

Climate Change Action on College Campuses – Getting Started

For more information on managing your campus' greenhouse gas emissions and to receive reports from WRI on climate change and greenhouse gas management, please contact Ryan Levinson at 202-729-7724 or rlevinson@wri.org.

For more information on the Campus Climate Challenge, please contact Billy Parish at billy@energyaction.net.

Climate change is a global challenge with serious consequences for our social and economic infrastructure as well as the natural environment. The greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that cause climate change are emitted mainly from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. While most of the focus has been on large industrial emitters, such as manufacturers and utilities, long-term solutions require emission reduction efforts by the entire economy.

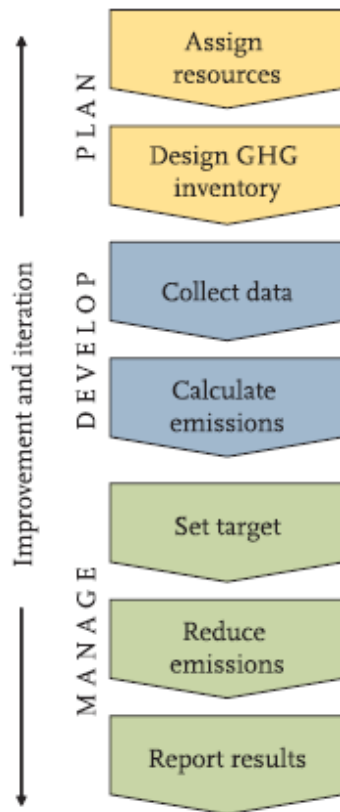
This includes service sector companies – like banks, law firms, retailers, and real estate managers – universities and colleges, and other organizations. Even though they are not considered large “emitters,” these companies, universities, and organizations do emit GHGs and can help mitigate climate change through changes in their energy use, operations, and products and services offered.

Universities, which contribute to climate change through electricity use, heating and cooling, and transportation, are in a unique position to play a leadership role in reducing GHG emissions. Universities have an opportunity to influence their operations, suppliers, student body, staff, and other stakeholders to help curb the most dangerous effects of climate change. In addition to reducing their own emissions, universities have the leaders of the next generation that are motivated for action and change, along with the technical skills and resources to develop innovative solutions to this global challenge.

To provide the context for taking action, WRI has developed a new guide for managing greenhouse gas emissions that details the various steps necessary to manage, track, and reduce emissions. The guide, titled “Hot Climate, Cool Commerce: A Service Sector Guide to GHG Management”, is based on GHG Protocol methodologies that are currently being used by hundreds of businesses, organizations and climate change programs throughout the world.

In order to track performance and ensure that actions do reduce GHG emissions, it is important to first measure emissions by developing a GHG inventory – a list of the sources of GHG emissions and their quantities. This inventory is the foundation of an effective climate change program. Measurement enables businesses, universities, and organizations to assess their risks and opportunities, follow their progress, and create a strategy to reduce emissions by measurable amounts.

Taking Action



In early May, WRI will release the full report, which will provide:

- An introduction to climate change, its connection to the service-sector, and the business case for taking action;
- Step-by-step guidance on assembling a GHG inventory and managing emissions over time.
- Detailed information about GHG-accounting issues relevant to the service-sector. Examples include accounting for the GHG emissions associated with leased assets like buildings or vehicles, and guidance on deciding which emission-causing activities should be measured.
- Case studies illustrating how the service-sector is responding.

This guide serves as a comprehensive, step-by-step manual for businesses, universities, and other organizations ready to begin responding to climate change.

Top climate 5 action steps for colleges and universities:

1. *How big is your university's footprint?* From computer use to student and faculty commuting and keeping lecture halls warm, there are many every day opportunities to reduce your campus's impact on the climate. A first step is to develop a greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory for your college or university. A GHG inventory is a list of your school's GHG emissions sources and their quantities. Developing a GHG inventory is the cornerstone of any effective climate change strategy and critical to helping you understand your school's climate impact and opportunities for emission reductions.
2. *Think globally, act locally.* Regardless of where you go to school, campus climate change activities can have a significant impact on emissions. Climate friendly actions include installing energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), and energy saving appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators and air conditioning units. Keep the heat in campus buildings by properly insulating boilers and weather-proofing dormitories and lecture halls.
3. *Travel smarter.* Transportation is the fastest growing source of emissions. Schools can do their part by promoting smarter travel. Universities and students groups can encourage the use of mass transit when possible and when driving is essential, encourage

trip consolidation and ride sharing. Schools can also buy fuel efficient vehicles for their fleets and run them on climate friendly biofuels.

4. *“Green” your school’s energy.* Clean energy from sources like the sun and the wind can be used to power your campus. Wherever your school is, there are ways to tap in to green power.
5. *Make your voice heard.* Decisions that politicians make at the local, state and national level can have a tremendous impact on our ability to affect climate change. Student action can send a powerful message that meaningful climate policies are needed to achieve significant GHG reductions.

Links to resources

- *The Campus Climate Challenge.* A project of 30 leading environmental and social justice organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada to increase campus use of green power and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. <http://campusclimatechallenge.org/>
- *Clean Air-Cool Planet.* CA-CP’s Campuses for Climate Action program supports institutions in finding and demonstrating energy and global warming solutions, including providing a free greenhouse gas inventory toolkit that is already being used on more than 150 campuses. http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/for_campuses.php
- *Household footprint calculator.* Figure out your household’s climate impact with this easy-to-use calculator. http://multimedia.wri.org/safeclimate_calculator.cfm.
- *Energy saving tips.* Practical tips for conserving household energy and reducing costs compiled by the Natural Resources Defense Council. Includes links to other resources on the web. <http://www.nrdc.org/air/energy/genenergy.asp>.
- *Alliance to Save Energy.* Practical information for consumers on how to reduce energy use and use it more efficiently. www.ase.org.
- *Greener cars.* Find out which vehicles pass and which ones fail the green test. www.greenercars.com.
- *Socially responsible investing.* Information and resources for the socially responsible investor. www.socialfunds.com.
- *Project Vote Smart.* Discover the facts behind your elected representatives, where they stand on the issues and how they have voted. www.vote-smart.org.