



COUNCIL OF COMMONWEALTH STUDENT GOVERNMENTS
THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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C.R. 20.21.14
Climate Action for a Cleaner Penn State

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Sponsors: *Mitchel Ray (Behrend), Nicole Jimenez (Brandywine), Sidney Przbylski (Greater Allegheny), Megan Close (Abington), Sunjana Mishra (Lehigh Valley), Noah Schiro (Harrisburg)*

Whereas, The Council of Commonwealth Student Governments (CCSG) recognizes that anthropogenic climate change threatens the livelihoods of the entire Penn State community and the State of Pennsylvania. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection:

“In Pennsylvania, our climate has undergone a long-term warming of more than 1° C (1.8° F) over the past 110 years. Pennsylvania’s climate has also become wetter, with a 10 percent increase in the amount of precipitation, on average. Pennsylvanians can expect to see an additional 8 percent increase in precipitation by 2050. Human activities related to greenhouse gas emissions have been linked to disruption in the global climate.”⁽¹⁾

CCSG recognizes the threats of climate change and demand that Penn State University Administration take more aggressive climate action to ensure the health and safety of current and future Pennsylvanians, thus upholding their mission as a land-grant institution for the state of Pennsylvania;

Whereas, CCSG passed C.R. 15-16.05, *In Support of Fossil Fuel Divestment*, on December 5th, 2015. This piece of legislation called on the Pennsylvania State University “to take the path of divestment from fossil fuels” and since then the University’s administration has not taken action to divest from fossil fuel investments;

Whereas, CCSG also recognizes that Penn State has formed several corporate partnerships to create comprehensive climate solutions that align with its target emissions reduction goal of 80% greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction below 1990 levels by 2050², such as the Lightsource BP and Alternative Energy Development Group solar projects;

Whereas, However, these plans only address only a fraction of Penn State’s overall GHG emissions and does not take other aspects of sustainability and climate action into consideration;

Whereas, In order to address all the aspects of sustainability and climate action, student leaders from across Penn State University created a petition that incorporates several strategies that Penn State administration could adopt to ensure a more sustainable future for the university and the surrounding community;

Whereas, The strategies in the Penn State Climate Action Petition is built on the premise that enable the university to further expand upon their strategic plan⁽³⁾ and to make more aggressive action to better uphold the United Nations’ Paris Climate Agreement;

Whereas, The strategies that the petition is asking the university administration to consider include:⁽⁴⁾

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible, setting a specific date between 2030 and 2040 for reaching net zero emissions.
- Prioritizing research efforts into carbon-capture technology, agricultural carbon sequestration, and carbon neutral fuels, and using our institutional partnerships to accelerate their deployment.
- Divesting from fossil fuels and investing in the green economy, especially energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and zero-emissions transportation.
- Reallocating a portion of the existing student fee towards sustainability initiatives.
- Improving efforts to incorporate sustainability education into existing curriculum.
- Creating a Climate Action Committee made up of Penn State experts charged with the capacity to study, set policy, assess and publish progress on our climate commitments.

By asking administration to adopt these strategies, it ensures that Penn State is addressing every scope of climate action that will make it a global leader in sustainability;

Whereas, During the month of October 2020, student leaders from the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA), the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA), and the World Campus Student Government Association (WCSGA) passed legislation in support of the Penn State Climate Action’s aspirations, strategies, and collected signatures;

Whereas, During the month of October 2020, student leaders from the following Commonwealth Student Government Associations (SGAs) released statements demanding Penn State Administration to take more aggressive action on climate change.

1. Abington
2. Brandywine
3. Greater Allegheny
4. Scranton

These statements from SGA student leaders demonstrate a united call on Penn State leadership to make the necessary steps to take a more aggressive stance on climate action.

Be it resolved, The Council of Commonwealth Student Governments supports the Penn State Climate Action’s aspirations and strategies and calls on Penn State Administration and the Board of Trustees to adopt the strategies outlined in the petition to ensure that the Pennsylvania State University is a leader in sustainability and climate action;

Be it further resolved, The Council of Commonwealth Student Governments also recognizes that the Commonwealth Campuses should be included in the discussion of how the Pennsylvania State University can adopt the proposed strategies outlined in the Penn State Climate Action Petition.

Respectfully,

Gabriel Schaefer

Gabriel Schaefer, Sustainability Co-Director

Matthew Long

Matthew Long, Sustainability Co-Director

Council Action

Vote 31: 0: 0 Pass: YES Fail: NO Postponed: NO

Presidential Action Approved: _____ Veto: _____

Date: 11/07/2020 _____

1 “Climate Change.” *Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.*

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/climate/Pages/default.aspx>

2 “Climate Action.” *Penn State Sustainability Institute, www.sustainability.psu.edu/climate-action.*

3 “Stewarding Our Planet’s Resources.” *Penn State’s Strategic Plan.*

<https://strategicplan.psu.edu/plan/thematic-priorities/stewarding-our-planets-resources/>

4 “Strategy.” *Penn State Climate Action, psuclimateaction.weebly.com/strategy.html*