



Overview: ACUPCC Academic Guidance Document

Revised February 10, 2009

Summary:

Universities and colleges that address the climate change challenge by both reducing global warming emissions and by integrating sustainability into the educational experience will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society. These institutions will be providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to address the critical, systemic challenges faced by the world in this new century and enable them to benefit from the economic opportunities that will arise as a result of solutions they develop. Signatories of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) have committed to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the educational experiences of their students. A document guiding colleges and universities on the strategies and opportunities for meeting this commitment can assist decision-makers in taking the necessary steps on their own campuses to transform education to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Goals of this Project:

1. To assist with the transformation of higher education for the 21st century:

Higher education plays a unique and critical role, one that is often overlooked, in making a healthy, just and sustainable society a reality. Higher education prepares most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in, and influence society's institutions.

- The current educational system is (unwittingly) reinforcing the unhealthy, inequitable, and unsustainable path that society is pursuing.
- What if higher education were to take a leadership role in preparing students and providing the information and knowledge to achieve a healthy, just and sustainable society? The education of all professionals would reflect a new approach to learning and practice. *The context of learning* would make the human/environment interdependence, values and ethics a seamless and central part of teaching of all the disciplines. *The content of learning* would reflect interdisciplinary systems thinking, systems dynamics and analysis for all majors, and would have the same lateral rigor across the disciplines, as

there is vertical rigor within them. *The process of education* would emphasize active, experiential, inquiry-based learning and real-world problem solving on the campus and in the larger community.

2. To provide guidance for signatories of the ACUPCC:

The more than 600 signatories of the ACUPCC recognize that providing sustainability education to the leaders of tomorrow, so that they can develop ongoing solutions to the threat of significant climate disruption, is as important as eliminating their school's operational contribution to global warming pollution.

- Signatories to the ACUPCC have committed to take *“actions to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experiences for all students.”*
- This document is intended to give high-level guidance to college and university presidents to clarify the intent of this element of the Commitment, and to provide some resources for signatories to create strategies for fulfilling this commitment.

Outcome:

A 5-10 page academic guidance document will be developed through an inclusive process and disseminated widely to ACUPCC signatories and the public. This document will be an important component of the AASHE Climate Action Planning site being developed to assist ACUPCC signatories and will include:

- Rationale for the academic component of the ACUPCC;
- The best strategies for making climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the educational experience;
- Examples demonstrating these strategies in practice; and
- Resources for more information.

This document will provide a road map for colleges & universities tackling this most important, yet perhaps most challenging, aspect of sustainability in higher education.

Outline:

I. Introduction

- A. Higher education's unique and critical role
 - 1. Prepares the nation's professionals and leaders
 - 2. Responsibility for creating societal mindset
 - 3. Creation of knowledge and incubator for innovation
- B. The challenges of the 21st century
 - 1. All biological systems in decline
 - 2. Health and social goals not being met
 - 3. Global warming destabilizing climate
 - 4. Economic sustainability not achieved
- C. Defining sustainability
 - 1. Bruntland Commission definition
 - 2. The Natural Step principles
- D. The ACUPCC commitment to sustainability in curriculum
 - 1. The language
 - 2. What is required to meet commitment
- E. How to use this document
 - 1. Its purpose: Offers choices to variety of institutions
 - 2. Its focus: Imparting knowledge to address climate change
 - 3. The spectrum of options: Determining what is best for your institution

II. The Educational System

- A. Traditional higher education
 - 1. Organized into specialized disciplines
 - 2. Stresses individual learning and competition
 - 3. Does not challenge common assumptions
- B. Expanding traditional education for sustainability
 - 1. Institutions both practice and teach sustainability
 - 2. Education is interdisciplinary
 - 3. Sustainability is central to all disciplines
 - 4. Learning is experiential with real-world problem solving

III. Strategies for Transformation

- A. Moving beyond disciplinary boundaries to interdisciplinary education
 - 1. Case-based learning
 - 2. Local community sustainability
 - 3. More emphasis on undergraduate research
 - 4. Case studies (from Presidents' perspectives)
- B. Engaging faculty in meaningful and constructive dialogue on sustainability
 - 1. Identifying and supporting faculty champions
 - 2. Workshops on sustainability in education

3. Opportunities for continuing education (speakers, etc.)
4. Faculty fellowships
5. Case studies
- C. Creating curriculum with sustainability in mind
 1. Integrating sustainability principles into existing courses
 2. Creating new interdisciplinary courses
 3. Student projects that build local communities
 4. Case studies
- D. Providing incentives for advancing sustainability education in teaching, research, and outreach
 1. Including sustainability in performance reviews
 2. Re-focus scholarship on teaching
 3. Peer review of sustainability research
 4. Changing incentives for tenure and promotion
 5. Involving VP of Academic Affairs, Provost, and Deans
 6. Case studies
- E. Leveraging avenues for transformation
 1. General education requirements
 2. Freshman programs
 3. Sustainability modules in courses
 4. Etc.

