

VSU Campus Climate Commitment Plan

Executive Summary:

Recognizing that impacts by people on the environment is a critical issue and Valdosta State University seeks to play a leadership role in southern Georgia in addressing this issue, VSU President is prepared to sign the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) documenting VSU's efforts toward climate neutrality for the University. The document outlines the overall structure for creating the VSU Climate Commitment Plan and suggested planning goals for the Climate Commitment Council to investigate and develop into the VSU Climate Commitment Plan.

The VSU President has established a Climate Council to initiate the coordinated campus-wide effort of preparing the Climate Commitment Plan and overseeing the implementation of the initiatives in the plan and reporting progress to VSU and the public. As stated by the ACUPCC, by signing this Commitment the President is:

"...pledging [VSU] to eliminate its contribution to global warming over time. This includes establishing an institutional structure to oversee the development and implementation of the school's program; completing an emissions inventory within a year and annually thereafter; establishing a climate neutrality action plan, taking some immediate steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; integrating sustainability into the curriculum and making their climate action plan, inventory and progress reports publicly available."

While VSU is committed to reducing the Green House Gas emissions of the institution the Council understands that no single energy-saving technology or practice will achieve the significant reductions in energy use and carbon emissions being pledged by the University in the ACUPCC. Instead, an on-going, multi-pronged effort will be required and must include increased efficiency, increased awareness of the Commitment for students, faculty, and staff through education and training, and an aggressive shift towards sustainable practices in the University's operations. Identifying ways to conserve natural resources including energy and water, increase efficiency wherever possible and feasible, and establishing a focus on sustainability are essential aspects of this plan and the ACUPCC.

Budgets and feasibility:

Initiatives will be included in the strategic planning process of VSU. Authors of the plan recognize that the shift toward climate neutrality is a long term goal. Valdosta State does not intend to make radical changes to the mission and vision of the University, but add environmental leadership as a part of how the mission and vision are implemented. The University will continue, under the plan, to search for and implement energy conserving technologies that may not currently be available.

The following are recommendations for demonstrating a VSU Campus Climate Commitment Plan. They include establishing the organizational structure, creating a comprehensive plan, taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, integrating sustainability into the curriculum, and reporting progress.

- I. **Organizational Goals:** Establish a structure of committees and subcommittees capable of supporting the creation of the Campus Climate Commitment Plan, to be completed within two months of the President's signing of the ACUPCC.
 1. Create the Climate Council a permanent voting body responsible for direct oversight of all aspects of the Climate Commitment Plan and any subcommittees associated with the Plan. Action of the council

would be advisory to the appropriate administrative office of the University. Membership on the Council will include representatives as follows.

- i. Council Chair: Physical Plant Director
 - ii. A representative from each of the following organizations:
 1. Faculty Senate
 2. Council on Staff Affairs
 3. Student Government
 4. Environmental Impact Committee of the Faculty Senate
 5. Students Against Violating the Environment
 6. Student Affairs
 7. Academic Dean Representing the Administration
 8. Campus Architect
2. Create subcommittees to establish climate neutrality goals and initiatives in specific areas with a focus on sustainability. Recommend to the Climate Council how these areas can contribute to the climate neutrality timeline and implement these initiatives to achieve these goals. This list of committees is a recommendation for this document.
- i. Operations Subcommittee to address:
 1. HVAC
 2. Energy Conservation
 3. Computers
 4. Recycling
 5. Purchasing
 6. Transportation
 7. Housing
 8. Food Service
 9. Water Usage
 - ii. Teaching, Research and Curriculum Subcommittee: The following listing of focus areas was included in the University of Florida Sustainability Plan and a similar list of initiatives would be developed by the Subcommittee. While the initial focus may be on student learning, the intent is to include improving the climate commitment and sustainability of the entire university, students, faculty and staff and programs will be developed over time for that intent.
 1. Service Learning
 2. Research
 3. Degree Programs
 4. Sustainability incorporated into current classes
 5. Additional Classes
 6. Lecture Series
 7. Reading Program
 8. Training and Workshops
 - iii. Outreach Subcommittee:
 1. Community
 2. Student Organizations
 3. Work with City of Valdosta and Lowndes County
 4. Other Universities in the Region
 - iv. Assessment: While each Subcommittee will need to assess their progress towards goals, an initial subcommittee may need to be established to assess the existing carbon footprint and to review how the collective efforts of the operations subcommittee will impact the carbon footprint. This committee may also prepare the annual reports and make recommendations for updating the timeline in the plan as part of an annual review.
3. Establish a Campus Sustainability Fund: In other campus' plans sustainability funds have been established as a sinking fund that is replenished from savings created by initiatives. Some plans show using savings generated by initiatives to fund other initiatives or carbon offsets. This committee

should research different fund sources that may include: revolving funds, Clean Renewable Energy Bonds, corporate, government, and foundation grants, partnerships, student fee initiatives and class donations. Efforts would be coordinated with the Vice President for University Advancement and may be included as objectives in annual campaigns and capital campaigns.

