

Climate Resilience

Second Nature's Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments

It is becoming increasingly clear that climate leadership in higher education includes having the capacity to *respond & adapt* to changes in the climate while continuing to mitigate carbon emissions to avoid the worst damage to the climate system. The Climate & Resilience Commitments are a way for higher education institutions to address this challenge.

Why resilience? Why now? Why higher education?



Impacts are being felt – Many campuses are already experiencing increased extreme weather (such as Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy) and longer-term impacts (such as drought and increased heat events). Institutions face direct risks to their personnel, infrastructure, and operations from the impacts of climate disruption.



Action is underway – Many municipalities, particularly large urban areas, have already begun to plan for the impacts of climate disruption. This presents timely opportunities for campuses to collaborate locally and regionally but also risks higher education's expertise and interests being left out of the conversation through inaction.



Campus is a focal point of community – Higher education institutions play a unique role in their communities as convening spaces, sites of inquiry and discussion, and places of key physical infrastructure. Campuses may be called upon to play critical roles in times of need (such as serving as emergency shelter), and proactive community planning is key.



Intellectual resources – Higher education houses the scientific knowledge, and capacity to understand complex social issues that will be critical for addressing the impacts of climate change. Addressing resilience provides researchers and students with direct experience in addressing the complex challenges of society.



Demonstrating leadership – Cross-sector collaboration provides an opportunity for institutions to provide positive leadership and demonstrate the value of higher education to society in an era of budget cuts and anti-intellectualism.



Higher Education's Role

Second Nature's report on the role of higher education in adapting to a changing climate concluded that higher education institutions have a unique and critical role to play in preparing society through the integration of research, teaching, and action. Colleges and Universities are ideal for experimenting with and modeling solutions while also improving knowledge, design, and technology for future applications. This is why Second Nature launched the Climate and Resilience Commitments in October 2015, to engage and support higher education leadership in investing and organizing the sector's response to this opportunity and challenge. At the heart of these commitments is partnership with the community; resilience often includes social factors that are inherently a community-wide responsibility and are rarely confined to the boundaries of a campus.

Resources and Next Steps

Second Nature has resources to support Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments signatories in their implementation, including examples of campus-community collaborations, indicators of resilience, actions to enhance resilience, etc.

For questions about the Commitments, see [How to Join](#) or email commitments@secondnature.org

For questions on resilience, contact resilience@secondnature.org