Five questions for Roger Pielke Jr.[1]

You might know Roger Pielke Jr. as a University of Colorado Boulder environmental studies professor, Fellow of the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) and the founder of the CIRES Center for Science and Technology Policy Research. But in recent years, Pielke has begun to focus more of his research on another often-discussed topic: sports and policy. And now he has proposed instituting a new center on campus, the Center for Sports Governance.

The idea for the center has percolated over the past few years.

“At some point in my (policy) teaching, I started using examples from the world of sports, in particular the issue of sex testing in the Olympics and how it is determined who is eligible to compete in the women’s events, which has been interesting and complicated and a fraught political topic for about a half-century,” Pielke said. “I also used the issue of Oscar Pistorius, who runs on blades, as an example of what is called technological augmentation and how athletes make their bodies better or stronger. The question is, how do you come up with rules for that?

“The students were really into it. They liked the sports examples. Sometimes when you talk about governance and policy, unless that is your thing, it can be kind of dry, but sports really made it come alive.”

From there, the topic of sports governance became something of a hobby for Pielke, and then it grew to occupy some of his professional time. Later, he decided to jump in with both feet.

Pielke earned three degrees at CU-Boulder in the late ’80s and early ’90s. He went on to work as a scientist for the National Center for Atmospheric Research before being recruited to CU, where he was asked to found a center focused on science and technology policy in 2001.

His father was one of the first atmospheric scientists to conduct three-dimensional modeling of the atmosphere.

“When I was a child, I learned how to program computers in FORTRAN. I thought every kid learned how to do that. When I got to college, I realized I had that kind of a skill so I landed a job at NCAR as an undergraduate as a computer programmer,” he said.

At NCAR he rubbed shoulders with brilliant scientists.

“This was when ozone depletion was a big issue, and I remember the scientists would sit around and say things like, ‘If only politicians better understood science, the world would be a much better place.’ And I thought maybe I should know something about this political world if I was going to have a career in science.”

During his mater’s work in public policy at CU, he was advised by Rad Byerly (who passed away two weeks ago), who was invited to go to Washington, D.C., to be the chief of staff for the House Science Committee. Pielke said Byerly “must have felt bad leaving me behind” and so he brought Pielke with him to the Hill.

“The a-ha moment came to me one day when the senior staff was sitting around, critiquing a Nobel Prize-winning scientist who was asking for more money for science. They said, ‘If only these scientists better understood Washington, the world would be a much better space.’

“I realized that both sides thought the other needed to understand more about the other. That’s when I decided to get a Ph.D. in political science focused on policy for science and technology.”

Pielke has written numerous books on science, politics and society. The one he said he is best-known for is “The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics,” which was “a kind of pithy field guide for scientists in the political world.”

“The 10th anniversary is coming up and I’m hoping to do a second edition,” he said. “The book really resonated with

a lot of people."

Another book of which is he especially proud is 2010's "The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't Tell You About Global Warming." "This issue is full of controversy and people arguing and it is all very political. I'm pleased that the book has stood the test of time, which is not a small feat in the climate arena."

1. What spurred your research into the governance of sports in 2011?

I started teaching the subject and as I read the literature, I realized that the governance aspect of sports is a pretty interesting area. In 2010, there was a sting operation by a London newspaper focusing on members of the FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association). I thought it was stunning that a couple of reporters could go undercover and offer bribes to these officials and catch them. Obviously there was something deeply wrong with FIFA.

I have a Ph.D. in political science and I thought I should be able to learn about what went wrong with FIFA. So I spent a summer reading every academic paper on FIFA – the excellent investigative journalism, too – trying to figure out what was going on. There wasn't much out there that was recent in the academic literature so I decided to write up what I discovered, what I learned and what I concluded. I wrote on the governance of FIFA and was able to present it at a sports conference in 2011. It got a little bit of attention beyond academia, which always is rewarding for a policy academic.

