# Second Nature

## Higher Education's Role
## in Advancing Climate Justice

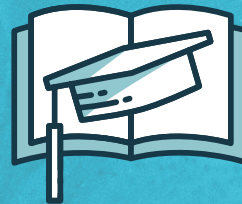December 2022

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# Executive Summary

Technical and scientific solutions alone are insufficient to tackle the impacts of the climate crisis. To be most effective, we, the higher education sector, must adopt a more holistic approach to climate action that addresses the social and political considerations that lie at the root of the crisis. Now more than ever, institutions of higher education are presented with an immense opportunity to assist in this shift and can do so by advancing **climate justice.**

Individual institutions are making important progress, but the higher education sector as a whole is far from meeting its full potential in advancing climate justice. This working paper provides an overview of climate justice, outlines models of leadership from various governments and universities, and provides recommendations for action based in part on the results from a stakeholder engagement process with internal staff, executive leaders, and college/university faculty and staff members across Second Nature's Climate Leadership Network and the University for Climate Change Coalition (UC3).

## Key recommendations by theme include:

### 1. Community Engagement

- Precede any community engagement efforts with honest internal reflection: is your institution the right entity to support community-led work?

- Community-based organizations are best situated to lead environmental/climate justice efforts, and this work is likely underway already. Focus on building community capacity as a committed partner, even if that means ceding control.

- Establish community partnerships formally where possible, ideally at the institutional level and over long time horizons.

### 2. Education and Training

- Seek opportunities to support and cultivate student training and leadership development in partnership with community organizations and climate justice advocacy groups.

- Support the creation of transdisciplinary student minors/certificates in climate justice and sustainability.

- Pursue the creation of affinity groups to further institutional staff and faculty training in climate justice topics.
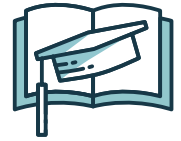
### 3. Research

- Explore community science initiatives and leverage participatory research frames to develop an approach to research that incorporates community members and addresses their needs.

- Likewise, leverage funding opportunities that incentivize community-oriented and applied research.

- University leaders and faculty alike should call for a greater valuing of community engaged scholarship by expanding incentives, including updating the tenure and promotion process, to reward those who adopt these community-oriented processes.

### 4. Internal Administration

- Focus on authentic leadership that provides guiding principles and a shared vision for climate justice implementation and prioritization.

- Support the creation of a career pipeline to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility among those working in climate/environmental careers.

- Create committees within the college/university that utilize all of the collaborative strengths of the institution and disperse workload and capacity restrictions.

These practical recommendations align climate justice principles with the higher education sector's shared values of preparing students as future leaders, committing to service and community, and pursuing innovation and excellence. In committing to advancing climate justice, colleges and universities pave the way for future progress in terms of implementation, collaboration, and community engagement.

Lastly, this working paper ends with a call to action. The climate crisis is upon us, and it requires the mobilization of every sector. The effects of a changing climate are felt disproportionately in frontline communities. The unevenness of these consequences reflect age-old disparities and discriminations in our society based on racial, social, and economic biases. This working paper urges higher education to pursue climate action holistically, with intentionality, and to prioritize equitable, just outcomes that advance climate justice.

*The climate crisis is upon us, and it requires the mobilization of every sector.*

# Introduction

*There is increasing evidence of adaptation that has caused unintended consequences... destroying nature, putting peoples' lives at risk or increasing greenhouse gas emissions. This can be avoided by involving everyone in planning, attention to equity and justice, and drawing on Indigenous and local knowledge.*

— Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022)

The IPCC makes it abundantly clear: technical and scientific solutions alone are insufficient to tackle the impacts of the climate crisis. To address the root of the crisis, a more holistic approach to climate action is necessary. A holistic approach includes viewing people and communities in their entirety, handling a complex intersection of factors that are derived from a wide array of social, political, and economic necessities. This approach is necessary to create climate solutions that address (and challenge) the social and political systems which lie at the root of the crisis (Williams, 2021). Advancing climate justice in climate action work enables this shift.

Higher education institutions can utilize their powerful mission of instruction, research, and service to advance climate justice (Dua et al., 2020). Through this mission, institutions provide learning opportunities that elevate the population, pursue research that advances the progress of human innovation, and perform service that pushes society to its highest ideals. This mission connects higher education to climate justice in that higher education can use its instruction to augment a climate justice commitment that would reorient all degree programs toward impact for the public good; use its research capacity to innovate new relations between community and climate adaptation; and use its commitment to service for "social innovations that strengthen community access to health care and sustain long-term collaborative relationships" (Boyle & Stephens, 2022).

With an awareness of ever-increasing climate threats, higher education is well positioned to advance its mission as being for the "public good" and assist in this global shift to center climate justice in climate action.

## Why Climate Justice?

### Climate justice is climate action.

From sea level rise to increasing heat indices and heightened exposure to climate disasters, climate change disproportionately impacts communities who have been marginalized and made vulnerable, including communities of color, and exacerbates existing social and economic inequities (US EPA, 2021; Lippincourt, 202). The transformative change needed to achieve a more resilient, equitable, and just society in which all can thrive means that mitigative and adaptive climate actions must address the systems and structures that created these injustices in the first place. Without intentionally addressing climate inequities, our work will sustain these inequities (guha, 2021). **Climate justice is climate action.**

### Climate justice is key to building campus-community resilience.

The resilience of any one campus is intertwined with that of the community in which it exists: it's challenging to be a resilient campus without also being part of a resilient community (Climate Resilience Background). However, the collaboration required to build community resilience — made possible only through committed, trusting relationships — may very well be precluded by fraught relationships resulting from historical or ongoing harm.

Consider the legacy of the 1862 Morrill Act, which dramatically redistributed 11 million acres of tribal lands from Indigenous peoples to form 52 land grant universities and was enforced by over 160 violence-backed treaties and land seizures (Lee & Ahtone, 2020). In modern day, institutions continue to contribute to the dis-

placement of primarily Black and brown communities through their physical expansion and gentrification of surrounding neighborhoods (Baldwin, 2021). One such example includes Columbia University's displacement of West Harlem. According to census data, "between 2000 and 2010, Manhattanville's Black and Latinx populations witnessed significant drops, by 22 percent and 9 percent respectively, while its white numbers exploded by 231 percent" (Baldwin, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative that higher education institutions consider these relationships between themselves and their surrounding communities.

Advancing climate justice requires that the relationship between equity, justice, and community resilience simultaneously hold a mirror to the past, along with acknowledging ongoing harms and holding higher education institutions accountable to the communities they find themselves embedded within. "Resilience is the ability of a system or community to survive disruption and to anticipate, adapt, and flourish in the face of change" (Climate Resilience Background). Climate justice further demands that institutions intentionally break the cycle of (re-)enforcing these inequities through their climate action efforts by seeking fair and equitable climate solutions that are in collaboration with surrounding communities (guha, 2021). In doing so, institutions can move away from extractive relationships with communities and toward reciprocal partnerships.

