Droughts, flooding, crumbling infrastructure, social unrest, volatile fuel prices. Renewable energy, ecological urbanism, responsive design, open civic data.

The themes of the day could not be starker in both the formidable peril and the creative promise of what the future has in store. As we move ahead into one of the most challenging and dynamic environmental eras humanity has ever known, we are stepping into wholly unknown spaces with uncertain outcomes. The hope of a positive collective future is a universal value that drives our work to repair these broken relationships with our global earth systems.

Since its founding in 1993, Second Nature has played a critical role in mobilizing higher education to move the needle towards the goal of this sustainable society. We created and currently oversee the largest voluntary carbon neutrality commitment in any sector in the United States. Millions of students have passed through these schools and this history has placed Second Nature in a key leadership position working with higher education to advance sustainability.

We believe the 2020 Strategic Plan represents a new, catalytic phase of Second Nature’s development. Anchored in clarified mission and vision statements, this plan sets out five key objectives designed to build broader and deeper levels of sustainability impact both on and off campuses. We recognize that one specialist or organization can’t solve these problems. The plan’s success is rooted in a renewed commitment to novel partnerships, collaborations, and interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving. The activities resulting from this plan will bring us together in innovative ways to creatively form solutions that not only work for today, but set us on an adaptive path to address the solutions we will need tomorrow.

We hope you will help us make this vision a reality,

Tim Carter
WHAT DEFINES US

We will strive to have our commitments to diversity, transparency, humility, innovation, and community be qualities that are said ABOUT us, not characteristics that we simply declare in this document. These values serve as our mirror as well as our lens for focused decision-making, internal organizational dynamics, and engagement with external stakeholders.

MISSION

Our mission is to proactively build a sustainable and positive global future through initiating bold commitments, scaling successful actions, and accelerating innovative solutions among leadership networks in higher education.

VISION

We envision humanity thriving through healthy, just, and sustainable living within a dynamically changing earth system. We see higher education playing a prominent leadership role in shaping research, learning, and communities that inspire and operationalize this positive future. Second Nature serves as a critical driver for leaders in higher education that commit to this responsibility.
HOW WE DID IT
Strategic Assessment Process

In 2013, Second Nature contracted with David Gardiner and Associates to complete a Strategic Assessment process, engaging internal and external stakeholders on Second Nature’s key strengths, challenges and opportunities. This Assessment identified four key opportunities that will lead to successful expansion, promotion, and advancement of this successful approach among higher education institutions and other institutions in society at large:

1. **The American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) is capable of much more.** While the ACUPCC has achieved significant results, it is capable of reaching more schools and of supporting and driving more action on each and every member campus.

2. **Institutions of higher education want to be more sustainable and need help in achieving their goals.** Colleges and universities want help in tackling a much broader array of sustainability issues – deeper cuts in emissions, greater capacity for climate adaptation, and better understanding of key tools such as finance and investment.

3. **Communities and corporations are also leading in sustainability.** Many communities and corporations are also demonstrating successful sustainability business models while recognizing the need for new leadership and technical skills in tomorrow’s workforce and the kind of innovation that is natural to higher education. Second Nature can partner with these other organizations to foster learning and inspire others to do more.

4. **Knowledge of the successful approach taken by Second Nature is limited, as is knowledge of the successful approaches being demonstrated in the individual colleges and universities.** Creating more awareness of the successes that Second Nature and its partners are demonstrating will more effectively drive significant sustainability achievements throughout higher education and society.
The Strategic Assessment resulted in a Strategic Framework that was adopted by Second Nature’s Board of Directors in May 2014. In September 2014, this Strategic Framework was reviewed and revised based on internal evaluation with senior staff. A facilitated strategic retreat was held in November 2014 with all Second Nature staff to present the results and receive input on these revisions. Finally, the Board of Directors approved the five strategic objectives anchoring the plan below at the December 2014 Board meeting.

We’ve included the projected outcomes, targets, and sample activities that follow from the high level objectives. The activities, in particular, are designed to be dynamic in response to what is or is not working as well as to changing external conditions. The objectives and targets are considered fixed, but we think it is important to remain nimble and responsive in our activities.

**Why these five?** In response to the assessed opportunities described above, the five objectives were structured to ensure that Second Nature and its programmatic offerings continued to be seen as the leading edge of what is possible within higher education. Three programmatic objectives are designed to complement one another, creating significant efficiencies for implementation. Two operational objectives serve improve critical support functions for the organization. Clearly measurable targets will drive the staff’s work plan development and provide accountability for success. The collective impact of the five objectives form a robust infrastructure that will support our decision-making, ensure sustainable growth, and efficiently advance the mission of Second Nature for the next five years.
THE FIVE OBJECTIVES

Strengthen Second Nature’s leadership network through enhancing, leveraging, and maturing the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment.

