environmental Policy course, who will present a collaborative exhibit using social networking sites and www.popcop15.com to poll the public and share the responses in a display at the convention.

"Each day of the conference, the students will post a single question on climate change to the public by blogging, twittering, e-mailing and obtaining responses in person, with the results displayed online and in a public exhibit space at the convention," said associate professor Susan Allen-Gil, chair of the Department of Environmental Studies and Sciences, who also will attend.

"With a goal of gathering one million responses per day, the objective is simple: to ensure that other voices are heard and widely held opinions are represented at the negotiations," she added.

Ithaca College is among only a handful of academic institutions to be granted permanent observer status at these annual climate treaty gatherings. It sent observer teams to prior conferences held in Canada, Kenya, Indonesia and Poland.

Frongillo, who participated in the United Nations climate negotiations in Bali in December 2007, said his delegation will submit policy briefs, attend meetings with the U.S. State Department, and lobby other world leaders as well as deliver media messages.

He said it's important that youth be represented because their generation will have to live with the consequences of the decisions made at the conference.

"We have a huge opportunity to not only help slow the deterioration of our atmosphere, but also to launch a clean energy economy here in the U.S.," Frongillo added.