That kind of opened my eyes to this world of the governance of sports. It seems there's something new every day. Recently, an elite biker was discovered with a motor in her bike. There's corruption and controversies and issues almost every day. I started blogging about it in 2011 (http://leastthing.blogspot.com[2]), mainly as a way to organize my own thoughts and organize some of the materials I came across. My interest and involvement in the issue of sports governance snowballed after that.

After working on the issue of climate change and energy policy for more than 20 years, I'm comfortable that I've said my bit in that area. And It think it's really healthy for policy scholars to not get stale and move on to new challenges, new issue areas. I also think there's an opportunity to make some academic and practical contributions in this area. It is exciting to pretty much have a new career at mid-career.

2. How did the discussion of a center that would address sports governance progress? How would the center's focus differ from or integrate with other sports-related programs at CU?

There's really no sports governance center or institute or effort in the United States at a university of the sort we are developing. What we do have is a number of really good sports management programs and a smaller, but well-respected area in sports law.

Sports management is more about getting a job in the sports industry and is usually found in a business school. But when I talk about governance, it's a little bit larger focus. It's more about decisions about sport, not necessarily decisions in sport. For example, when the U.S. Congress takes up discussions of concussions and football, that's the governance question, it's not management. The question of corruption in FIFA is more of a governance discussion. We saw there was an opportunity to do something new and interesting here at CU. We don't have a policy school or sports law program, so there isn't a big umbrella under which to do interdisciplinary, practically oriented sports governance work. The fact that CU is a pretty good place to be entrepreneurial made me think about organizing something.

The discussion actually began before (athletic director) Rick George came here. I had a few initial conversations with Mike Bohn (the former director). Mike Bohn left the university soon after and when Rick George arrived, I reached out to him, first, to come to the class I was teaching as a guest lecturer. I give Rick all the credit in the world. He is an enormously positive person: You suggest an idea and his first response is, "Why not?" One thing led to another and we came up with an idea of creating a sports governance center. His supportive and positive attitude is infectious.

There are two aspects to what we are doing that I think are really innovative, which means experimental and new. One, of course, is the focus on sports governance, because you won't find much elsewhere, and the other is locating an

academic research and teaching unit inside the Department of Athletics. It's a positive model that better connects athletics with academics at a big-time university.

We're in the last stage of the institutional process of formalizing the center; under CU guidelines the center has to be approved by the vice chancellor for research. The university has been incredibly supportive from the start. One of the advantages of being a tenured, full professor is that I have some latitude to think through and develop these ideas. The university structure allows faculty the intellectual freedom to chase down ideas and see if they will work. I benefited from a recent sabbatical where the center and my career turn really took shape. The ability to be entrepreneurial doesn't happen in every profession and not every university supports their faculty in changing direction every now and then. I cannot overstate how rewarding it has been to work with George, Lance Carl (associate athletic director) and Ceal Berry (senior associate athletic director), who all have been great collaborators. None of this would have been possible without leadership in the Athletics Department.

3. As you mentioned, there's something new – scandals, corruption, controversy – going on in sports every day. Is there something specific about the industry (or our culture) that makes it particularly prone to this?

People in sports are people, just like those in business or law or government, and you will see the same sort of human failings in sorts that you'll see elsewhere. What makes sports particularly interesting is the visibility that society gives to sports. If you look at the economics of sports, it is not that big. The NFL's yearly revenue is about the same size as two weeks revenue of Apple, for instance. In terms of economic activity, sports is dwarfed by its media presence and how much people care about it and talk about it.

The other thing is that the institutions we've built to govern sports – whether at the national level, the NCAA or the international level – are unique. Look at the example of FIFA: It's not a governmental body, it's not a business, it's not even a civil society organization. It is this strange institution (technically a Swiss-based association), and to understand why it doesn't work, you have to get into a space that most people aren't familiar with, and while that makes it intellectually interesting, it makes the issue of "fixing" it a difficult practical problem. Intellectually interesting plus practically challenging are an irresistible combination for the policy scholar.