### Climate justice activates student leadership.

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in preparing students, communities, and future leaders to adapt to, and help solve, the climate crisis. Rising college/university-aged students demonstrate intense interest in social justice issues, civic engagement, and climate change/sustainability topics. This intense interest factors into school choice and can translate into powerful campus sustainability movements, such as fossil fuel divestment campaigns (Cohen, 2021). Activating this powerful student energy allows institutions, as cultivators of future climate leaders, to have an impact both locally and globally.

### The Next Generation of Climate Leadership.

Since 2006, Second Nature's Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments have offered the opportunity for campuses to boldly lead decarbonization efforts and

*Climate justice is climate action*

develop climate action plans (A Call for Climate Leadership). Later, recognizing the growing need to adopt an expanded definition of climate action, Second Nature introduced its Resilience Commitment and expanded organizational efforts to support member institutions in advancing campus-community resilience assessments to enhance climate action plans (Higher Education's Role).

In the face of tumultuous social, political, and environmental stressors, higher education institutions are once again presented with an opportunity for bold leadership to tackle the world's most pressing issues, including the systems and injustices that lie at the root of the climate crisis.

# Defining Climate Justice

Climate justice may encompass academic, practical, and activist definitions, and the term's application is evolving as it becomes more mainstream.

Broadly speaking, the concept of climate justice expands the treatment of climate change as a scientific, financial, and/or technical topic to include considerations of morality and justice. Climate justice is an intentional "human-centered approach" to understanding climate impacts and solutions, and aims to enhance equity and justice while reducing marginalization, exploitation, and oppressions (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2022; Sultana, 2022). To the climate action practitioner within the sector, climate justice demands that we not only seek solutions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but do so in a way that promotes advancing equitable social, health, and/or economic outcomes for everyone.

Climate justice is closely related to, but distinct from, environmental justice. While environmental justice typically addresses local or regional issues of air pollution, toxic waste sites, and water & soil contamination, climate justice is concerned with larger scale issues such as the global carbon budget, atmospheric temperatures, and sea-level rise (Parker, 2022). Each term also references its own grassroots social movement. The environmental justice movement draws its origins around organizing efforts in Black communities in the 1970s and 1980s (US EPA, 2015). The climate justice movement is commonly viewed as an outgrowth of the environmental justice

movement and finds its explicit origins in 1992 with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Climate Justice Alliance; Adams & Luchsinger, 2009).

Climate action plans (CAPs) offer a powerful institutional mechanism with which to practically pursue climate justice. What considerations does climate justice encompass within this context? Below we include the eight principles of climate justice prepared by Jenalee Kluttz, former **University Climate Change Coalition (UC3) Fellow** at the University of British Columbia (Kluttz, 2022). Importantly, Kluttz recognizes that an institution's response to climate change cannot be satisfied by climate action planning alone, but that it must be accompanied by activities and initiatives that are embedded across the full scope of the institution and that additionally address underlying structures and systems. These shared, overarching principles represent a useful starting point to inform CAPs and a collective understanding of climate justice implementation:

1. Climate justice recognizes the disproportionate risks, impacts, and burdens of the climate crisis.

2. Climate justice recognizes the disproportional impacts and burdens of efforts toward both mitigative and adaptive solutions.

3. Climate justice prioritizes justice that restores communities through the benefits and opportunities provided by climate action.

4. Climate justice requires justice that is representational.

5. Climate justice requires taking both responsibility and initiative.

6. Climate justice includes multispecies justice.

7. Climate justice requires acting with the urgency of those who are worst impacted and most at risk for climate vulnerability.

8. Climate justice requires being cognizant of not only the present moment, but also the future.

Note that "vulnerable" communities are not inherently so: they have been made more vulnerable by existing systems of marginalization, exploitation, and oppression such as the historical practices of redlining and land expropriation. These policies reflect a broader history of discrimination and disempowerment that Black,

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Indigenous, and people of color experience in their civil, political, and environmental lives. Climate justice must address these diverse facets by recognizing the disproportionate impacts of climate effects on these communities, connecting the dots between social and racial injustice, and incorporating systems-scale solutions (Osborne & Prince, 2022).

Approaching climate action planning holistically, with an eye towards advancing climate justice, can represent a transformative opportunity for institutions of higher learning to begin rooting out extractive, oppressive relationships with climate vulnerable communities and in their place cultivate mutually beneficial relationships. **By addressing histories of social and racial injustice and shifting power to communities, higher education institutions can help craft a more resilient, equitable, and just future for all.**

*By addressing histories of social and racial injustice and communities, higher education institutions can help craft a more resilient, equitable, and just future for all.*

# Climate Justice Leadership Across Government and Higher Education

## Actions Across Levels of Government

The movement to advance climate justice is growing across sectors, including government. Below is an overview of three such examples stemming from city, state, and federal governments. Each model includes an explicit tool for advancing justice initiatives – including a racial equity toolkit, community engagement requirements, and proportional benefits benchmarking – which can be replicated within an individual academic institution.

### Cleveland Climate Action Plan:

**A racial equity tool embedded in sustainability planning**

In addition to addressing traditional sustainability considerations like waste, energy, transportation, and water quality, Cleveland, Ohio's **2018 Climate Action Plan** (CAP) addresses four cross-cutting priorities: Social and Racial Equity; Good Jobs, Green Jobs; Climate Resilience; and Business Leadership. Cleveland's CAP focuses on racial equity as a way to intentionally combat false notions that low-income communities and communities of color are not concerned with environmental protection, as well as address compounded inequities related to race.

"To ensure equitable approaches to climate action planning, the City includes a Racial Equity Tool within its CAP." (Cleveland Climate Action Plan, 2018, pg. 2)  The purpose of the **Racial Equity Tool** is to ensure a "just distribution of the benefits of climate protection efforts and [to alleviate] unequal burdens created by climate change." "This Tool can be used prior to decisions related to policy, planning, programming, and budgeting within city government and other institutions seeking to prioritize racial equity and address the "larger structural forces of the systems that perpetuate both climate change and inequity" (Cleveland Climate Action Plan, 2018, pg. 2).

