

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2012 Climate Leadership Summit

## *Economic Renewal: Jump-starting a Sustainable Economy through the ACUPCC*

American University, Washington D.C. | June 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012

The 6th Annual [American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment](#) (ACUPCC) Climate Leadership Summit took place June 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> in Washington, DC at American University. The theme of the summit, "*Economic Renewal: jump-starting a sustainable economy through the ACUPCC*," was aimed at celebrating five years of the ACUPCC successfully transforming higher education from a series of isolated projects to a cohesive network of campuses transforming the way institutions teach, build, and prepare graduates to create a just and sustainable society.

53 signatory presidents and senior staff from over 65 institutions gathered to determine how institutions can assist each other in overcoming challenges by identifying specific approaches to achieving climate neutrality and education for sustainability, and helped to identify how the ACUPCC can collectively to support higher education institutions in advancing sustainability on their campuses and helping the rest of society to do the same.

### **Special Report: Celebrating Five Years of Climate Leadership**



A special report, *Celebrating Five Years of Climate Leadership: The Progress and Promise of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment*, was released at the Summit, detailing successes from signatory campuses across the country and innovation in education, emissions reduction, financing, and more.

## Awards

### The Founding Signatory Awards

Five years ago, a group of visionary college and university presidents gathered to initiate the ACUPCC. They were motivated by their conviction that higher education had the capacity and responsibility to make a commitment to action for the sake of their students and society. The 12 founding signatories were recognized in a special awards ceremony during the opening reception.



*The attending founding signatories pose with awards during the opening reception*

### Visionary Leadership Awards

Two outstanding leaders were recognized for their contributions and accomplishments in advancing sustainability in education and society. Mary Anne (Anderson) Lanier accepted a posthumous award for her father, Ray C. Anderson, for his leadership in business and education. Dr. David Orr of Oberlin College accepted an award for his vision in sustainability education.



*Mary Anne (Anderson) Lanier accepts the award on behalf of her father, Ray C. Anderson*

### The Climate Leadership Awards

Ten schools received Climate Leadership Awards for demonstrating unparalleled campus innovation and climate leadership. The awards were designed by students at the Pratt Institute using reclaimed redwood from New York City water towers. [Read more about the award winners and award design here.](#)



*The Pratt Institute and PALS was awarded a Climate Leadership Award, and Pratt students designed the awards.*

## Welcome and Speakers

David Hales, Chair of the Board, Second Nature; President Emeritus, College of the Atlantic, and Neil Kerwin, President of the hosting institution, American University, welcomed the audience and keynote speaker, [Dianne Dillon-Ridgley](#) Thursday evening. Ms. Dillon-Ridgley's address encouraged the audience to continue their strong leadership by envisioning participants at a future conference reflecting on the action of today's leaders in pursuing sustainability reform. Dianne is an environmentalist and human rights activist who has worked on issues of the environment and sustainability for over thirty years.



*Dianne Dillon-Ridgley addresses the participants during the keynote welcome, Thursday evening.*

[Bill McKibben](#), environmental author and founder of [350.org](#) also addressed participants with an [inspiring video during the opening reception](#).

Kickstarting the event on Friday, Dr. David Orr, Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics and Special Assistant to the President of Oberlin College, and Marvin Krislov, President, Oberlin College, detailed their work on the Oberlin Project and the importance of connecting campus to community development. Liz Clark, Director, Congressional Relations, NACUBO spoke about *Higher Education and Energy: Opportunities for National Leadership*, including opportunities for advancing federal support for sustainability initiatives, and Debera Johnson, Academic Director of Sustainability, Pratt Institute and Roy Koch, Provost, Portland State University gave inspiration to participants about the importance of integrating comprehensive sustainability education across institutional boundaries by encouraging faculty development and curriculum exchange.

The lunch panel *Uniting Higher Education and Communities for a Sustainable Future*, featured Savante Myrick, Mayor of Ithaca, NY, Peter Bardaglio, Senior Fellow, Second Nature, Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, and John Childers – President and CEO, Consortium of Universities (Washington, DC), and was moderated by Neil Kerwin, President, American University. The panelists addressed the question, “*How do we amplify and expand exemplary community development partnerships that advance sustainability by engaging higher education, business, and government?*”

## Working Sessions

### Working Session I: World Cafe

Mitchell Thomashow, Director, Presidential Fellows Program, Second Nature and President Emeritus, Unity College, facilitated the first working session of the day, inspiring an open-ended conversation regarding the main themes of the conference, organized around three converging areas of interest: preparedness, opportunity, and innovation.



Signatory Presidents brainstorm during the World Cafe

### Working Session II: Strategies for Federal Investment and Academic Integration of Sustainability

Guided group dialogue on how to catalyze presidential leadership to implement the recommendations of reports reflecting the year-long work of ACUPCC committees to provide strategic guidance and prospects for incorporating sustainability with federal investment, national educational leadership, and campus-wide academic integration.



Participants began to synthesize their work and the speakers ideas during the section working session

### Working Session III: Implementation, Next Steps, and Commitments

Participants discussed how to implement the next stage of higher education presidential leadership to advance climate action planning, sustainability, and economic vitality, and made commitments to do so on their campuses, addressing the following:

- What should the ACUPCC do in the next five years around this theme?
- What is the role of senior leadership in ensuring real impact?
- How do we maximize the effectiveness, stature and reach of the ACUPCC while accomplishing these objectives?



John Anderson, President of Alfred State College SUNY College of Technology, leads the final session

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Second Nature would like to thank the staff of American University for their partnership in hosting the event, Bon Appetit for providing sustainable and food for the event, and all attendees.

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