4. You've turned your research and knowledge of sports into a book and into a class that will be the foundation of the Center for Sports Governance.

Yes, and at the moment, the book is very close to being finished. I just turned in the complete draft to my editor. It's called "The Edge" and it is really about a number of battle grounds that we see in modern sport where rules are broken and difficult to enforce. The "edge" refers to the edge of what is deemed acceptable and what is not. We sometimes use the word cheating as sledgehammer when what we really need to do is engage these questions with scalpels because it is complicated.

In the book I have five battlegrounds: the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) and that's the sea that we in universities swim in; match-fixing, which got attention recently in tennis; doping, like Lance Armstrong and the Tour de France; the issue of technological augmentation, or using technology to get stronger or faster; and sex testing, which was the subject of a landmark arbitration decision last summer.

My overall argument is that values that sports has carried with it over the last century or so are not doing the job for us as we go forward in the 21th century. Those values are amateurism; purity, which is the idea that athletes should somehow be "pure" when they compete; the idea of autonomy, that sports organizations should govern themselves; and also uncertainty, meaning we don't know who will win. These values, however great they sound in the abstract, have proven subject to all sorts of failures when we apply them.

I suggest that if we think through all of these battlegrounds, there should be a new set of values in mind: professionalism, pragmatism, accountability and transparency. Using these values, maybe we can do better in sports and the crises we are facing.

As for the class, "Introduction to Sports Governance," I actually test-drove it two years ago. I taught it as a volunteer for Ethnic Studies (another incredibly supportive unit) and I had about 14 students. The class got really good reviews.

That gave me the sense that there was something to all this.

This year, I've been overwhelmed. There are about 90 people in the class with more than 20 different majors, which has to be some sort of record for an upper-division course. It's an enormously fun class; one of the requirements of the course is to watch ESPN. But it is also a pretty rigorous class. I expect a lot from students. When you talk about things like constitutive rules and ordinary rules and norms and all sorts of wonky governance speak – I go to sleep just saying it to you – it can be pretty tedious, but when you talk about it in the context of sports for people who are interested, it's different. We have pretty high-level discussions, and the class is full of smart thinkers.

On the academic side, I think there's lots of untapped potential here and under the Sports Governance Center. We hope to capitalize on that.

5. Do you have a favorite item or artifact in your office, and if so, what is the story behind it?

I have a Landsat photo of the Chesapeake Bay area that was given to me by Rad Byerly, who was my mentor. The photo was given to him by NASA in the 1980s because he was a member of the Congressional staff that helped to make Landsat (an early Earth observing satellite) possible in the 1970s and '80s. It hung in his office in Washington, D.C.

I keep it for a couple of reasons. First, it shows that any achievement requires enormous effort. We take things like that for granted today, but it took a lot of hard work by dedicated people to be able to take Earth observation for granted. The second is perspective. It's a picture of D.C. from space. When you look at the picture, all the day-to-day politics and fights and anger and poisonous atmosphere in Washington, D.C., that you see up close disappear. From afar, the place looks pretty amazing. It reminds me that it is important to keep your perspective on whatever it is you are working on, particularly policy topics that people get worked up about.

Regent candidates come together for debate[3]
[4]

The three announced candidates for the District 1 seat on the CU Board of Regents assembled Tuesday night at CU Denver for this election year's first debate, taking questions from students while highlighting issues and qualifications.

Jack Kroll, Zach Rothmier and Lucky Vidmar – all Democrats – took part in the event, which was presented by CU Denver's Student Government Association and Faculty Assembly. Regent Michael Carrigan, the Denver Democrat who holds the seat, moderated the panel at the Student Commons Building; he is term-limited and will depart the board early next year.

The candidate who emerges victorious from the Democratic primary later this year likely will go on to win the seat, as no Republican candidate has entered the race.

