

## UMASS AMHERST RESPONSE TO CLIMATE DEMANDS

October 15, 2019

*We are calling on the Five College institutions to address the following demands during the next academic year, and we are partnering with students on each campus to customize these demands.*

***Tell the truth.*** *Declare a state of climate emergency.*

The need for urgent action to address climate change is undeniably clear, and UMass Amherst fully recognizes the need to ensure a sustainable future for all. An emergency requires bold action, and the university has committed to exploring ambitious plans for how the campus can achieve a transition to 100% renewable energy with a primary target of 2025, or alternatively by 2030. We also recognize this is a worldwide problem that requires global solutions.

It is unclear what standing the university has to declare an official climate emergency and if it would have any practical impact. Most importantly, UMass is committed to taking actions that make a difference.

***Act now.*** *Develop comprehensive plans with community input for complete divestment and carbon neutrality by 2025 and provide transparent communication and reporting on progress toward these goals.*

The university's newly developed Carbon Mitigation Taskforce is in the process of exploring how to develop an ambitious plan on how to pursue 100 percent renewable energy for the electricity, heating and cooling systems of the campus by 2025, or alternatively by 2030. In addition, we have convened a Climate Resilience Task Force to prepare for the impact of climate change already underway. These initiatives have been advanced through the advocacy and support of the Student Government Association led by President Timmy Sullivan. Addressing these complex and critical challenges will require ongoing participation by members of our community. Please take the time to make a difference. You can write directly to Ezra Small, our campus sustainability manager, at [esmall@umass.edu](mailto:esmall@umass.edu) to learn more and become involved.

Regarding divestment, in 2016 the five-campus UMass system became the first major public university to divest its endowment from direct holdings in fossil fuels. We're proud that the UMass Foundation made that decision, and we look to them to provide leadership in further discussions about divestment.

***Community Leadership.*** *A Five College body composed of students, staff, faculty, and community stakeholders will develop and oversee plans for responding to the climate emergency.*

Drawing on the broad expertise and best practices within the Five Colleges can benefit and accelerate our efforts to address climate change locally. UMass Amherst will explore ways to create more collaboration among the Five Colleges, perhaps through hosting idea-sharing forums with each of the respective task forces or working groups from each campus. Such an approach can inform decision-making on each campus, where the responsibility and vested authority for enacting change resides.

***Pursue a just transition.*** *Mitigation and adaptation efforts should prioritize the people on campuses and in communities who are most vulnerable to the immediate and long-term impacts of the climate crisis, including youth, people of color, indigenous peoples, and poor communities.*

The Campus Resiliency Task Force is developing a resiliency plan that aligns with the state's preparations, builds on the campus' Hazard Mitigation Plan, and reflects the insight of diverse constituencies. The task force will look at resilience through a comprehensive lens, including social equity and governance; health and well-being; economy and society; infrastructure and environment; and leadership and strategy. These conversations will serve as a roadmap for recommended actions in hazard mitigation and climate adaptation planning. This includes participation by the Student Government Association and the Graduate Student Senate. The task force is undertaking efforts to engage a variety of groups, and part of that process will be a climate resiliency workshop scheduled for November 15, 2019. The Five Colleges can also take a leadership role by recruiting national leaders to speak on strategies relating to climate change and its effect on human rights and social justice.

***Prepare your students for the future.*** *All students must be educated on environmental science and how the climate emergency will affect their careers, their lives, and the lives of other people on our planet.*

UMass Amherst is recognized as an international leader in climate change research, education and policy development. Those strengths inform international efforts to address climate change and empower students to make important personal and career decisions. Every UMass student, through our General Education Program, can help meet their requirements by selecting from a variety of courses that focus on climate, sustainability and the natural world. The School of Earth and Sustainability, launched in 2017, is an important and growing resource that offers undergraduate majors, minors and certificates to provide students with knowledge that addresses our most critical social and environmental challenges. To enable faculty to cultivate teaching excellence in sustainability, UMass has created Sustainability Curriculum Fellowships. The program is designed to support faculty so they can enhance sustainability learning outcomes in an existing course or incorporate learning outcomes into a new course.