Primer on the University Climate Change Coalition

About UC3
The University Climate Change Coalition, or UC3 is an innovative Coalition of 22 leading North American research universities that have come together in the spirit of collaboration to help communities achieve their climate goals and transition to a low-carbon future. Together, UC3 Coalition members represent approximately 4 million students, faculty and staff at the some of the most dynamic institutions across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

- Arizona State University
- Boston University
- California Institute of Technology
- La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
- Queens University
- Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- Tecnologico de Monterrey
- The Ohio State University
- The State University of New York system
- The University of Arizona
- The University of British Columbia
- The University of California system
- The University of New Mexico
- The University of Toronto
- The University of Utah
- The University of Washington
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Connecticut
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Michigan
- University of South Florida
- Washington University in St. Louis

UC3 connects leading North American Research Universities to each other and represents a comprehensive approach, uniting leaders from many sectors of society to inspire solutions and make informed policy recommendations. UC3 member institutions have the opportunity to accelerate cross-sector climate activities by learning from peer institutions, sharing best practices through an international platform, and developing new resources that will help scale climate actions. Resources include the production of academic papers, tool-kits, and other resources to help advance knowledge and practice of the role research institutions can play in driving climate action forward across sectors. Additionally, UC3 member school’s senior leadership connect with their peers for high-visibility and high-leverage events as well as government leaders, business CEOs, and other executives that share a commitment to tackling the climate challenge.

Harnessing the unique resources and convening power of member institutions, the Coalition works to inform and galvanize local, regional and national action on climate change.

Governance
Coalition Leads: There are three (3) types of Coalition lead positions which a member institution can fill for a fixed amount of time: Leadership, Research, and Network. The Leadership Lead communicates between presidents and chancellors in the network and supports public-facing UC3 opportunities. The Research Lead develops the network-wide research agenda and evaluates the effectiveness and impact of UC3 actions in advancing research priorities. The Network Lead provides coalition network support and maintains and leverages external relationships.

Second Nature serves as the Network Lead and backbone organization for the Coalition. In this role, Second Nature pursues program-related funding opportunities in line with UC3’s strategic goals, serves as the Coalition’s social and historical knowledge repository, and connects the Coalition members with
high-level climate events and speaking opportunities. The Network Lead also provides general program administration and research that supports the growth of the Coalition and Coalition activities, helps to establish goals, and evaluates the success of Coalition initiatives and projects.

**Steering Committee:** The steering committee decides on the priorities or order of the coalition and is the policy-making body that manages the general course of its operations. In the case that a decision needs to be made that will impact the expected work from the Coalition, the question will then be presented to the Coalition for a decision to be made by a majority. Steering committee members will be selected biannually at the in-person coalition meeting from a group of liaison volunteers. The Leadership Lead will select at minimum five members and maximum 40% of the total number of member schools.

**Institutional Liaisons:** Liaisons are individuals at each institution appointed by the University Head with the assistance of their appointed Coalition Executive Liaison. There are four (4) types of Liaisons: Executive, Operational, Research and Communications. Executive Liaisons have senior decision-making authority and serve as the direct contact between the Coalition and institutions president’s or chancellor’s office. Operational Liaisons maintain knowledge of institutional climate goals, familiarity with ongoing and upcoming operational projects, and access to operations staff. Research Liaisons coordinate across the various faculty and research communities across the institution and have a knowledge of cross-campus research strengths. Communications Liaisons provide general support and amplification of UC3 activities and provide external relations support (i.e. quotes, talking points, etc.) for UC3 activities.

Conceptual Rationale

**Non-Federal Action:** Non-federal (aka subnational) climate action is of the utmost importance to address the climate crisis in time. Non-federal action can mobilize climate mitigation and adaptation work in the face of political uncertainty and/or lack of will, particularly at the national level. The climate crisis demands swift and ambitious action, higher education can be direct contributors to the effort.

**Higher Education as an Agent of Change:** Higher education is helping lead this groundswell of momentum and has strengths as an actor and an enabler. As leaders in their own right when it comes to the impact of their operations, colleges and universities also possess the research and analytical capabilities needed to support and drive the decisions and actions of states, cities, and businesses. Additionally, H.E. is educating the next generation of leaders who will shape the nation’s climate agenda and address the structural systems that creates this crisis in the future. Institutions of higher learning the following great strengths that lend itself well to the work of climate action:

1. **Knowledge Generator** - Colleges and universities are the generators of new knowledge through the research they perform, accumulators of knowledge created at their institutions and accessed
via other institutional, and utilize that knowledge to innovate often times acting as a loving laboratory.

2. **Community Anchor** - Colleges and universities are place-based, long-standing and credible institution uniquely positioned to understand and work with the community on local solutions.

3. **Neutral Convener** - Colleges and universities can use their influence and physical space to bring together public officials, business professionals, or leaders of community or nonprofit organizations to collaborate.

In conjunction with these strengths, Second Nature has identified the following roles H.E. institutions can fill to accelerate climate solutions in their communities and beyond:

1. **Cross-sector convenings to maximize community buy-in and/or educate** - The institution may host cross-sector convenings and town halls to promote citizen engagement and maximize community buy-in on city projects and state initiatives.

2. **Technical assistance through data, assessments, research and climate guidance** - The institution may serve as a research & development resource providing data, assessments, and guidance to cities and states to inform programming and their objectives. They may also exchange knowledge based on the university's "living lab" experience and past implementation of smaller-scale, but similar projects.

3. **Knowledge exchange based on smaller-scale, “campus as a living lab” (CLL) projects** - Institutions often have large institutional footprints and implement climate solutions on campus that can be learned from and potentially scaled up to the community level via knowledge exchange.

4. **Active participant in the design and execution of implementation projects** - The institution may help design and execute implementation projects that will help accomplish city and state objectives (i.e. hosting city challenges, workforce development programs).

5. **Real-world, curriculum based, and community-engaged learning for students** (often involving with external partner organizations).

Research Universities are the specific focus of the UC3. In addition to the strengths of H.E. Institutions noted above, these institution types are uniquely positioned to lead academic and research efforts in service of real-world climate solutions through the robust ecosystem of faculty scholars, post-doctoral researchers, graduate students, academic centers and facilities that exist that these large institutions. Application, rather than isolation, of this knowledge is the key to unlocking research university’s full potential to drive climate solutions forward.

**Coalition Building**: Forming coalitions with other groups of similar values, interests, and goals allows members to combine their resources and become more powerful than when they each acted alone; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The University Climate Change Coalition brings together a variety of voices in the higher education research community including public and private institutions, international schools from developed countries and a developing country with varying national commitments to addressing climate change in hopes of learning from one another, combining strengths, and thus increasing and accelerating impact.
Eligibility

- The University head has pledged to reduce their institutional carbon footprint and commitment is consistent with objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement.
- The University is a research institution designated as R1 by Carnegie Classification for US schools, an informal designation for non-US schools.
- The University President/Chancellor’s office acknowledges participation and designates an executive liaison, research liaison, operational liaison, and communications liaison.
- The liaisons have the ability to participate, with the rest of the cohort, in UC3 meetings/calls including senior leadership where appropriate.
- University commits to holding a cross-sector climate convening (public or private) within a year of joining the Coalition and reporting outcomes to the other UC3 institutions.