Why? In its eighth year, the ACUPCC, and its robust network of 680+ schools, needs ongoing refreshment and refinement in response to changing global contexts in order to maintain its catalytic character.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES
- (<1 yr) Evaluate the purpose, intent, and deliverables of the ACUPCC to ensure all the requirements are current and applicable
- (<1 yr) Assess compliance criteria to reflect appropriate activities necessary for meeting the spirit of the ACUPCC
- (<1 yr) Create a membership model for Second Nature that clearly articulates value proposition of the core commitments
- (<1-2 yr) Identify “stress points” and develop tools for various stages of compliance (e.g. financing, recruitment, education, etc)
- (1-2 yr) Highlight and disseminate best practices through a web portal (e.g. the Project Bureau) and comprehensive public relations / marketing strategy
- (1-3 yr) Leverage the network with non-higher education corporate and philanthropic partners for sponsorship and pilot project development

SAMPLE OUTCOMES
- ACUPCC signatory institutions will perceive the network as a thriving, growing entity with significant benefits for participation
- ACUPCC signatory institutions can understand and articulate the value of the network to non-signatories
- The ACUPCC will be seen as a living commitment, responsive to the cultural and educational contexts and signatories throughout the entire life cycle of the commitment
- Commitment compliance will carry a high honor amongst signatories
- Individual higher education institutions who are signatories to a commitment are receiving recognition and publicity for their actions

TARGETS
- 85% of signatories in full compliance by end of FY20
- 300 new carbon commitment signatories by end of FY20
- 300 new SN members by end of FY20
- 9 new signatory supporting resources by end of FY16
Diversify and integrate Second Nature’s core commitments with robust supporting activities.

Why? Climate action planning relies on both mitigation and adaptation for success. Designing and supporting complementary commitments of carbon neutrality and resilience allows for holistic climate leadership to be achieved.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES
- (< yr) Describe existing core commitments to include currently those branded as ARC and ACUPCC and map activities that support these commitments
- (<1 yr) In coordination with ACUPCC and ARC signatories, design and launch the Resilience Commitment
- (<1 yr) Rebrand and visually integrate core commitments all program areas with Second Nature visual identity and brand
- (<1-2 yr) Develop data and communications synthesis between carbon and resilience commitments
- (1-2 yr) Develop and support regional and affinity networks based on location, school size and type, and professional organizations
- (1 - 5 yr) In collaboration with institutional partners, create centers for data and research to support the core commitments

SAMPLE OUTCOMES
- Institutions participating in SN commitments and supporting activities will become globally recognized sustainability leaders by virtue of their SN affiliation.
- Second Nature’s commitments and supporting activities are viewed by participating institutions and external entities as a holistic suite of sustainability activities contributing to larger societal benefits beyond institutional boundaries
- Second Nature will be known for having an efficient and dynamic organizational structure and culture that encourages collaborative work across programmatic areas

TARGETS
- 800 new signatories by end of FY20 (500 non carbon signatories)
- Leadership surveys demonstrate 90% satisfaction with SN commitments by end of FY20
- Leadership surveys demonstrate 100% identification of SN as the organization supporting the commitments by end of FY16
- 75% of institutions are part of more than one commitment by end of FY2
Catalyze collaborative partnerships across institutions and sectors.

Why? Second Nature and its network of schools in higher education cannot move the global sustainability dial in isolation. We need shared strategic (and possibly non-traditional) partnerships to develop creative, novel initiatives for advancing sustainability goals.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES
• (<1 yr) Explore and test mechanisms, (e.g. the Project Bureau, Corporate Council) for regular engagement between corporate partners and SN
• (<1 yr) Develop targeted partner identification list best aligned with SN mission and goals
• (1-2 yr) Identify potential for collaborative activity schedule with national organizations representing higher education (AACC, NCSE, USGBC, NCAA, etc)
• (1-5 yrs) Connect institutions within the network with non-higher education corporate and philanthropic partners for sponsorship, research, and pilot project development
• (1-2 yr) Develop and support regional and affinity networks based on location, school size and type, and professional organizations
• (1-2 yr) Embed and highlight corporate partner projects and activities in SN strategic communications and dissemination

SAMPLE OUTCOMES
• Increased understanding of the role of partnerships in advancing collectively shared sustainability goals
• A clear understanding of the mutual benefit of SN partnerships and a resulting desire to increase partnership activities over time
• Increased clarity among constituents regarding SN’s role with and separate from its sister organizations
• Second Nature is recognized as a thought leader and critical partner in sustainability in higher education