"The First Congressional District is a vital one," Carrigan told the audience of 75, mostly students. "We're very lucky to have three terrific candidates and they each have tremendous strengths."

All three noted their ties to CU, both as students and staff members.

Rothmier[5] earned his undergraduate degree at CU-Boulder; master's degree at CU Denver: "I'm a lynx-buffalo hybrid," he said. He stressed his 10 years of experience working in public policy, including his current position with the Denver City Council. He previously worked for CU's Center for Education Policy Analysis.

Vidmar[6], a Denver patent lawyer, also earned his undergraduate degree from, and later worked at, CU-Boulder,

installing and maintaining computer systems. “I think what distinguishes me is how I see this job, which is as being truly representative of the people of Colorado,” he said. “The university needs to achieve outcomes that are good for the whole state.”

Kroll[7] is a current CU-Boulder staff member, serving as an assistant director of admissions. A CU Denver graduate, he reported regularly to the Board of Regents as chair of the Inter-Campus Student Forum, and continues to serve on several CU organizations. “I believe in the potential of the University of Colorado to serve all students,” he said.

Kroll and Rothmier both are Denver natives; Vidmar came to Colorado as a high school senior after growing up in Croatia. All three said they have enough flexibility of schedule in their current jobs that devoting time to Board of Regents responsibilities would not be problematic.

In answering questions and addressing topics including student affordability and CU Denver’s role and mission, the candidates indicated they are largely in agreement in broad terms. Disagreements were more nuanced.

As to whether the Board of Regents is best elected by partisan ballot as is the case, Rothmier and Kroll said they approve of the current practice. Vidmar said that having the board be elected, rather than appointed, is for the best, but that he doesn’t necessarily believe it should be a partisan race.

In addressing a question about administrative growth at universities in general, Rothmier and Vidmar said CU has done fairly well in bucking the national trend. Still, Vidmar said CU must “avoid this propensity to appoint a new vice chancellor for whatever the latest problem is.” Kroll was more critical, pointing out that of CU’s 30,000-plus employees, only 16 percent are faculty; he also said he was discouraged by leaders choosing to give themselves compensation increases. “I don’t care that we’re doing more (with efficiency) than anyone else,” Kroll said. “We need to make sure the money (students) are paying in tuition goes directly into the classroom.”

Also attending the event were CU Denver Chancellor Dorothy Horrell and a fourth candidate for Board of Regents, Alice Madden[8]. A former state lawmaker from Boulder, Madden is running as a Democrat for the statewide at-large seat in November’s election. The post is being vacated by Steve Bosley, R-Broomfield, who is term-limited. Heidi Ganahl[9], a Broomfield entrepreneur, is running as a Republican.

The seat held by Regent Sue Sharkey, R-Castle Rock, also is up for election this year. No challengers have entered the District 4 race.

Students, faculty, staff tackle what it means to be inclusive[10]

Giant flightless bird wandered the Arctic 50 million years ago[11]

CU-Boulder’s resident entrepreneurs in place, ready to help[12]

Putting the punch to Parkinson's[13]

Scientist who inspired “Concussion” movie to speak at UCCS[14]

'The best of both worlds': Why students love the University Honors and Leadership program [15]

New call centers open at CU Denver and UCCS[16]

Board of Regents meeting begins today in Colorado Springs [17]

Breathett receives first grant in new health services research program [18]

Grover honored by thoracic surgeons[19]
[20]

Surgeon and researcher **Frederick L. Grover,** a professor of cardiothoracic surgery in the Department of Surgery at the University of Colorado School of Medicine at the Anschutz Medical Campus, recently was awarded the 2016 Earl Bakken Scientific Achievement Award by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons during the organization’s 52nd annual meeting.

“The Earl Bakken award is given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions that enhance the practice of cardiothoracic surgery,” said 2015-2016 STS President Mark S. Allen, M.D. “There is no question that Dr. Grover’s efforts in the development and growth of the STS National Database over the past 30 years have made a tremendous impact on the specialty and have made cardiothoracic surgery safer for our patients. His visionary thinking in this area has benefited us all.”

