

convening tool

FACILITATING CROSS-CUTTING CLIMATE ACTION AT YOUR UNIVERSITY

Universities have a unique ability to serve the public interest by connecting research, education, policy, and meaningful action on climate change. In addition to their broadly understood roles in education and in building research and analytical expertise, universities also can provide a neutral and respected platform for convening diverse stakeholders and facilitating inquiry. Realizing the potential of integrating these pillars of strength can benefit communities across the country and the world.

In such a time of urgent need for understanding the opportunities and benefits of climate action for society, many universities have continued in their tradition of leading the way on issues of great societal significance by publicly reaffirming their commitment to robust and informed public policy. The University Climate Change Coalition (UC3) has been established to support academic institutions in their role as leaders on climate action and to realize untapped potential through new collaborations, partnerships, and coordinated efforts.

In addition, universities can support action on climate change from the local to the global. Universities can bring the expertise and capabilities of their institutions to their own local and state communities. Moreover, the new research, innovations, and ideas nurtured in the university context can leverage action much more broadly, building and scaling from local to global—and thereby contributing to tackling policy challenges at all levels.

Whether you are a change maker at your university, in your government, or in your community, we hope the following guidelines will stimulate your unique actions:

1. **Identify** your unique resources and strategic goals
2. **Analyze** gaps that can be filled
3. **Create** strategic partnerships
4. **Convene** diverse stakeholders and facilitate dialogue
5. **Generate** climate action

1. **Identify** your unique resources and strategic goals

What are your resources? What assets, knowledge, research, and services can you enter into the policy process of your state or locality? What are your strategic goals as an institution? Universities within UC3 have each made their own ambitious climate commitments for reducing their own emissions footprint. For example, the University of California (UC) is working to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2025. This initiative combined with their extensive system has the potential to make a large impact on emissions reductions in the State of California.

2. **Analyze** gaps that can be filled

What do your strategic goals have to do with the state and localities that you inhabit? What resources, policies, and initiatives have you used to complete or advance towards your mission? These tools and experience can translate to climate policy, making an even larger impact. UC convened leaders from across the state so that researchers could hear directly from the state what types of solutions were needed. Coupled with private and public funding, research proposals were then identified to work towards solving the state's climate goals.

3. **Create** strategic partnerships

Partnerships should be both internal and external to the university. Collaboration should not only be mutually beneficial but also inherently amplify each other's work. Potential partners can also be beyond the obvious, such as other universities, public health groups, student leaders, local businesses, and more.

In June 2018, the Ohio State University collaborated with the Franklin County Commissioners and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission to release a new Franklin County Energy Study, which explores how energy is produced and used in the county, and its impact on local communities. OSU specifically worked with these new partners to make key policy recommendations, including increasing the adoption of electric vehicles by developing a countywide network of public charging infrastructure.

4. **Convene** diverse stakeholders and facilitate dialogue

Stakeholders and dialogue should be open-minded. But, also the facilitators should have a strategic vision based on the outcomes of the first three steps so that the conversation yields actionable results. Arizona State University is working with the Security and Sustainability Forum to hold webinars focused on engaging a wide community of stakeholders both internal and external to the university, in thinking about sustainability challenges while facilitating collaboration between those who might have not otherwise.

5. **Generate** climate action

The University of Colorado Boulder held the Leadership Forum on Climate Solutions in July 2018 where they brought together leaders from academia, government, non-profits, and the private sector to forge positive change and identify solutions. Three new solutions and areas of opportunity were identified from this forum. One of which uses earmarked funds from the City of Boulder to build a living laboratory in which partners can research and understand how people interact with particular climate solutions and how policy can be molded to enhance results.