TARGETS
• 3x increase in external grant revenue by end of FY20 from FY15 budget baseline
• 20 additional collaborative partnerships by FY20 from FY15 baseline
• 3x increase in jointly sponsored events by FY20 from FY15 baseline
• 85% satisfaction from corporate partners in their engagement with SN by 2020

This freestanding post-and-beam classroom was designed and is being built by students using local materials in the three-part, for-credit course Shelter and Sustainability at Colby-Sawyer College. The Sunshack will be one of the first commercial building in New Hampshire to integrate a straw-bale wall system. The building also features a passive solar design and a living roof. (courtesy of CSC)
Develop and implement strategic communications plan and integrated rebranding of Second Nature commitments.

**Why?** Currently, Second Nature communications are opportunistic and widely disparate across our distribution channels. Critical to our success is the ability to compellingly communicate shared and consistent messages through a variety of media to our target audiences.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**
- (<1 yr) Create a coordinated platform for SN that facilitates visual and written, communications, and incorporates ‘new’ media in effective ways
- (<1 yr) Develop a strategic communications schedule for the network and beyond including opportunistic articles and communications based on ‘reachable moments’ and windows of opportunity with key audiences
- (<1 yr) Research strategic communications and re-branding options of core commitments for better integration
- (<1 yr) Rebrand and visually integrate core commitments of all program areas with Second Nature visual identify and brand

**SAMPLE OUTCOMES**
- Second Nature is recognized as a thought leader and critical partner in sustainability in higher education
- There is increased interest in contributing to our communications from external experts
- There is widespread recognition, across multiple sectors, of the role that leaders in higher education are playing in sustainability fields
- Individual higher education institutions are receiving recognition and publicity for their actions based on the communications exposure through the network
- Second Nature’s publications are widely perceived to be some of the most accessible, thought provoking, and usable in this sector
- Foundations point to SN as an example of compelling communication of value and impact

**TARGETS**
- Baseline communication success metrics developed by end of FY15
- Brand recognition success metrics developed by end of FY15
- Revised membership model by end of FY16
Lead the creation of a cross-sector sustainability data and information exchange.

**Why?** Data supports informed decision-making and progress. Though significant amounts data are being collected by Second Nature, an open data exchange activated by priority climate and sustainability problems can serve as a solutions center for all stakeholders including those outside of our immediate network.

**ACTIVITIES**
- (<1 yr) In collaboration with a higher ed partner(s), explore opportunities for a shared data platform
- (<1yr) Build research team/project on indicators of success for sustainability and resilience and secure grant funding
- (< 1yr) Evaluate and integrate internal system of data collection and management at SN
- (<1-2 yrs) Generate program plan based on survey and assessment for pilot phase and data summit, and, with partners, create initial proposal for full information exchange
- (1-2 yrs) Identify and initiate pilot ‘nodes’ of information generation and exchange with volunteer schools/cities

**OUTCOMES**
- The higher educations community is viewed as a leading sector in the effective assessment of institutional and community sustainability progress and contributing to scalable information and knowledge systems
- SN will have an internal operations culture that is dynamic and responsive by improving resources and communications based on shared data
- SN is a recognized leader using data and information to connect federal, state, higher ed, NGO, and private sectors in the measurement of sustainability progress
- Second Nature signatories and key decision makers will understand the value of shared data in advancing sustainability initiatives

**TARGETS**
- Working groups on metadata/standards for sharing sustainability data (FY16)
- 2 pilot schools co-developing, with the private sector, the data platform (by FY17)
- 100% of the signatories have uploaded data into the reporting system by FY20 (greenhouse gas inventory emissions and resilience data)
- 60% of users have chosen to use the reporting data dashboard/interface to visualize their own and aggregated network data
- 80% of signatories view the reporting system as usable and beneficial
CONCLUSIONS

This 2020 plan is not designed to elevate the profile or merely improve organizational health of Second Nature. It is designed to get us closer to our vision of seeing higher education as a key catalyst for positive global change. This future is one that we shared with many in other sectors of society. We know that the collective action needed for significant social change takes leadership of the leaders in higher education and with help from partners, we think this change can be significantly realized in this critical moment in history.

We hope this plan inspires you to help us in this journey forward and demonstrates areas that others will see significant potential for jointly contributing to progress. We have many opportunities to engage with us in implementation of the plan and are thrilled to share those with you. We will continue to update and revise our strategy in response to successes and challenges we encounter over the next five years and this dynamic process will hopefully lead to greater accomplishments than we can even imagine at this point.

Thanks for your ongoing and future support of Second Nature.