



AMERICAN COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENTS CLIMATE COMMITMENT

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America's Leading Colleges & Universities Release New Carbon Offset Protocol

Effort will drive carbon markets toward higher standards

Washington, D.C. – The leaders of more than 590 of America's top colleges and universities today announced the adoption of a protocol to guide the institutions when buying offsets on carbon markets as they work toward greenhouse-gas neutrality.

As the largest sector committed to carbon neutrality, the protocol adopted by the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) is expected to drive the carbon market toward higher standards.

Carbon offset markets are relatively new, unregulated and often confusing. The Presidents' Climate Commitment saw a need for clear, rigorous standards to identify high-quality offsets, which are an important adjunct to programs to reduce, avoid and eliminate greenhouse-gas emissions.

“Our protocol raises the bar for the offset market and will help improve the credibility of carbon offsets,” said David Hales, president, College of the Atlantic, who spearheaded the effort to create the protocol. “A key differentiator is the call for offset projects that reduce existing emissions versus future emissions as allowed in some other protocols. The ACUPCC protocol will go far to alleviate the concerns many organizations have about the credibility of some of the products in the voluntary offset markets.”

The protocol provides guidance to institutions evaluating investments in offsets to help determine whether or not to invest, when to do so, and what to look for in an offset to ensure they are credible, high-quality and effective – that is, they are real, measurable and permanent.

“The ACUPCC Carbon Offsets Protocol is a result of higher education leaders coming together to tackle important questions raised in our ongoing efforts to achieve climate neutrality,” said Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University. “Higher education needs to have the courage to engage these kinds of contentious issues, producing real solutions and seizing the immense opportunities before us.”

The protocol and accompanying guidelines were developed over a six-month period through a highly collaborative process involving signatories of the ACUPCC, their representatives, and experts from the offset markets. A sixteen member Working Group, chaired by David Hales, conceptualized and drafted the protocol. Feedback during two public comment periods was provided by a broader advisory group made up of all ACUPCC signatories and experts from dozens of offset-related organizations, including the Center for Resource Solutions, the Offset Quality Initiative, and members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

More than 590 presidents and chancellors have signed the ACUPCC, making an institutional pledge to pursue climate neutrality in campus operations, and incorporate climate and sustainability issues into the educational experience for all students. The key components of this pledge are to implement a climate action plan and report publicly on progress toward climate neutrality.

The charter signatories of ACUPCC – those that signed before September 15th of 2007 – have recently completed the first major milestone of their climate action planning process: conducting a greenhouse-gas inventory to measure their emissions. By September 2009, these institutions have agreed to make their completed plans publicly available.

These plans will include a target date for achieving climate neutrality as well as interim targets, along with strategies and actions that will be implemented to reduce emissions on campus and contribute to the educational experience for students. Many of these plans will take a long-term perspective and include options to adjust to changing technologies, laws, and expectations.

The protocol and guidelines encourage institutions to plan, initiate and fund activities that avoid emissions (such as conservation), reduce emissions (such as improving efficiency), and eliminate sources of emissions (through renewable energy) before considering offsets. It also encourages institutions to view offsets as a short-term tool to help the gap to a climate neutral future.

Learn more at www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org

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