

# Call to Action for Higher Education Leadership

## Guiding Principles for Accelerating Equitable and Just Climate Solutions

We, the undersigned leaders of colleges and universities, believe firmly in the power, potential, and imperative of higher education to shape the future of society. Not only are we deeply concerned about the increasing pace and intensity of global climate change and the potential for unprecedented detrimental impacts, we also believe that we can help advance necessary and just climate solutions through the strengths of our institutions.

For decades, leaders of colleges and universities across the United States and the globe have been taking climate action seriously. We have made long-standing commitments to decarbonize our operations, improve the resilience of our campuses and communities, and invest in climate solutions. Many of our institutions produce cutting edge climate science and solutions research that yields breakthrough technologies and deepen our understanding of climate solutions across the vast range of relevant disciplines. We have increasingly come to recognize the financial impact of climate risks in our endowment investment portfolios and the prudent opportunities to invest in climate solutions that responsibly steward the capital in our care and align with the mission of our institutions.

The best available science continues to demonstrate that these actions are not only necessary, but may be insufficient, creating greater urgency to innovate, scale, and accelerate progress. Collective actions that create transformative solutions are critically important. We, as higher education institutional leaders, share a commitment to act on this obligation. Additionally, climate change risks and impacts are unevenly distributed and put the greatest burden on marginalized and vulnerable populations. That is why climate solutions must be equitable, inclusive and serve the diverse array of voices and experiences that exist in society.

Therefore, we call on our colleagues in higher education around the world to lead by example and to catalyze cross-sector climate action with cities, states, countries, businesses, and other stakeholders with the following Guiding Principles:

- 1. Consistent with our sector's mission, expand educational opportunities for future generations of climate leaders with new academic majors, co-curricular programs, and community engagement.*
- 2. Review and refine our climate action plans to ensure our goals are consistent with benchmarks established by the best available science, reflect the urgency of the challenge, and emphasize inclusivity and equity. Mobilize institutional resources to invest in transformative climate solutions, demonstrate what is possible, and stimulate widespread market adoption.*
- 3. Leverage our role as anchor institutions and engaged members of our communities to drive solutions that serve all, especially those who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change.*
- 4. Account for the full, long-term costs of our institutional activities, including those that negatively impact people and the planet, and strive to measure, internalize, and avoid these costs to the greatest extent possible.*

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*5. Create applied research and/or educational initiatives that support our public sector's climate goals and explore enhancement opportunities that support the development of vibrant communities, economic prosperity, and social equity.*

*6. Host and participate in cross-sector climate activities that facilitate open exchanges of ideas and foster civil dialogue while striving to ensure all members of the community are represented.*

*7. Advocate for climate policies that support equitable and just climate solutions, consider climate impacts in the institution's goals at all levels of decision-making, and lend support to other leaders who are advocating for shared outcomes.*

*8. Consider ways to align endowment investments with scenarios for meeting science-based climate goals and transitioning to low-carbon economy by reducing climate risk in the portfolio, investing in inclusive climate solutions, and engaging with companies and the finance sector to accelerate equitable climate actions.*

In conclusion, we have taken action, but we resolve to do more. We believe leveraging all of our strengths as higher education institutions is critical to making this happen. We will help lead the nation in these efforts, and we urge other higher education leaders to join us in moving society towards a more sustainable, healthy, and prosperous future.

Sincerely,

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List as of 2/6/19

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