II. Consumption and Green House Gas Inventory

1. VSU consumption of Electricity and Natural Gas need to be calculated and translated into Green House Gas (GHG) emissions inventories so that a base line of consumption and trends can be established. The ACUPCC website has recommended protocols and calculators for establishing the inventory.
2. The raw data required for a campus GHG inventory calculation falls generally under the following major categories (specific details are outlined in inventory calculators):
 - i. Purchased Electricity
 - ii. Purchased Steam/Chilled Water--Not Applicable to VSU
 - iii. On Campus Stationary Sources (energy generation)--Generators
 - iv. Transportation (commuting, air travel, campus fleet)
 - v. Agriculture (fertilizer use, animal waste)
 - vi. Solid Waste (incinerated, landfill)
 - vii. Refrigerants and other Chemicals
 - viii. Offsets (Renewable Energy Credits purchased, composting, forest preservation, local offset project such as paying for boiler conversion at a local K-12 school, etc.)
3. Data and analysis must be recorded in a manner consistent with American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment guidance. The data must be reportable, reproducible and auditable.

III. **Operational Goals:** VSU will conduct all aspects of campus operations in a fashion that protects the environment. The campus will diligently work toward creating a campus with a net zero impact upon the climate and environment working within the budgets limitations available.

1. **Electrical Energy Management and Conservation:** VSUs current goal is to reduce overall electrical consumption per square foot of building space, 15% from 2007 levels by 2020 as is required by the Georgia Governor sonny Perdue's Energy Challenge. Governor Perdue has committed all state agencies in Georgia to reduce energy consumption measured in BTU's per square foot in state facilities at least 15 percent below FY2007 levels by the year 2020.
http://gov.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,78006749_110479098_112180087,00.html
 - i. **Campus Cooling/Heating:** Cooling and heating are the largest source of energy consumed on VSU campus. A concentrated effort should be made to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels for cooling and heating and communicate to the VSU community the benefits of those reductions.
 - ii. **Sustainable Energy:** VSU needs to make strides toward becoming less dependent upon fossil fuel energy for electricity, heating and cooling. Investigate the possibilities of using geothermal, solar, wind, and other truly renewable sources of energy. Develop renewable projects and include them in the campus strategic planning database
2. **Fresh Water Conservation:** Reduce overall water consumption levels from 2007. Research existing consumption and establish goals for annual reductions. Investigate the reduction of potable and well water as well as the reduction of storm water.
3. **Facilities Planning, Renovations and Construction:** Utilize energy efficient and sustainable design standards on all new construction and applicable renovation projects. Define the standard as LEED Silver and the specific elements new construction must adhere
4. **Transportation:** Investigate setting a goal to reduce automobile trips to campus by 20% by 2012. Investigate and recommend incentives and improvements in alternatives. See how the City and County development of a Public Bus system will impact the goals. Incentives and improvements may include: carpool parking spaces, increasing bicycle lanes and better communication of alternatives.
5. **Purchasing:** Review VSU Waste Prevention and Recycling Policy and coordinate with Business Services department. Encourage VSU community to follow current policy and update policy by

incorporating more sustainable-focused purchasing standards were feasible. Communicate to the VSU community standards for waste prevention and on-going purchasing efforts.

6. **Solid Waste Management:** Reduce production of municipal solid waste.
7. **Food Services:** Work with our food service partners to minimize the environmental impacts of operations while continuously providing a variety of nutritious foods.
8. **Grounds Maintenance:** Emphasize use of native plants and protecting usable green space of the campus while reducing dependence on fossil fuels, other extracted minerals, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

IV. **Teaching and Research Goals:** The long-term vision is to link the university's formal teaching mission and informal teaching opportunities to develop understanding, attitudes and habits that promote sustainability and climate neutrality. This section of the plan suggests a variety of ways that VSU can improve the way that it teaches sustainability, both inside the classroom and outside of it. The sub-sections and associated goals are:

1. **Curriculum:** Sustainability and Climate Commitment should be a recognized, emphasized, and common theme across colleges, departments and general education initiatives. Students should have extensive and diverse opportunities to study sustainability in their coursework.
2. **Raise awareness** of students and staff through participation in campus sustainability activities that take place outside of the formal classroom. Develop a campus-wide commitment to sustainability. Develop a method to gauge campus awareness on climate neutrality.
3. **Campus Events:** Work with campus event organizers to include sustainability and climate commitment principles into existing events and promote climate commitment at those events.
4. **Internships, Service Learning, Volunteering:** Expand the opportunities for students experience in sustainability initiatives by increasing the number of available internship, service learning, and volunteer experiences.
5. **Research:** The long term vision is that scholarly activities by faculty, staff and students generate and test ideas for creating a sustainable future. The objective is to develop and maintain research and scholarship that supports campus sustainability efforts, contributes to the professional development of staff, and challenges students to apply their emerging skills and knowledge.

V. **Outreach:** The long term vision is that the university is well-known throughout the region and country as a source of information and inspiration about climate commitment and sustainability. This part of the plan will focus on ways of sharing knowledge with the broader community.

VI. **Assessment:** The administration will obtain sufficient information to enable them to make resource decisions that support the climate commitment goals within the existing resources. Information, accurate data, and metrics will be used to present practical choices and evaluate the results of decisions. Results of the successes and failures of those decisions will be reported to students, faculty, staff and the community. The Climate Commitment Plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the Climate Commitment Council.

CONCLUSIONS:

This document outlines a viable path to create the organization, the plan and suggested goals/objectives to meet the VSU obligations under the American Colleges and Universities Climate Commitment. This document does not suggest a timeline for VSU to become climate neutral because the existing greenhouse gasses need to be inventoried and strategies need to be developed within existing budget constraints. By making a conscious effort to become climate neutral and by making the efforts transparent and accountable, VSU hopes to join other universities in demonstrating an example of environmental leadership that will impact the students, staff, community and the region.