The Cleveland CAP Racial Equity Tool helps "guide [practitioners] through the process of recognizing inequities and the conditions under which they can thrive, as well as the possible solutions and environments that would mitigate negative effects and enhance positive results" (Cleveland Climate Action Plan, 2018, pg. 8). Tools like this help practitioners 1) analyze climate action objectives and their corresponding suite of actions and 2) aid in the development of implementation strategies. Racial equity tools can be adapted to diverse institutional contexts, including higher education. One application might inform the implementation of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education "**Framework for Advancing Anti-Racism Strategy on Campus**" (NADOHE, 2021).

While the racial equity tool is not unique to **Cleveland's CAP,** it does provide a specific application of these considerations to climate action topics.

**FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:**

See also the City of Portland/Multnomah County's approach to incorporating equity into their **2015 Climate Action Plan** (Williams-Rajee and Evans, 2016).

For a broader overview of how cities are operationalizing justice in their planning, see recent analyses from **Boston University** (Diezmartínez, 2021).

For more case studies, visit **Second Nature's Climate Justice webpage** for examples from higher education and city climate action planning processes that incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice principles.

# Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act:

## Comprehensive internal agency requirements and continual community engagement

From the State of Washington comes an additional model for implementing justice principles in the form of a statewide mandate. In the 2019-2021 biennial operating budget, a proviso directed the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities to convene and staff an Environmental Justice Task Force. The Task Force was required to recommend strategies for incorporating environmental justice principles into future state agency actions across Washington. As a result of this proviso, the Senate in the State of Washington passed the **Healthy Environmental for All (HEAL) Act** in 2021. **This working paper includes this example for its focus on community engagement and for its thoroughness of implementation of the directive throughout its agencies.**

The legislation includes directives that cover the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Ecology, Health, Natural Resources, and Transportation, as well as the Puget Sound Partnership. The legislation directs that each department must comply with specified environmental justice requirements concerning agency activities. Useful for a climate action practitioner is that the legislation provides an example of how higher education could implement justice priorities in each of its own departments. These same departments represent potential collaborators on localized climate justice initiatives. Each covered agency must include an environmental justice implementation plan within the agency's strategic plan by January 1, 2023. **This plan must include four components:**

1. goals and actions;

2. metrics to track and measure accomplishments;

3. methods to provide equitable access and ensure nondiscrimination; and

4. strategies to ensure compliance with existing federal and state laws and policies related to environmental justice.

Importantly, the HEAL Act requires that each covered agency create, adopt, and implement a community engagement plan. In considering any significant action initiated after July 1, 2023, a covered agency must conduct an environmental justice assessment as a metric for continued community engagement. Further, covered agencies must develop a consultation framework in coordination with Tribal governments. These key elements highlight how the law requires the continued prioritization of environmental justice issues and allows room for continuous community engagement.

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**FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION:**

See other state models from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, which each contribute essential considerations for climate justice practitioners.

New Jersey's **Global Warming Response Act** highlights overburdened communities and permitting, while Massachusetts' **An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy** model highlights historic environmental pollution, and Rhode Island's **Act on Climate** creates enforceable emissions goals.

## Justice40:
### Proportional benefits benchmarks

In January 2020, the Biden Administration announced its intent to center environmental justice throughout federal agencies. To secure an equitable economic future, the Administration recognized that the United States must ensure that environmental and economic justice are critical considerations in governing. That means investing and building a clean energy economy that creates well-paying union jobs, turning disadvantaged communities — historically marginalized and overburdened — into healthy, thriving communities, and taking robust actions to mitigate climate change while preparing for its impacts across rural, urban, and Tribal areas.

The **Justice40 Initiative** was created to ensure that 40 percent of the "overall benefits of certain federal investments" across key categories reach communities made structurally disadvantaged. The key investment categories include climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, clean water, workforce development, and remediation of legacy pollution. In total, hundreds of federal programs, representing billions of dollars in annual investment — including programs funded or created in the **2022 Inflation Reduction Act** — are being reimagined and transformed to maximize benefits to communities made structurally disadvantaged.

This benchmark of committing 40 percent of resources and benefits can be replicated at institutions, at a range appropriate, to address diverse institutional priorities, budgeting, and programming.

City, state, and federal governments are beginning to leverage their powerful institutional oversight to advance environmental and climate justice. Racial equity tools have proven to be a useful intervention at the city level as in the City of Cleveland example. The HEAL Act in Washington and comparable efforts in MA, RI, and NJ offer examples of how state-level policy can thoroughly elevate the importance of community engagement in finding environmental and climate solutions. Finally, the Justive40 Act offers just one policy lever – that of proportional benefits – that can be replicated elsewhere irrespective of jurisdiction or institutional reach to ensure policy impacts reflect priorities.

*...the United States must ensure that environmental and economic justice are critical considerations in governing.*

# Actions Across the Higher Education Sector

Higher education institutions are making progress on advancing climate justice work in different ways. Below are three models from the Climate Leadership Network and the University Climate Change Coalition (UC3). These models include one from a large state system, one from a large, urban community college, and one from a large, urban public university. Each of these three examples offers its own approach to prioritizing on- and off-campus communities at greatest risk of climate injustices. In doing so, each example is a demonstration of authentic climate justice leadership.



## University of California:
**A Framework for JEDI-Centered Climate Resilience Planning**



## Portland Community College:
**Accountability, Equity, and Climate Justice Commitments Driving a Climate Action Plan**



## University of British Columbia:
**Recommendations for Engaging on the Climate Emergency**

# University of California:
## A Framework for JEDI-Centered Climate Resilience Planning

As the name implies, the University of California's (UC) **Framework for JEDI-Centered Climate Resilience Planning** is a planning document guiding UC campuses on how to integrate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) into climate resilience planning. Designed for implementation across multiple UC campuses, it is included here as an example of how significant scaling might be achievable via university system-wide efforts.

The Framework is predicated upon the assumption that a university campus is both a system and a community, a center of gravity that draws students, faculty, and personnel from far and wide. The resilience of any one campus, in turn, is linked to the strengths and vulnerabilities of this broader community and its members when they are both on and off campus. The UC Framework centers JEDI as a way to deliberately prioritize the most marginalized and at-risk groups, to ensure that they are included in the resilience planning process and benefit from its outcomes.

The Framework further takes the position that because the root causes of climate injustice also increase a population's exposure, sensitivity, and vulnerability to climate change, no institution can effectively tackle the climate crisis, or achieve sustainability or resilience, without addressing environmental justice.

