



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Founding Members of the Presidents Climate Commitment Leadership Circle

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The *American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment* is a high-visibility effort to make campuses more sustainable and address global warming by garnering institutional commitments to reduce and ultimately neutralize greenhouse gas emissions on campus. The effort is modeled after the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

The challenge to reverse global warming will reshape the 21st century. An immense and ever-growing body of scientific evidence points to the conclusion that our over-reliance on fossil fuels is causing the planet to warm at dangerous rates and the climate to destabilize. The participating presidents recognize the need to reduce the global emission of greenhouse gases dramatically, in order to avert the worst impacts of global warming.

America's higher education community can play a determinant role in addressing climate change. Leading society in this effort fits squarely into the educational, research, and public service missions of higher education. No other institution in society has the influence, the critical mass and the diversity of skills needed to successfully reverse global warming. Tomorrow's architects, engineers, attorneys, business leaders, scientists, urban planners, policy analysts, cultural leaders, journalists, advocates, activists, and politicians—more than 17 million of them—are currently attending the more than 4,000 institutions of higher learning in the United States. Higher education is also a \$317 billion economic engine that employs millions of people and spends billions of dollars on fuel, energy, products, services and infrastructure.

The Presidents Climate Commitment provides a framework and support for America's colleges and universities to go climate neutral. It recognizes the unique role of presidents and chancellors in providing leadership and guidance in their institutions and in society. Participating presidents are leading their institutions to develop a comprehensive plan of actions, within two years, that will ultimately lead to campus climate neutrality, and provide the critical education and research necessary to help society re-stabilize the world's climate. Through the Commitment's flexible program of conservation, renewable energy, offsets and other creative strategies, campuses can go carbon neutral in a timely and efficient manner. We seek the commitment of 200 college and university presidents by June 2007 and 1000 by December 2009.

The program has three major phases:

- **Phase I: Laying the Groundwork: October 2006 – January 2007**—Development of commitment documents, plans, a website and support materials, and creation of a "Leadership Circle" of 15 to 25 presidents who will become the public face and lead supporters of the program.
- **Phase II: Launch: January 2007 – June 07**—Following an announcement to the higher education community by the Leadership Circle in January 2007, personal and direct marketing solicitation efforts targeting all American college and university presidents will commence in preparation for a public launch in June 2007.
- **Phase III: Public Rollout: June 2007 through 2009**—A public launch and summit meeting at a major university in June 2007 will be followed by an ongoing outreach effort to solicit additional signatories and provide progress reports. The ultimate goal in this phase is to generate a broad, continuous, higher education effort on climate change with at least 1,000 participating institutions.

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The fight against global warming is gathering momentum among students, faculty and administrators in higher education and in the public and corporate sectors. It is time for America's colleges and universities to show their strength and leadership. Early movers can realize extensive benefits in funding, attracting talent, achieving long-term cost reduction and generating broad support from alumni and communities while leading America to a new energy and economic future that is hopeful, healthy and prosperous. Many colleges and universities are already reaping these benefits. (*See Higher Education Case Studies in Climate Leadership*).

Addressing climate change will necessitate a transformation of our economy, our infrastructure and our communities in creative and positive ways that will fuel economic growth, protect our communities and the quality of life we cherish, and move our civilization forward. Many of the necessary tools and clean, renewable technologies are already in various stages of development and/or deployment. America needs its great higher educational institutions to put these pieces together in a way that creates a new foundation for growth, prosperity and peace. By creating and implementing plans to reduce their global warming impact down to zero within a generation, our campuses can drive the scientific innovation and public education necessary to catalyze rapid change.

Program Management

The American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment has been developed and is being coordinated and supported by Second Nature, ecoAmerica and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education ("AASHE"). We welcome your inquiries, input and support.

