



Acceleration Fund

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nine (9) Colleges and Universities Receive Acceleration Fund Support for their Climate Projects

\$80,000 Total Awarded Across Two Categories

Cambridge, Massachusetts (April 21, 2022) - Nine (9) colleges and universities have been named as the awardees of the Third Round of the Acceleration Fund. [Second Nature](#), an NGO whose mission it is to accelerate climate action in, and through, higher education, announced the awarded schools during the 2022 Higher Education Climate Leadership Summit.

The awarded schools are:

- Cal Poly Humboldt (Arcata, California)
- California State University, Monterey Bay (Seaside, California)
- California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento, California)
- Chatham University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
- The University of Arizona (Tucson, Arizona)
- The University of California Los Angeles (Los Angeles, California)
- University of Illinois Chicago (Chicago, Illinois)
- University of Mississippi (Oxford, Mississippi)
- Virginia Wesleyan University (Norfolk, Virginia)

The [Acceleration Fund](#) is dedicated to supporting climate action activities driven by colleges and universities. The Fund supports projects that advance decarbonization and/or campus-community partnerships and [resilience](#) goals. Second Nature is especially excited to support projects that clearly articulate how the work relates to advancing principles of [climate justice and equity](#).

The Acceleration Fund was first introduced at the 2020 Higher Education Climate Leadership Summit. Funding for this Third Round was made possible by an anonymous foundation.

Acceleration Fund eligibility includes colleges and universities who are [Climate Leadership Network](#) signatories and/or [University Climate Change Coalition \(UC3\)](#) members, and are in good standing with their annual dues and reporting.

This year the schools were awarded in two different categories (making \$80,000 total awarded):

- **Tier One:** \$5,000 to support individual colleges/universities, or
- **Tier Two:** \$10,000 to support collaborative projects (colleges/universities serve as the primary applicant, plus at least one other college/university or a non-college/university organization)

*“When we first brought the Acceleration Fund initiative to fruition in 2020, there was no way for us to anticipate its sustained success two years later,” stated **Tim Carter, president of Second Nature**. “At Second Nature, we offer the colleges and universities within our network creative and unique opportunities to support their climate efforts. Thanks to philanthropic partners that have supported the Acceleration Fund now three years in row, this initiative has been one way for us to do just that. Congratulations to all of the colleges and universities awarded in this Third Round!”*

Each application received was reviewed by an esteemed and diverse review committee:

- **Tony Abbott**, Professor, Environmental Science Department, Stetson University
- **Josh Arnold**, Campus Energy Advisor with the Office of Sustainability, University of Wisconsin - Madison
- **Marshall Curry**, Program Manager, EPIC-Network
- **Amy Dvorak**, Sustainability Director, Lewis & Clark College
- **Brandy Alexis Espinola**, Climate Resilience and Sustainability Program Manager, Environmental Finance Center, University of Maryland
- **Yancey Fuche**, Director of Sustainability, Davidson College
- **Rachel Hodgdon**, President & CEO, International WELL Building Institute
- **Jia Hu**, Associate Professor and Associate Director, School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona
- **Trevor Ledbetter**, Director for the Office of Sustainability, University of Arizona
- **Brandon Morton**, Assistant Director of Sustainability, Operations, Dallas College
- **Ben Newton**, Environmental Sustainability Director, Central Community College
- **Anne Rogers**, Associate Director of the Office of Campus Sustainability, Georgia Institute of Technology
- **Jim Simon**, Director of Sustainability, Gonzaga University
- **Jill Smedstad**, Equity Coordinator for Sustainability and Basic Needs Resourcing Office, Southern Oregon University
- **Korin Tangtrakul**, Sustainability Manager, Sustainable Water Resource Engineering Lab, Drexel University
- **Second Nature Team Members:** Bridget Flynn, Chantal Madray, Shaina Maciejewski, Michele Madia, Steve Muzzy, Mia Sen, and Rachel Valletta

Following is more information about each of the awarded colleges/universities and their projects.

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT

Cal Poly Humboldt

Cal Poly Humboldt's Climate Action Plan 2.0 calls for the campus to incorporate resilient landscape design and the use of native, climate adapted plants into landscape planning for all new construction. Thanks to funding from the Acceleration Fund, The *Climate Resilient Landscaping Demonstration Project* will convert an area on campus with native plants adapted to the multiple stressors anticipated for our climate constrained future. This project will be a model for landscape planning, a source of pollen and nectar for native pollinators, and a site for campus as a living lab research and the study of traditional, biocultural relationships.