**The Framework articulates eight key steps to implement the above-mentioned concepts in close relationship with surrounding communities, complete with clear Key Steps and Tasks.** These key steps include:

1. Establish the Team, Scope, and Baseline
2. Identify Vulnerable On-Campus Populations
3. Identify and Engage Stakeholders
4. Develop a Shared Vision and Guiding Principles
5. Identify Climate Impacts
6. Analyze Vulnerabilities
7. Identify and Prioritize Solutions
8. Move From Planning to Implementation

These steps can be useful to any institution approaching new planning work. Because they are designed for implementation across a university system, these steps are adaptable to multiple, diverse contexts. Applying these resilience planning principles with a simultaneous eye towards climate justice helps bring the elements of climate science into conversation with human-centered approaches of JEDI. Prioritizing the needs of structurally vulnerable and frontline communities, while also privileging these groups in any outcomes or benefits - shifts this approach from traditional resilience planning to climate justice-informed resilience planning, or resilience planning that centers climate justice.

# Portland Community College:
## Accountability, Equity, and Climate Justice Commitments Driving a Climate Action Plan

While a university system may have greater resources available for resilience planning efforts, pursuing justice initiatives can happen at many different scales and levels of capacity. Portland Community College (PCC) demonstrates how implementing justice work through climate action planning can occur within a community college context.

The development of **PCC's Climate Action Plan** reflects the college's mission and core strategic theme to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice across its campuses and centers, and the many diverse communities it serves. The Plan opens with a Land Acknowledgement, part of which is included here as a model for leadership in accountability for past harms: "By bringing attention to [local colonialist] history, PCC brings accountability to its climate justice work. It is an active commitment that includes supporting Indigenous sovereignty; promoting honest dialogue around race, racism and colonization; and action to end systemic oppression by interrupting white supremacy culture in the many ways it manifests, degrades and dehumanizes" (PCC, 2021, pg. 1).

**PCC established the following equity and climate justice commitment goals to inform their planning process:**

- Acknowledge the role environmental racism and the impact inequitable funding of climate solutions play in today's existing conditions for marginalized communities.

- Prioritize historically marginalized and oppressed voices in the decision-making process.

- Support students in having a voice in the regional discussion on climate change and resiliency.

- Address how risks from climate change impact equitable student success.

- Foster place-based equity.

- Advance racial and social justice through climate action.

By centering community engagement, PCC intentionally seeks to address power dynamics in their decision making process, a central tenet of any justice work. By 2026, PCC aspires to be an anchor institution in advancing sustainability and climate justice in the broader Portland community (PCC, 2021).

# University of British Columbia:

## Recommendations for Engaging on the Climate Emergency

In January 2021, the University of British Columbia (UBC) released its **Climate Emergency Engagement: Final Report & Recommendations**, which outlines the university's response to the climate emergency through a justice lens. This third example details the meaning of **"embedding a lens of climate justice"** and delves into recommendations about what climate justice on UBC's campus could/should look like. Some of their detailed recommendations include:

- Prioritize BIPOC students by emphasizing community engagement.
- Demonstrate community leadership by leading with climate justice.
- Expand educational opportunities and resources on climate justice by incorporating community feedback gained from their engagement.

The UBC Climate Emergency Engagement Recommendations provide a holistic approach to engagement, leadership, and education. The recommendations consider past and ongoing harms, extend considerations to all communities impacted by a university's activities, and acknowledge the "multiplier effect" of extractive industries. CAPs typically focus on internal operations, however UBC pushes the practitioner to consider how internal operations can be bolstered by community/stakeholder engagement, research, and student involvement. Framing the conversation around emergency responsiveness allows the UBC plan to be embedded within existing resilience considerations.

These brief examples of planning efforts at higher education institutions demonstrate how some are embedding climate justice into their processes and plans. From Portland Community College centering climate justice in their action planning, to the University of California's eight-step process towards JEDI-centered climate resilience, there are many ways to incorporate climate justice in climate action planning on campuses. **Increasingly, colleges and universities are connecting their responsibility to students with the resilience of the campus and surrounding community.**

# Stakeholder Engagement Findings and Recommendations for Action

While the examples above highlight important aspects of climate justice leadership, the higher education sector as a whole is not yet meeting its full potential in this work. In many instances, college/university practices actively hinder progress on climate justice, particularly as it pertains to centering and empowering surrounding communities that have been marginalized and made vulnerable through past and present systemic injustices.

Opportunities to address this need abound. The following perspectives and recommendations, informed in part by a stakeholder engagement process (see **Appendix B**), provide actionable steps through which individual institutions could advance climate justice in climate action planning and/or parallel strategic planning efforts at the institution/system level.

## The findings are organized into four categories:

**Community Engagement**

**Education and Training**

**Research**

**Internal Administration**

# 1. Community Engagement

The substantial role colleges/universities play in their surrounding communities cannot be overstated. Utilizing the wellspring of their academic expertise, financial resources, and convening power, higher education institutions are well suited to support engagement activities that simultaneously bridge the campus-community divide and directly shift the power to the people in the community in which they reside to create greater agency and build stronger relationships.

## Key Finding:

Campus-community partnerships are lacking: Higher education institutions are not always viewed as trusted partners by community members surrounding their campus. There exists a need to build relationships and trust with these community members, as well as a need for those success stories to be shared among climate action practitioners.

## Recommendations:

1. Internal reflection: A "just transition" describes the transition toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy that maximizes the benefits of climate action while minimizing hardships for workers and their communities (Just Transition Center). Since a just transition requires new ways of relation, the first step is reflection and evaluation. Important screening questions during this process include: *"Are we the right entity to support this community-led work? Does the community want our support?"*

Consider carefully your realistic level of commitment. Consider what your organization seeks to gain from community partnerships and climate justice planning. Deeper engagement is more resource intensive, but ensures stronger outcomes and relationships rooted in reciprocity. The **Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership** is one useful framework for understanding your team's/institution's orientation towards community work, and provides crucial reflection questions before beginning this process.

2. Support community-led efforts and partner with local organizations already involved in environmental justice and climate justice. Higher education institutions can back community-led processes in important ways. Many techniques are employed to help build community capacity in order to address environmental issues and they range from lesser to greater levels of engagement. These techniques include (Reproduced from Freudenberg et al. 2011):

A. **Technical Assistance -** Tailored support that enables community participants to gain information or skills to solve problems or to participate more effectively in decision-making processes.

B. **Training and Technology Transfer -** Community participants gain knowledge, skills, competencies, or technologies that enable them to participate in assessing and remediating environmental hazards and engage in relevant policy deliberations.

C. **Community Organizing/Social Action -** Community mobilization and organization to enable a disadvantaged segment of the population to make demands on the larger community for increased resources and more equitable policies.

D. **Empowerment Approaches -** Process by which individuals, communities, and organizations gain power and mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment to improve equity and quality of life.

E. **Authentic Participation Process -** Participation processes that improve community capacity by getting people involved early, providing them with information and resources for full participation, and ensuring that outcomes reflect their participation.

F. **Community-Based Participatory Research -** A research process in which community residents participate in selecting issues, designing studies, interpreting findings, and presenting results to policymakers.

