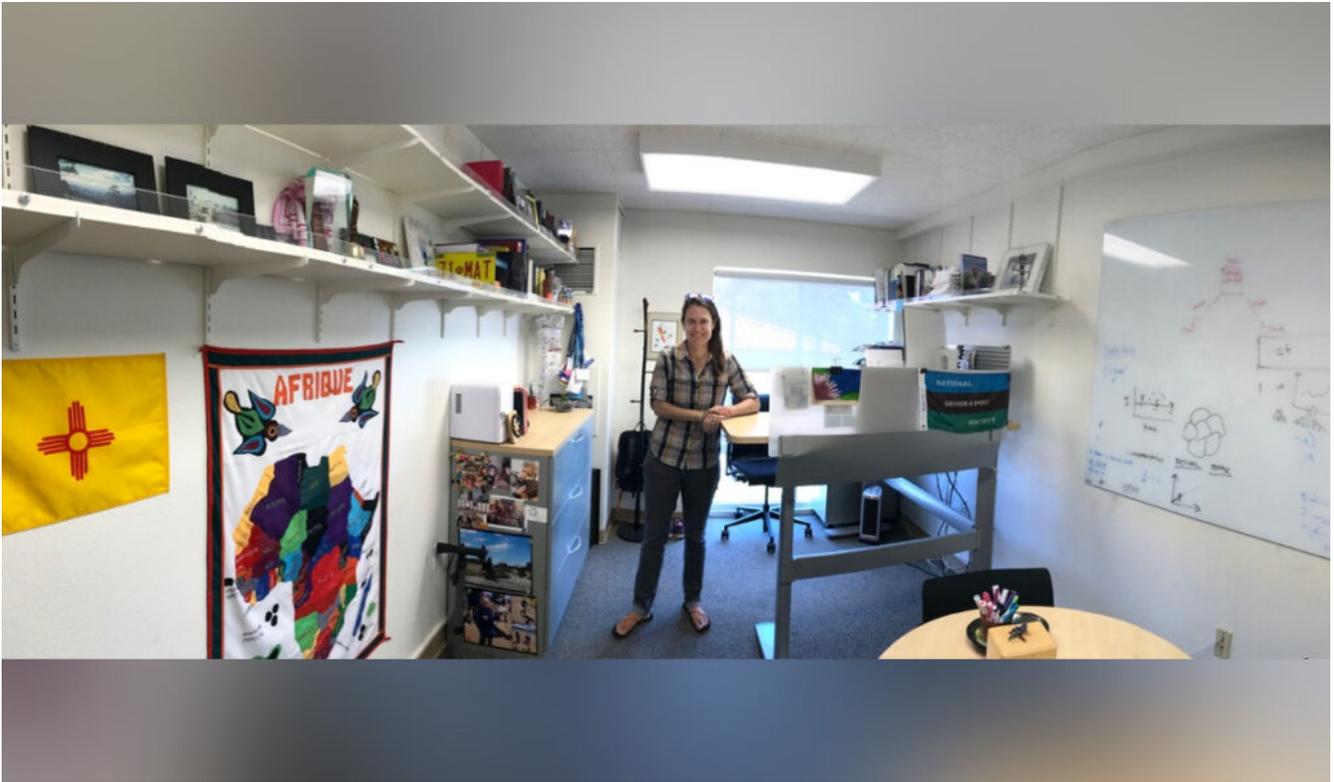


Office hours: Associate Professor Jennifer Burney



The GPS faculty member opens up about some of the dearest objects that adorn her office, painting a picture of her professional backstory and personal interests

By Rachel Hommel | GPS News



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A climate change expert and environmental scientist, Jennifer Burney's office at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) displays a rich background in humanitarian work, highlighting her research on global food security.

Peek inside during office hours and you will notice an affinity for tchotchkes (Yiddish for trinkets) from her global travels and research sites. Her kids' artwork adorns the office, a colorful reminder to never grow up. Her sense of humor is infectious, as well as her obsession with soccer.

A member of the National Geographic Explorers family, Burney takes the path less traveled, with a long-standing project in Benin, West Africa. Named a UC San Diego Community Champion, Burney fosters the spirit of equity, diversity and inclusion at GPS and campus-wide.

Hover over the images above for the big picture on her professional backstory and personal interests.

3 questions with Associate Professor Jennifer Burney

What is your academic focus?

I study the ways in which climate variability and climate change impact our food systems, how our food systems, in turn, impact the climate and whether and how farmers might adapt to changing environmental conditions. Specifically, I am really interested in the role that aerosols and other short-lived pollutants play in impacting both climate and human systems. It's complicated and fun on both the physical and human side of things.

What are the real-world impacts of your research?

We all have to eat to survive. And, like it or not, the climate exhibits a lot of variabilities and is also changing over time. Those changing conditions are on average making it harder to grow enough food with the same technologies and expanding the land base on which we grow food is really detrimental from a climate perspective. I hope that some of my work thinking about this set of issues, from a systems perspective, can help build a world where everyone has enough to eat, but where we are also stabilizing climate and cleaning up the environment.

What skills or understanding do you hope students leave your class with?

I teach a lot of quantitative methods courses and a food security seminar. I always want my students to be using data responsibly and powerfully to tell their stories. I push them really hard to think very clearly about the “how” of any sort of policy or technology. How does it exactly work? What are the technical and institutional details? And therefore, what’s the causal chain by which enacting a new regulation or introducing a new technology or making a policy shift will lead to a change that you both care about and can measure?