

Collaborating for the Future of Higher Education Sustainability

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College and university leaders across the US and around the world have stepped up to model sustainability across curricula, operations, management systems, and community relations. The breathtaking examples range from networked geothermal efficiency systems across hundreds of buildings; dramatic shifts towards more sustainable transportation modes; near elimination of solid waste; and tens of thousands of graduates launching greener careers, businesses, and ways of life. More than any other sector, higher education is comprehensively addressing the imperative of climate science. Nearly 700 college and university presidents have pledged to reduce carbon pollution at the scale and within the timetables recommended by scientists, with many institutions aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, or within the lifetimes of most of today's college students.



In all of these endeavors, sustainability directors, presidents, and students have led the way. Walking gratefully by their side for at least the last two decades have been a handful of organizations. Most recently AASHE, NWF, Second Nature, the US Green Building Council, and many other governmental and non-governmental partners, have coalesced in new ways, renewing and strengthening a commitment to play a coordinated and meaningful part in the next stages of the advancement of higher education leadership for sustainability in the US and beyond.

In celebration of the bold strides toward sustainability made across US higher education, these organizations pledge to support the next bold leaps with a collective vision that will convey to the world that the US is serious about demonstrating social, economic, and environmental sustainability and is doing so in a way that prepares graduates for 21st century imperatives. We collectively support a vision that:

By 2025, 20 million graduates across all majors will be global sustainability citizens: learning about relationships between natural, physical, economic, social, and cultural systems; understanding how their personal and professional choices impact these systems; and having the agency to create solutions that allow people and the environment to thrive.

In order to achieve this vision, AASHE, NWF, Second Nature, and USGBC pledge to:

1. Expand our collective capacity to convene and empower higher education leaders to deepen climate commitments, share best practices and drive sustainability into their core business.
2. Consolidate and leverage our efforts to embolden more students to lead whole-campus sustainability initiatives and prepare them for 21st century careers
3. Cross-promote and increase alignment of our respective rating systems, frameworks and recognition platforms.

In response to feedback from the higher education community, our organizations will be meeting quarterly to address our ongoing collaboration. You will hear from us as this develops, and we look forward to your continued input, insights, and support as we tackle these ambitious goals together.