G. **Direct Community Change Strategies -** Higher education institutions pursue policy advocacy, media advocacy, litigation, or other direct efforts in support of communities (Williamson, 2022).

### 3. Seek institutional level, long-term community commitment.

Community organizations don't need or want "parachuting" from the university. A university should approach community partnerships fully transparent about their long-term commitments and be able to determine the duration of their community engagement as well as practical methods for securing the relationship despite the vagaries of grant funding cycles.

• The **Morris Model** is a multi-year, cross-sector partnership that has united the University of Minnesota at Morris with the City of Morris, surrounding counties, hospital and public school systems, and area businesses for over ten years. Though not explicitly centered on justice initiatives, the Morris Model is emblematic of a long-term, reciprocal relationship cultivated between university and community partners.

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# 2. Education & Training
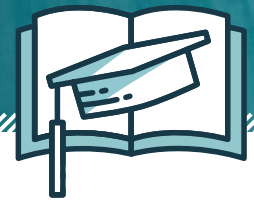
Providing curriculum support is essential to broaden the adoption of climate justice in climate action planning. Examples of climate justice scholarship in curricula are mentioned above. As students learn about the benefits of being better stewards of the environment they also engage in the benefit of learning about environmental and social justice. Climate justice education and training advances the mission and role of higher education by providing an opportunity for the direct application of climate justice principles. Equity/justice-informed education is foundational to fostering opportunities for student leadership, while providing an entry point for like-minded students to gain insight, learn, practice, and build connections crucial to furthering an investment in a climate-just future.

Climate justice-informed education can be shared by all disciplines. Higher education faculty are already taking on the mission of incorporating climate justice into their scholarship and this progress can be amplified within individual institutions by engaging students in this teaching and research continuum. Partnerships across a variety of disciplines to co-create climate justice curricula will strengthen the relationship between student engagement and climate action planning on campuses.

## Key Findings:

**1. "More and better" curriculum needed:** Many stakeholders identified a need to improve and expand curriculum that incorporates climate and social justice, particularly to non-sustainability majors. This would help reinforce higher education's mission rooted in service, climate and social justice concepts, and make curriculum accessible to non-majors.

**2. Barriers to access exist for students and trainees:** There are financial barriers that exclude lower-income students from participation in climate and social justice initiatives. There is limited access to research & career pathways that scholars can utilize for tenure and becoming a researcher.

**3. Too few opportunities for student leadership exist:** Stakeholders feel they lack the training, resources, and/or capacity to empower student leaders around climate action/justice and provide them with career pathways, but maintain a strong desire to do so.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Support/Cultivate Student Leadership.

Seek partnership with climate justice advocacy groups for student training (internships, placements, etc.) and leadership development opportunities. This effort will additionally grow institutional relationships and bolster climate justice engagement with on-the-ground organizations.

A. The **HBCU Climate Change Consortium**, co-led by the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and Texas Southern University, supports a network of HBCU faculty and students from climate-vulnerable populations to participate in domestic and international climate events. The Consortium's annual conference "[bridges] the gap between theory and experience" by uniting university audiences directly with environmental justice and community residents.

### 2. Create Affinity Groups.

Empower faculty and interested parties to create initiatives around curriculum.

A. The **Teaching Learning Center** at Harvard University is a network that convenes Affinity Groups around shared teaching and learning interests and professional objectives. Harvard affiliates are welcome to join Affinity Groups that support: learning design, research informed teaching and learning, and data & analytics. These groups provide examples of how, when supported and institutionalized, collaboration and organizing among faculty (outside of the classroom and across disciplines) can provide a means to more fully integrate climate in curriculum development.

## 3. Create Student Minors/Certificates for Climate Justice-Related Work.

Offer opportunities for students to gain certification from across majors/disciplines. These minors/certificates add incentives for students to pursue sustainability education while gaining a skillset they can market while satisfying degree requirements.

A. The **Lehigh University's Environmental Justice Certificate** offers an interdisciplinary lens through courses across environmental science, political science, sociology, African American studies, women and gender studies, and anthropology. Through this certificate, students are equipped for careers in environmental policy that examine the built and natural environments' relationship to economic and racial inequities.

B. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's **Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Climate Justice** includes courses across the Department of Geography, Environment, and Sustainability and the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. The certificate prepares students to work in emerging climate careers with the tools to analyze social and ecological systems through technical and cultural understandings.

C. The Adelphi University's **Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Justice for Social Workers** addresses the effects of climate change on historically marginalized populations. Students explore multilateral strategies and interventions to foster resilience across individuals, communities, and the broader ecologies.

D. The University of Montana's **Environmental Justice Certificate** provides courses across the social sciences and humanities to build the capacity of students to analyze and develop innovative solutions to "domestic and international environmental inequalities and injustices." With topics in Tribal sovereignty, African American histories, feminist theory, and Earth ethics, the certificate provides students with diverse approaches and methodologies to advance equitable frameworks in sustainability.

E. The University of Florida **Environmental Justice and Policy Minor** "offers an interdisciplinary framework for examining how disparities of class, race, gender, and organizational capacity interact with access to a safe and healthy environment." The minor prepares students for careers in policy and research in the environmental sector through environmental conflict management, organizational capacity building, and systems analyses of environmental impacts.

# 3. Research

Developing analysis that converges the research agendas of multiple stakeholders will reinforce the feedback loop between current research development on climate justice and its applicability towards climate action planning. The recommendations below demonstrate ways to pursue community-centered research, important examples of research funding, and advocacy around faculty incentives to drive this research.

Developing metrics to measure progress made toward advancing climate justice and bolstering practices of participatory led research are two ways cutting edge research can support climate justice development. Additionally, as powerhouses of research innovation, higher education institutions can provide incentives for climate justice specific research agendas. Offices of Grant Development should prioritize and incentivize grant proposals that spotlight climate justice concerns.

## Key Finding:

**Funding incentives for faculty research are needed:** Stakeholders reported limited funding available to advance applied research, including community-based initiatives.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Explore Community Science Initiatives.

Utilize participatory research frameworks that invert the typical power dynamic of researchers originating research questions instead of creating research agendas in collaboration with community members.

A. The American Geophysical Union's **Thriving Earth Exchange** (TEX) supports environment and sustainability projects rooted in community science. The TEX model advances high-impact environment and sustainability projects by connecting community leaders with scientists and researchers around community-defined problems, and elevates communities as decision-makers.

B. Outside of established programs like TEX, pursuing community science initiatives can be jump-started by seeking partnerships with boundary organizations who have existing community relationships. Science and technology centers and museums are ideal facilitators of this effort; see the **Association for Science and Technology Centers'** approach to community science.