Grover was among a group of surgeons tasked with creating the STS National Database, which officially launched in 1989 with the Adult Cardiac Surgery Database, followed by the General Thoracic Surgery Database and the Congenital Heart Surgery Database. Grover served on the STS National Database Committee for 13 years and as chair of the STS Workforce on National Databases. He personified the proposition that clinical data are the foundation for scientific advancement, and he continues to remain involved with the database, considered the international gold standard for clinical outcomes databases.

Grover plays an active role with STS quality initiatives and currently serves as vice chair of the steering committee for the STS/ACC TVT Registry, a database launched in 2011 in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that monitors outcomes from transcatheter valve therapies, including transcatheter aortic valve replacement.

Grover earned his undergraduate and medical degrees from Duke University. After a junior residency at Duke, he moved to the University of Colorado, where he completed residencies in general surgery and cardiac surgery. After living and working in San Diego, California, and San Antonio, Texas, Grover returned to Denver, where he's been since 1991.

Grover has authored or co-authored more than 300 published manuscripts and 50 book chapters. He was one of the principal investigators on the Randomized On/Off Bypass (ROOBY) trial, which examined on-pump versus off-pump coronary artery bypass grafting surgery and ultimately led to significant changes in clinical practice. He also has lectured at numerous regional, national, and international meetings.

Meaney elected to UN initiative on responsible business education[21]

Albert named vice chair for clinical affairs [22]

Deanda celebrates 50th anniversary [23]

CU Scoop: Price of Higher Education-cost contributors and financial assistance[24]

Todd Saliman, vice president and chief financial officer, CU System will provide insight to student financial assistance at the CU campuses, how tuition can be reduced relatively significantly based on income, need and merit. He will also take a close look at some of the factors contributing to rising costs at CU, such as the STEM disciplines. More details and registration here[25].

$40M UCCS sports medicine center part of City for Champions tourism initiative[26]

The disappearance of Dinosaur Ridge [27]

After finals-week snow day, CU-Boulder developing a plan for repeat [28]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/five-questions-roger-pielke-jr[2] http://leastthing.blogspot.com/[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/regent-candidates-come-together-debate[4] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/reg-candidates-debate_top.jpg[5] http://www.rothmier4regent.com/[6] http://www.vidmarforcolorado.com/[7] http://krollforcolorado.com/[8] http://madden4cu.com/[9] http://heidiganahl.com/[10] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/students-faculty-staff-tackle-what-it-means-be-inclusive[11] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/giant-flightless-bird-wandered-arctic-50-million-years-ago[12] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-boulder-s-resident-entrepreneurs-place-ready-help[13] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/putting-punch-parkinsons[14] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/scientist-who-inspired-concussion-movie-speak-uccs[15] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/best-both-worlds-why-students-love-university-honors-and-leadership-program[16] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/new-call-centers-open-cu-denver-and-uccs[17] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/board-regents-meeting-begins-today-colorado-springs[18] https://connections.cu.edu/people/breathett-receives-first-grant-new-health-services-research-program[19] https://connections.cu.edu/people/grover-honored-thoracic-surgeons[20] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/p_grover_top.jpg[21] https://connections.cu.edu/people/meaney-elected-un-initiative-responsible-business-education[22] https://connections.cu.edu/people/albert-named-vice-chair-clinical-affairs[23] https://connections.cu.edu/people/deanda-celebrates-50th-anniversary[24] https://connections.cu.edu/events/cu-scoop-price-higher-education-cost-contributors-and-financial-assistance-1[25] https://www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/UCO/event/showEventForm.jsp?form_id=196366[26] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/40m-uccs-sports-medicine-center-part-city-champions-tourism-initiative[27] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/disappearance-dinosaur-ridge[28] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/after-finals-week-snow-day-cu-boulder-developing-plan-repeat