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## Higher Education Institutions Lead With Distinction Towards Carbon Neutrality

Boston, MA (April 19, 2018) -- Colleges and universities across the country are being recognized as climate champions by Second Nature, a non-profit focused on accelerating climate action in and through the higher education sector. [Marks of Distinction](#) is a new initiative for the [Climate Leadership Network](#) that recognizes a select group of higher education institutions that set high-performance goals and demonstrate and report progress towards those goals.

"ASU has made it a priority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and those efforts are being recognized. We thank Second Nature and the Climate Leadership Network for their national leadership in raising awareness and recognizing institutions that are making a difference," said Michael M. Crow, President of Arizona State University, which received three Marks of Distinction.

For more than a decade, Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment signatories, all a part of the Climate Leadership Network, have shared their knowledge by developing climate action plans and submitting greenhouse gas inventories to a public [Reporting Platform](#). Until now, this information has never been used to recognize the accomplishments of individual schools.

With more than 175 diverse institutions in 39 states receiving Marks of Distinction in 15 categories, Timothy Carter, President of Second Nature notes, "Recognizing the progress of these select institutions will inspire further action as they lead by example in their communities and for their students. We commend the institutions' achievement and celebrate the hard work of many individuals who contribute to our shared goals."

Receiving both Honors Society and [We Are Still In](#) Marks of Distinction, Dianne Harrison, President, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and Chair of the Climate Leadership Steering Committee notes, "As with many initiatives, higher education is leading the way in communicating and inspiring positive public perception and change for good – this time, for a healthier environment. I am confident that validating climate achievement through the Marks of Distinction will further motivate other institutions to join our movement toward real, measurable climate change actions."

Progress is being made across all sizes and types of institutions, in very different geographic regions of the country. Colby and Middlebury Colleges have achieved carbon neutrality, and with several others marking that milestone soon. The University of Oklahoma at Norman is on track to meet their carbon neutrality goals by 2050, over with over a 50% current reduction in emissions from their baseline.

Cornell University is the only institution to receive a Mark of Distinction recognizing their goal to procure 100% renewable energy by 2030. Portland Community College, is also leading on innovative transportation solutions and received a Mark of Distinction that according to President Mark Mitsui will “help us recognize and amplify the substantive action taking place at PCC regarding reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In turn, this will lead to a virtuous cycle of validating the good work that made this recognition possible and inspiring further action.”

Mariko Silver, President of Bennington College, also notes the benefits of such an initiative. " The Marks of Distinction further amplify the power of this network by enabling us all to see clearly who among our peers is excelling in a variety of areas related to the climate commitments. Those who are excelling can share their successful approaches, too, with peers in the network. With these Marks of Distinction, each campus can more clearly describe its own progress and become a model for others."

A complete list of signatories and those earning Marks of Distinctions can be found at [secondnature.org](http://secondnature.org)

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#### About Second Nature and the Presidents’ Climate Leadership Commitments

Second Nature is committed to accelerating climate action in, and through, higher education. We do this by mobilizing a diverse array of higher education institutions to act on bold climate commitments, to scale campus climate initiatives, and to create innovative climate solutions. We align, amplify, and bridge the sector’s efforts with other global leaders to advance urgent climate priorities. The Presidents’ Climate Leadership Commitments are a signature program of Second Nature and include a Carbon Commitment to become carbon neutral, a Resilience Commitment, which focuses on climate adaptation and building community capacity, and a Climate Commitment that integrates both. The Climate Leadership Network comprises more than 500 colleges and universities in every state and the District of Columbia who have committed to take action on climate and prepare students through research and education to solve the challenges of the 21st century. Learn more at: [secondnature.org](http://secondnature.org).

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