### 2. Seek funding opportunities that incentivize community-oriented & applied work.

Increasingly, federal funding agencies are recognizing and rewarding the importance of applied work, in addition to original research. Some examples include:

A. The National Science Foundation's (NSF) **Convergence Accelerator** program funds multidisciplinary research focused on "use-inspired and application-oriented" research with high potential for long-lasting societal impact.

B. More broadly, NSF's portfolio of **Broadening Participation in STEM** includes funding opportunities that reduce barriers to entry for historically marginalized participants and promote strategic partnerships and alliances through the support of community science.

### 3. Update and expand faculty rewards for community-engaged scholarship.

The tenure and promotion process acts to disincentivize community-engaged scholarship, favoring instead highly specialized research paths with short-term outputs. University leaders and faculty should call for a greater valuing of community-engaged research and establish clear policies for recognizing this work.

A. To reward community-engaged scholarship, universities should consider explicitly incorporating language about community engagement into institutional/departmental policies for each faculty role; explicitly define and reward the products of community scholarship; and/or clarify how the impact of this work is assessed (Saltmarsh et al., 2021).

# Climate Justice Scholarship:
## New Areas of Inquiry & Curricular Collaboration

Second Nature's stakeholder engagement process revealed the need for more, deeper engagement across campus departments, as well as a call for further scholarship. Below are three lenses or fields (of many possibilities) within academic thought that have contributed to interdisciplinary scholarship and link the study of climate justice and climate action.

Each of these three fields – **Black Ecology, Environmental Political Theory, and Critical Environmental Justice Studies – represent possible entry points for climate action practitioners to further collaborative research and support in climate justice.** Though climate solutions are commonly sought from the natural and physical sciences, the social sciences and humanities are essential areas of inquiry to explore curricular responses and climate solutions.

**Black Ecology** "provides a way of historicizing and analyzing the ongoing reality that Black communities… in the African Diaspora are most susceptible to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, subsidence, sinking land, as well as the ongoing effects of toxic stewardship" (Roane and Hosbey, 2019). The structural analysis about the ongoing climate vulnerabilities of Black communities connects ideas of justice to climate change. To accomplish its analysis, Black Ecology brings together the disciplines of Black Feminism, Geography, History, and Environmental Studies.

**Environmental Political Theory** has deepened its engagement with disciplines in the Humanities such as History in order to ask questions about ecological destruction and neocolonialism. The geologic epoch of the Anthropocene offers a useful lens to climate action practitioners as it helps frame understanding of the climate problem as man-made and influential on all the life systems (human, animal, planet, etc.) on Earth. Climate action plans can also operate from this perspective to include plant adaptations, to think comprehensively about community resilience, and to consider how justice and historical colonialism might influence current climate vulnerability.

**Critical Environmental Justice & Critical Climate Justice** build off the intellectual engagements of the environmental justice movement to consider contemporarily how the analyses of Ethnic Studies, Political Ecology, and Critical Race Theory influence our understandings of power and our environments. Pellow's (2017) *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* is a key text within this discipline. The text is important to climate justice practitioners as environmental justice is connected to current social movements. In making those connections, Pellow reveals how ecological injustice, experienced all over the world, is connected to social injustice, not a separate sphere of resistance. Additionally, Farhana Sultana's (2022) article *Critical Climate Justice* offers interventions into climate justice by forwarding an intersectional feminist analysis of accountability and power relations that expand the frame of climate justice studies.

# 4. Internal Administration

Taking action on climate justice has implications not only for how a university or college interacts with external partners, but also for the internal organization of a university or college. Investing in the internal relationships between university departments will, in return, enhance the ability of campus staff to effectively manage their resources and engage their capacity to implement climate justice principles efficiently. The recommendations here focus on staff diversity, greater institutional collaboration, and the balance between diversity goals & outcomes.

## Key Findings:

**1. Diversity among university staff, faculty, leaders remains limited:** University staff, faculty, and leadership do not typically reflect the diversity of the student population, including in sustainability offices. Hiring does not adequately build diverse staff pools.

**2. Sustainability office resources are limited:** Justice-oriented work is time consuming and often stakeholders struggle with balancing their capacity and the urgency of the issue.

**3. There is a call to integrate climate justice across institutional offices:** Stakeholders realize that there should be greater administrative integration across campus offices, such as between DEI offices and sustainability offices, to advance climate justice. Similarly, practitioners highlighted a need for climate justice priorities to find greater integration into high-level Strategic Planning and executive-level advisory decision-making.

**4. Stakeholders desire authentic institutional commitments:** Stakeholders desire more authentic engagement, and recognize higher education's profit model as at odds with climate justice principles of equity. Stakeholders reflected on a discrepancy between the higher education sector's stated commitments to DEIAJ and follow-through.

1 - See intersectional environmentalism. Office of Sustainability at Princeton: "Draft Environmental Justice Framework"  https://sustain.princeton.edu/about/environmental-justice

## Recommendations:

### 1. Focus on authentic leadership.

A. The relationship between inner thought and outward action should mirror the process of internal organizing and external partnerships.
- Higher education institutions should consider how their internal policies around decision-making, pay equity, and diversity also reflect the elements of justice they are promoting in their community partnerships.[1]
- Additionally, climate justice initiatives can be labor intensive and will require vertical as well as horizontal buy-in. Understanding the internal "why" for your institution will help guide your organization on what to expect from centering climate justice (Climate Justice Case Studies; Talking with U of M, 2021).

B. Understanding the context for the implementation of climate justice is important for authentic leadership. For some institutions, climate justice planning is a response from student leadership. For others the charge comes from the changing context of higher education or as a response to static college dynamics. Whatever the cause, understanding this relationship will help structure why your institution is engaging with climate justice programming (Ono & Nosek, 2021).

C. Authentic leadership for higher education institutions in the justice-centered climate action planning process should reflect the ethical imperative of the university's mission. The mission should be grounded in a responsibility not only for advancing climate justice but also for combatting climate injustice.

D. Acknowledging the current context of higher education, authentic leadership also provides the sector with relevancy. Without a climate justice centered approach, the sector will fall further behind and further lose its ability to communicate with its core constituency: the public, as climate issues come to dominate more and more of society's political capital (Boyle & Stephens, 2022).

## 2. Support a pipeline for diversity in climate careers.
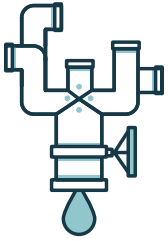
Beyond a moral and ethical imperative, cultivating a more diverse workforce also promises to unlock more innovative social and technical solutions to solving the climate crisis. More diverse leadership will better confront interconnected and multidimensional climate problems. These truths apply across the higher education sector and to the environmental field or climate and sustainability field/workforce, specifically (Johnson, 2019).