"Cal Poly Humboldt is committed to reducing its carbon footprint while protecting and enhancing the resilience of our local communities, in a way that prepares our students with skills and knowledge to navigate a climate constrained world. The Climate Resilient Landscaping Demonstration Project will be an example of that commitment, and we thank Second Nature and the Acceleration Fund for helping us make this project a reality." - Cal Poly Humboldt President Tom Jackson, Jr.



California State University
MONTEREY BAY

California State University, Monterey Bay

The California State University, Monterey Bay's Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is thrilled to be a recipient of the Second Nature Tier 2 Acceleration Fund. The funding we receive will greatly enhance the visibility and public scope of an existing partnership that we have with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC). Through this partnership, university classes from across the campus work directly with TAMC staff to further their Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs that aim to reduce traffic congestion and to reduce the number of vehicles used to both drop off and pick up children from schools across our county. In so doing, we engage hundreds of university students in projects whose aim is to increase the activity of our K-12 youth, reduce the carbon footprint associated with parents dropping off their children individually, enhance the safety and livability of neighborhoods near elementary schools through reduced traffic, and reduce the level of automobile emissions that our school children and the other populations living near schools experience. The funding we receive through Second Nature will allow us to publicize our efforts much more comprehensively through both the web and other social media channels and it will also allow TAMC to further the degree to which they highlight their accomplishments. We thank Second Nature for this wonderful opportunity!

"CSUMB is very pleased to be the recipient of funding from Second Nature's Acceleration Fund, Third Round. This project supports our university's successful EPIC-N program known as the Sustainable City Year Program in its efforts to enhance regional environmental sustainability and social justice. The work with our current partner, the Transportation Agency for Monterey

County, and their activities as a part of the Safe Routes to School Program will be greatly furthered through this additional support" - **CSUMB President Eduardo Ochoa**



California State University, Sacramento

Prof. Wayne Linklater in the Department of Environmental Studies at Sac. State is collaborating with Breathe California and United Latinos in research to measure and address the challenge posed by poorer air quality in neighborhoods of under-served minorities. The project will place student interns and air monitoring technologies with community groups in support of their efforts to understand and improve Sacramento's air quality. The research aims to unite the aims of environmental health and justice as additional motivations for a decarbonized economy.

"I am incredibly proud of Professor Linklater's collaboration with Breathe California and United Latinos to conduct research that will address the challenges posed by poorer air quality in underserved neighborhoods. This Anchor Initiative is another example of the important work being done by our faculty and students with community partners to advance knowledge and social justice while making our region a better, safer place for all." - **President Robert S. Nelsen**



Chatham University

The Higher Education Climate Consortium's mission is to actively collaborate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Pittsburgh's higher education institutions; its vision is to strengthen this region's position as a leader in climate action by achieving carbon neutrality. Current HECC members are Carlow University, Carnegie Mellon University, Chatham University, Community College of Allegheny County, Duquesne University, Pennsylvania State University's Pittsburgh Center, Point Park University, Robert Morris University and University of Pittsburgh. The Acceleration Fund grant from Second Nature will support 1 to 2 graduate student fellows who will help HECC advance as a collaborative over the next year through a variety of data, communication and/or engagement tasks.

"We're delighted to have received the Acceleration Fund which will help the work of our consortium of 10 colleges and universities who are partnering to help build a greener future for Pittsburgh and our region." - **David Finegold, President, Chatham University**



The University of Arizona

The Second Nature Climate Solutions Acceleration Fund grant to the University of Arizona will be used to create and implement the Desert Waters Climate Justice Internship, in collaboration with the local non-profit organization, Watershed Management Group. Through paid internships, to UArizona students of color and limited-income students, the program will provide students with training in rainwater harvesting techniques and workforce-relevant interpersonal and community engagement skills to address real world climate and environmental justice issues. These next generation leaders will apply their skills to mitigate environmental hazards, such as extreme heat waves, drought, and intense storm runoff, and work in collaboration with community members in limited income neighborhoods, supporting community members in resilience planning and project implementation.