IV. Benchmarks

- A. Student learning outcomes
- B. Metrics for assessment

V. Closing

- A. The challenges
- B. The opportunities
- C. The rewards for institutions, students, and society

VI. Resources

- A. Names and contacts of potential consultants
- B. AASHE Resource Center
- C. U.S. Partnership for Sustainable Development resources
- D. NCSE Center for Environmental Deans and Directors
- E. Key books and articles
- F. Organizational web sites (Second Nature, ACUPCC, AASHE, DANS, HEASC, Play A Greater Part, etc.)

Timeline:

Phase I: Preparation of ACUPCC Academic Guidance Document

<i>Overview completed</i>	<i>November 7, 2008</i>
Working Group selected	November 17, 2008
Advisory Group selected	November 17, 2008
Working Group conference call to discuss overview	November 25, 2008
<i>Draft 1 available</i>	<i>January 19, 2009</i>
Advisory Group comments on Draft 1	January 29, 2009
Working Group conference call to discuss Draft 1 and advisory group comments	February 2, 2009
<i>Draft 2 available</i>	<i>March 6, 2009</i>
Advisory Group comments on Draft 2	March 19, 2009
Working Group conference call to discuss Draft 2 and advisory group comments	March 20, 2009
<i>Final Draft completed</i>	<i>March 27, 2009</i>

Phase II: Further Development & Next Steps

Working Group recommends process for further development of substantive areas	By June 2008
Workshop on next steps at ACUPCC Summit	August 14, 2008

Dissemination:

The academic guidance document will be disseminated directly to ACUPCC signatories as well as to the public via these channels:

- Emails to all signatories
- The ACUPCC Implementer e-newsletter: announcement and link
- The ACUPCC web site: link to PDF

- The ACUPCC Leadership Summit: public announcement, limited hard copies
- Press release for public announcement in *Chronicle of Higher Education* and other media

Key Contributors:

Staff: Second Nature will facilitate the drafting and dissemination of this document, with the input and guidance of a working group and broad advisory committee.

- Amy Seif Hattan, MA, MPA - Director of Strategic Partnerships
- Michelle Dyer, MSLS - Vice President

Working Group: The working group will participate in the drafting the guidance document through regular conference calls and communication with Second Nature staff. The working group will provide information to include in the document and offer their knowledge of the work in the field. *To be invited:*

- Monty Hempel, Director of Environmental Studies, University of Redlands
- Toni Nelson, Climate Program Manager, AASHE
- Richard Torgerson, President, Luther College
- David Shi, President, Furman University
- Ron Thomas, President, Dakota County Technical College
- Christopher Blake, President, Mount Mercy College
- Mitchell Thomashow, President, Unity College
- Kim Tanzer, Professor of Architecture, University of Florida
- Bill Timpson, Professor of Education, Colorado State University
- Anthony Cortese, President, Second Nature

Advisory Group: The advisory group will provide their expertise by providing suggestions and edits to the first and second drafts of the guidance document. The advisory group will represent a broad group of stakeholders. *To be invited:*

- Bill Throop, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Green Mountain College
- Nan Jenks-Jay, Dean of Environmental Affairs, Middlebury College
- Andy Sheppard, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Southwestern College
- Deb Rowe, Higher Education Co-Chair, U.S. Partnership for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
- Mary Spilde, President, Lane Community College
- Jean MacGregor, Senior Scholar, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, The Evergreen State College
- James Elder, Founder, Campaign for Environmental Literacy
- Tom Kelly, Chief Sustainability Officer, University of New Hampshire
- Robert Koester, Professor of Architecture, Ball State University
- Peter Bardaglio, Senior Fellow, Second Nature

- Yolanda Moses, Professor of Anthropology, University of California Riverside
- John Farnsworth, Lecturer in Environmental Writing and Literature, Santa Clara University
- Lindy Biggs, Professor of History, Auburn University
- James Farrell, Professor of History, St. Olaf College
- John Warner, Director, Warned Babcock Institute for Green Chemistry
- David Orr, Chair of Environmental Studies, Oberlin College
- Fritjof Capra, Author, Co-Founder, the Center for Ecoliteracy
- Zenobia Barlow, Co-founder and Executive Director, Center for Ecoliteracy
- Jim Buizer, Director of the Office of Sustainability Initiatives, Arizona State University
- Andy Jorgenson, Senior Fellow, National Council for Science and the Environment
- David Blockstein, Senior Scientist, National Council for Science and the Environment
- Tyler Volk, Associate Professor of Biology, New York University
- Tom Wessels, Professor of Environmental Studies, Antioch New England
- Peggy Bartlett, Anthropology Department, Emory University
- Robert Costanza, Director, Gund Institute, University of Vermont
- Robert Doppelt, Director, Watershed Center, Portland State University