A. Promoting diversity within higher education remains a stated interest and resources abound. Importantly, while short-lived commitments are likely to fail, the difficult work of shifting cultural change to address racial injustice is possible. For case studies within the academic context, see McNair et al. (2020).

B. Hiring a diverse faculty requires a specialized focus on comprehensive pipeline development. A sampling of these activities span outreach to local K-12 entities; supporting diverse undergraduate students in advancing to graduate studies, especially via dedicated mentorship; and committed engagement with top-tier faculty prospects originating from HBCUs and HSIs (Jawaharlal, 2022).

C. Within the climate and sustainability workforce, higher education can support blossoming professional networks serving underrepresented minorities by sponsoring the creation of on-campus chapters, hosting recruitment events, and coordinating targeted communications.

## 3. Foster Internal Collaboration Across Departments.

Consult with leadership to create greater agency for staff to collaborate, mobilize, and organize with other offices - such as the Diversity office, Disability Services, Womxn's groups, and Immigrant Students - to advance climate justice across the institution (Morris & Mc-Camp, 2020; Tobias et al., 2021):

A. **USC Presidential Working Group (PWG) on Sustainability** was established in 2019 with representatives across education, research, and campus operations. The interdepartmental working group launched **Assignment: Earth**, a multi-year initiative to empower faculty to expand the sustainability curriculum through existing courses, convene community stakeholders to advance sustainability goals in the Los Angeles region, and develop an evaluation framework to report on the university's progress in addressing social inequities through its sustainability initiatives. Through the **PWG's Sustainability Across the Curriculum** program initiated in 2021, faculty are teaching students how sustainability intersects with their major field of study. As faculty learn from colleagues who are embedding sustainability concepts into their curriculum, pilots have reached students across the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences through departments such as Psychology, American Studies, East Asian Language and Culture, Sociology, and Chemistry.;

B. **California State University Monterey Bay** merged their Sustainability Office and Office of Inclusive Excellence to promote inclusive sustainability initiatives across internal and external community engagements, campus planning, and academics. The **2020 Inclusive Sustainability Plan** details efforts to enable faculty, staff, and students to integrate sustainability practices and topics into the classroom, co-curricular education, and departmental operations.

C. **Truckee Meadows Community College** (TMCC) has a combined Equity, Inclusion and Sustainability Office. For the 2022-2023 academic year, TMCC spearheaded the **Year of Sustainability** for students, faculty, and staff to implement sustainability initiatives through the curriculum and campus infrastructure. With a "focus on intergenerational equity with ecological stewardship of the environment, economy, and cultures," TMCC facilitated collaborative design workshops for culturally responsive curriculum and campus planning efforts through sustainability activities for courses, programs, and committees.

# Conclusion and Call to Action

Climate action cannot, and should not, be limited to scientific and technological solutions alone. This paper calls for incorporating climate justice as an integral component of climate action, and as an extension to higher education's mission. This approach is aligned with the sector's shared commitments to prepare students as future leaders, to service and community, and to the pursuit of research innovation and excellence.

## Specific recommendations include:

1 - Enable community capacity to lead climate justice initiatives as a committed **institutional partner** over long time horizons.

2 - Cultivate opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to advance climate justice through **trainings, leadership development, and education**.

3 - Fund participatory **research and community science initiatives** that center frontline communities and their needs.

4 - Foster **authentic leadership** to build the next generation of diverse environmental stewards through an institutional vision for climate justice implementation.

Our society's current approach to climate action is unsustainable and ill-fitted for the urgency of the moment. As a corrective: every sector, every institution must leverage their capacity in the struggle to curb climate emissions and do so in an equitable and just manner. To achieve this society-wide transformation requires all hands on deck as the sector reimagines its relationships and its responsibilities to all people and the environment (Climate Justice Coalition, 2022).

*Together we can build a future where principles of justice and equity climate solutions are woven into the fabric of all climate actions.*

Higher education as a sector can respond to this call to action by using its power and resources to address the human element of climate injustices. Higher education institutions individually, and the sector at large, hold a tremendous amount of societal importance. Higher education's mission, centered around the public good, places it in contact with a large swath of the public. As anchor institutions, the ability of higher education to impact housing, employment, infrastructure, and politics through their management of resources and their influence gives them significant prominence in local communities. Their hold on the American imagination, as a site of cultural productivity and social mobility, makes the higher education sector central to all of our lives. The sector must leverage its influence to respond to the most pressing issues of our time. Higher education's impact on the lives of its students, its employees, its communities, and the public in general mandates a response. In this response, climate justice requires that those solutions be equitable and community-focused. By embodying climate justice principles, those solutions will help ameliorate the history of community relationships, encourage new participation in climate action, and help prevent the worst of climate catastrophe.

The challenge and call to action for the sector is two-fold: commit to doing everything possible to innovate solutions to the crisis and do so in a manner that provides dignity, equity, and justice. The current climate challenges are here from the exploitation of people and the extraction of the Earth's resources, and also due to the assumptions behind that exploitation and extraction. The assumption that some people are more vital to our ecology than others is analogous to valuing the Earth's resources according to what we think is most useful to meet our present needs. Climate justice requires a re-evaluation of these relationships so that not only is there a more sustainable use of resources, but also a greater parity in how people are valued. Without such reexamination and parity, not only are the resources the sector relies upon destroyed, but also the trust of the public it serves, further exacerbating barriers to collective action.

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to take the first step down a path we have not been down before. We need individual and collective courage to do this work. Together we can build a future where principles of justice and equitable climate solutions are woven into the fabric of all climate actions. Our hope is that you will bravely join us in this journey.

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# Appendix A
# Glossary of Key Terms

**Sustainability:** A dynamic and inclusive process that improves quality of life while regenerating ecological systems (Office of Sustainability, Princeton University).

**Environmental Justice:** The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The Environmental Justice movement was started in the 1960s by individuals, primarily people of color, who sought to address the inequity of environmental protection in their communities (US EPA, O).

**Environmental Racism:**

- Racial discrimination in environmental policy making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements (Mohai, Pellow, & Roberts, 2009).

- Any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color (Bullard, 1993).

**Intersectional Environmentalism:** This is an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet. It identifies the ways in which injustices happening to marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected. It brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and the earth, to the forefront and does not minimize or silence social inequality (Leah Thomas, 2020).

A **"just transition"** describes the transition towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy that maximizes the benefits of climate action while minimizing hardships for workers and their communities (Just Transition Center, 2017).

Broadly speaking, the concept of **climate justice** expands the treatment of climate change as a scientific, financial, and/or technical topic to include considerations of morality and justice. Climate justice is an intentional "human-centered approach" to understanding climate impacts and solutions, and aims to enhance equity and justice while reducing marginalization, exploitation, and oppressions (Mary Robinson Foundation, 2022; Sultana, 2022).