"It is a strategic priority for the University of Arizona that our longtime leadership in climate research be matched by our actions to promote sustainability on campus and in our community. We are honored and grateful, especially as a land-grant university, to receive this support from Second Nature, which will give our students the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the community to create a greener, more equitable future for all." - University of Arizona President Robert C. Robbins



The University of California Los Angeles

The University of California Los Angeles will use the funds from this award to support the work of the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability (LARC), housed at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. LARC will partner with the LA County Department of Public Health to launch a social media campaign to help those most at risk for heat related illness to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. The campaign will center on the experiences of BIPOC communities and low-income residents, who are disproportionately exposed to heat and face worse health outcomes on average.

"UCLA has long been a leader in confronting global sustainability challenges through the teaching we provide, our innovative research and programs across the disciplines, and our engagement with our neighbors in southern California. Second Nature's award will allow the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, housed at UCLA, to partner with the LA County Department of Public Health to support residents in learning how to

*adapt to more frequent days of extreme heat.” - University of California Los Angeles
Chancellor Gene Block*



University of Illinois Chicago

The UIC project will support graduate student staffing to strengthen the partnership between Urban Growers Collective (UGC) and the University of Illinois Chicago. Through resource procurement, technical negotiations, and continued establishment of our relationship, UIC seeks best practices for identifying community partner needs, supplementing their existing work with university resources, and working collectively to advance university-community relationships to mitigate climate injustices. UGC is a strategic partner in the Green Era Renewable Energy and Urban Farm Campus, and the Healthy Lifestyle Hub in Auburn Gresham, a primarily Black neighborhood that has low socio-economic and community wellness indicators due to historic disinvestment. The goal of this nascent work is to develop a climate justice framework to provide the foundation for resilient and lasting models for university-community collaborations seeking to advance climate justice.

“We are excited to work with Second Nature in building and strengthening university-community partnerships for climate justice that break down barriers while supporting UIC’s climate commitments.” - UIC Chancellor Michael Amiridis



**THE UNIVERSITY of
MISSISSIPPI**

The University of Mississippi

The University of Mississippi will use the funding to strengthen community partnerships through M Partner, a community engagement initiative that aligns university resources with priority projects in partner communities. In Ecu, the funds will be used for a sustainable landscaping plan and logo design at the M.B. Mayfield Museum, which will feature native plants that Mayfield, an African American folk artist, used to mix his own paints. In Pontotoc, the funds will create a summer internship at the Pontotoc Farmers Market for a UM student to conduct outreach to the Spanish-speaking community, promote the use of SNAP benefits and matching incentives to purchase local produce, and study risks to the regional food system.

“We’re pleased how Second Nature’s Acceleration Fund initiative will help the University of Mississippi support and advance our community engagement work through our M Partner program. Our collaborations with community partners are incredibly important to us, and we look

forward to witnessing the impact this work will have on quality of life and how it will positively impact these communities and the state.” - Dr. Glenn Boyce, UM Chancellor



Virginia Wesleyan University

Virginia Wesleyan University will use the Acceleration funding to support internships with the Elizabeth River Project (ERP), a local organization dedicated to restoring our urban tidal estuary. Interns will work closely with ERP staff on projects that promote environmental justice and climate equity, using their Interactive Environmental Justice mapping tool to identify priority areas. Interns will work with local residents to promote voluntary participation in bay-friendly activities, distribute rain barrels, LED bulbs, and water heater insulation, and help to install shoreline restorations, native plantings and rain gardens in priority neighborhoods. These efforts will help to reduce the impact of tidal flooding, promote energy efficiency, add native plants, and increase marsh and oyster reef habitat along “living shorelines”. This grant will also set a foundation for closer collaboration between VWU and ERP to address local and regional environmental issues.

"Virginia Wesleyan University is delighted to receive an Acceleration Fund grant from Second Nature. We are committed to developing students to be dedicated to environmental justice efforts everywhere, but most especially at home at the Elizabeth River watershed. Located in Coastal Virginia, our efforts in the Elizabeth River watershed also impact the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean." - VWU President Scott Miller

Second Nature

Second Nature is committed to accelerating climate action in, and through, higher education. They 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. Second Nature aligns, amplifies, and bridges the sector’s efforts with other global leaders to advance urgent climate priorities. [Secondnature.org](https://secondnature.org)

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