**Centering the Most Marginalized** is "an approach rooted in the foundational belief that by centering and valuing those most impacted by systemic oppressions we are able to create the most comprehensive and effective solutions that can ultimately benefit all of us. The approach acknowledges that the most marginalized are also ones with the most clarity around the unmet needs and realities of systemic inequities and therefore should be given real power to lead, beyond mere inclusion or consideration. It means prioritizing their voices and demands while deliberately shifting resources and decision-making powers to enable their top-level leadership. It means destroying the assumption that people who have privilege know more or better and designing systems, processes, policies, cultures, and products that value the full and complex humanity of marginalized people, including their lived experiences, wisdom, agency, and dignity" (Kim, 2021).
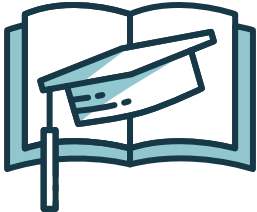
In summer 2022, Second Nature conducted a semi-formal stakeholder engagement process to collect recommendations for actions that higher education institutions can take to advance climate justice. Through facilitated focus group interviews and informal group discussion, Second Nature staff collected feedback from various stakeholder groups including the Commitments 3.0 Working Group, the Climate Justice Working Group, and the Second Nature Board of Directors. Stakeholders occupy diverse leadership roles within their institutions, ranging from Sustainability Officer to President/Chancellor/Rector, and possess varying levels of expertise as it pertains to climate justice, ranging from engaged learner to faculty researcher.

Stakeholders were asked to reflect on what opportunities and challenges exist with respect to advancing climate justice in and through higher education. Their feedback was collected anonymously, organized via simple thematic analysis, and is presented in full below.

| Theme | Greatest Challenge/Need | Opportunities for Climate Justice Leadership (cross-theme) |
|---|---|---|
| **1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** | **1.1 Partnership**<br><br>• Higher ed. institutions not always viewed as partners; need to build relationships and trust with communities<br>• Need for case studies of universities acting as resilience hubs | **1.1 Partnership**<br><br>• Viable models to support community move into the clean energy workforce/undergo a just transition (2.1, 2.2)<br>• Seek opportunities to support community-led environmental justice work (3.1) |

| Theme | Greatest Challenge/Need | Opportunities for Climate Justice Leadership (cross-theme) |
|---|---|---|
| **2. EDUCATION & TRAINING** | **2.1 Curriculum**<br>• Need to expand/improve curriculum that incorporates climate and social justice<br>• Need to make curriculum accessible to non-majors | **2.1 Curriculum**<br>• Cultivate collaboration between staff and faculty (4.3)<br>• Provide training/toolkits for integrating these themes into conversation (4.2, 4.3)<br>• Create more, new courses on sustainability and climate justice ("more and better")<br>• Prioritize placement training (1.1, 2.3)<br>• Create a new cabinet position or office (4.2)<br>• Seek opportunities to make climate justice curriculum a requirement (4.3) |
| | **2.2 Barriers to access**<br>• Financial barriers exclude lower-income students<br>• Limited access to research & career pathways towards becoming a researcher | **2.2 Barriers to access**<br>• Offer incentives, scholarships for energy management and sustainability studies to surrounding community members and historically displaced populations (e.g., Indigenous folx) (1.1) |
| | **2.3 Student Leadership**<br>• Lack of training to empower student leaders around climate action and climate justice | **2.3 Student Leadership**<br>• Support student work in service of communities and emphasize placement training (2.1)<br>• Build education around student engagement with local legislature and institutional leadership (2.1) |
| **3. RESEARCH** | **3.1 Funding, Faculty Incentives**<br>• Limited funding available to advance sustainability research | **3.1 Funding, Faculty Incentives**<br>• Incentivize/support faculty performing community engage research (1, 2.1, 2.3)<br>• Recognize community work, social justice, climate justice work in tenure review process, specifically<br>• Expand ongoing climate justice research ("more and better") |

| Theme | Greatest Challenge/Need | Opportunities for Climate Justice Leadership (cross-theme) |
|---|---|---|
| **4. INTERNAL CAMPUS OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION** | **4.1 Staffing - Diversity**<br>• Sustainability staffs are often predominantly white and don't reflect diversity of student body<br>• Hiring practices don't adequately cultivate diverse staff | **4.1 Staffing – Diversity**<br>• Emphasize diversity and hiring from local communities (1.1)<br>• Incorporate DEI best practices into hiring (e.g., including diversity statement in hiring process) |
| | **4.2 Staffing - Capacity**<br>• Justice-oriented work is rooted in relationship-building which is a time-intensive practice and is burdensome on limited staffs; there exists a tension of urgency vs just practice<br>• Practitioners need guidance & resources on how to support this conversation internally at their university | |
| | **4.3 Cross-Campus Collaboration**<br>• Integration is needed across campus offices to advance climate justice (ex: DEI, Sustainability, Environment Offices) | **4.3 Cross-Campus Collaboration**<br>• Creation of affinity groups<br>• Climate justice priorities should be integrated into high-level strategic planning, executive advisory level |
| | **4.4 Institutional Authenticity**<br>• Discrepancy between commitments to DEIAJ work commitments<br>• Higher ed. business model at odds with "tackling climate justice equitably" | **4.4 Institutional Authenticity**<br>• Acknowledge historical relations with community engagement (1)<br>• Elevate "consciousness to this work … go beyond the bottom line"<br>• Leverage political connections [to advance justice priorities] |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since 2006, Second Nature's Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments have offered the opportunity for campuses to boldly lead on decarbonization efforts and develop climate action plans. Recognizing the growing need to adopt an expanded definition of climate action, in 2015 Second Nature introduced its Resilience Commitment and expanded organizational efforts to support member institutions in advancing campus-community resilience assessments to enhance climate action plans. At this inflection point of tumultuous social, political, and environmental stressors, higher education institutions are once again presented with an opportunity for bold leadership to address the world's most pressing issues.

This working paper was prepared in conjunction with Second Nature's Commitments 3.0 update, a year-long planning process involving stakeholder engagement focused on Membership; Claims, Targets, and Technical Guidance; and Climate Justice. The lattermost of these topics – climate justice – is in response to the growing recognition that climate justice is climate action. Through this paper and the stakeholder engagement process, Second Nature is exploring how to meaningfully and authentically embed principles of climate justice within its Commitments.

While we take the time to reflect and celebrate our shared progress over the past 15 years, we recognize that there is so much more work for higher education to do, and hope that this paper inspires us to further action.

**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.

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