



Emory's Climate Commitments: Summary and Implementation



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EMORY

Executive Summary

Emory's Climate Commitments

On October 13, 2021, in response to student activism by the Emory Climate Coalition and on behalf of Emory, President Gregory L. Fenves joined Race to Zero, a coalition of educational institutions devoted to achieving zero carbon emissions. He also signed the Second Nature Climate Leadership Network Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment, joining Emory with over 450 other institutions that have agreed to take actionable and trackable steps toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

These two commitments together require Emory to set, meet, and publicly report on greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and community resilience targets. The Second Nature and Race to Zero Networks also provide Emory with resources, guidance, and community to support its carbon reduction and resilience-building efforts.

This memorandum summarizes the commitments that Emory made in 2021, Emory's history of implementation, the next steps for implementation, and relevant resources and contacts for each commitment. Information in this memorandum is drawn from the [Second Nature](#) and [Race to Zero](#) websites, [Emory's 2023 Climate Action Plan](#), and [the Office of Sustainability Initiative's Website](#).

How Emory is Meeting its Climate Commitments

| Commitment | Emory's Fulfillment |
|--|---|
| Within two months of making the commitment, create internal institutional structures to guide the development and implementation of the plan and within one year of the implementation start date, actively support a joint campus-community task force to ensure alignment of the plans with community goals. | Emory established a Climate Action Task Force, comprised of nearly 40 university, municipal, alumni, and external community experts and stakeholders, including representatives of Emory student, staff, and faculty groups. The Task Force met eleven times over the 2023 fiscal year to inform the 2023 CAP. Emory also convened a series of six Community Conversations facilitated by Dr. Ed Lee III, Senior Director of Inclusivity for Emory College of Arts and Sciences, to connect students, faculty, and staff across Emory University and Oxford College campuses to share climate action planning priorities. |
| Within one year of the implementation start date, complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and identify near-term opportunities for greenhouse gas reductions. | Within one year of the implementation start date, Emory completed its 2022 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventory, its eighth such inventory since 2005. Emory will continue to publish annual GHG Emissions Inventories. |
| Within two years of the implementation start date, lead and complete an initial campus-community resilience assessment including initial indicators and current vulnerability. | Emory partnered with two national environmental non-profits, Second Nature and the Nature Conservancy, to host a Community Resilience Building Workshop, a participatory workshop that brought together campus, municipal, and community stakeholders to assess resilience strengths, vulnerabilities, challenges, and priorities for the enterprise. The workshop culminated in Emory's Resilience Assessment . |
| Within three years of the implementation start date complete the Plan. | Emory's 2023 CAP was publicly posted on October 13, 2023, one year ahead of the deadline. |
| Review, revise if necessary, and resubmit the climate action plan not less frequently than every five years. | Emory's CAP will be reviewed and if necessary revised and resubmitted no later than October 13, 2028, and every five years thereafter. |

Requirements for the Climate Action Plan

| Features to Include in CAP | Emory's Fulfillment |
|--|---|
| A target date for achieving carbon neutrality as soon as possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emory has established a carbon neutrality date of 2050 following the current science-based recommendations. |
| A target date by which defined thresholds of resilience will be met | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emory's CAP features many thresholds of resilience to be achieved during the period of Emory's decarbonization before 2050. Emory's future Resilience Plan will offer concrete target dates for achieving resilience thresholds. |
| Interim target dates for meeting milestones that will lead to carbon neutrality and increase resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emory has established a 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of 50% from a 2010 baseline. Emory is committed to fully implementing its 5.5 MW Solar Energy Procurement Agreement by 2030. Emory is aligned with the City of Atlanta's goal to be 100% clean energy powered by 2035. Emory has commissioned and is beginning to implement emissions reduction investments in accordance with the Emory Greenhouse Gas Reduction Analysis and Recommendations. |
| Mechanisms and indicators for tracking progress (including those that cut across campus-community boundaries) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emory compiles and publishes an annual GHG emissions inventory. Emory completes and submits triennial STARS reporting. Emory is in the process of developing its 2025-2036 Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan, which will include both implementation planning and measurement and evaluation. |
| Actions to make carbon neutrality and resilience a part of the curriculum and other educational experiences for all students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAP Section B: Research and Curricula outlines goals for making carbon neutrality and resilience a part of educational experiences at Emory. Via its STARS reporting, Emory describes a variety of ways in which carbon neutrality and resilience are a part of the curriculum and other educational experiences for all students. |
| Actions to expand research in carbon neutrality and resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAP Section B: Research and Curricula outlines goals for expanding carbon neutrality and resilience research at Emory. Via its STARS reporting, Emory describes a variety of ways in which it is expanding research in carbon neutrality and resilience. |

I. Second Nature President's Climate Leadership Commitment

Second Nature is a nonprofit committed to accelerating climate action in and through higher education. They do this by mobilizing a diverse array of higher education institutions to act on bold climate commitments, to scale campus climate initiatives, and to create innovative climate solutions. Second Nature's Climate Leadership Network is a signature program that provides resources, networking, and national engagement opportunities for signatory institutions. Signatories are colleges and universities in nearly all fifty states that are acting on climate change and preparing students through research and education. Higher education institutions whose president has made a formal commitment to climate leadership on their campus by signing onto at least one of the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments become Climate Leadership Network signatories.

Emory has signed Second Nature's Climate Commitment, which integrates carbon neutrality goals with climate resilience goals and provides a systems approach to mitigating and adapting to a changing climate. The commitment opens with a Climate Leadership Statement, which asserts that colleges and universities must act as leaders in addressing climate change. Emory's full climate leadership statement and climate commitment under Second Nature can be found [here](#). Emory's substantive commitments can be summarized as follows:

Emory has committed to:

1. Develop a comprehensive Climate Action Plan (complete)
 - a. Within two months of making the commitment, create internal institutional structures to guide the development and implementation of the plan (complete)
 - b. Within one year of the implementation start date, actively support a joint campus-community task force to ensure alignment of the plan with community goals (complete)
 - c. Within one year of the implementation start date, complete a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and identify near-term opportunities for greenhouse gas reductions (complete)
 - d. Within two years of the implementation start date, lead and complete an initial campus-community resilience assessment including initial indicators and current vulnerability (complete)
 - e. Within three years of the implementation start date complete the Plan (complete)
 - f. Review, revise if necessary, and resubmit the climate action plan not less frequently than every five years
2. Submit an annual evaluation of progress
 - a. Within one year of the implementation start date, and every year thereafter, complete an annual evaluation of progress (ongoing)
 - b. Make the action plan and the annual evaluation of progress (including greenhouse gas inventory, resilience assessment, etc.) publicly available by submitting them to Second Nature's reporting system for posting and dissemination

Implementation and Reporting:

Emory publicly reports for its President's Climate Commitment through Second Nature's reporting platform, [Sustainability Indicator Management and Analysis Platform](#) (SIMAP). Emory's 2023 Climate Action Plan is uploaded under the "Goals" section of Emory's SIMAP account profile. Emory's annual greenhouse gas emissions inventories, reported through SIMAP by OSI's GHG emissions consultant, are currently accepted as annual evaluations of progress. On the same page, SIMAP allows users to select a carbon neutrality date, interim goals for total carbon reduction, carbon reduction from stationary fuels, carbon reduction from purchased electricity, and any other specific goals. Emory's annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory is reported on SIMAP under the "Emissions Report" tab.

Next Steps Toward Second Nature Commitment:

To continue to honor its Second Nature climate commitments, Emory must:

1. Continue to publish an annual greenhouse gas emissions inventory through SIMAP and stay current with any changes to the SIMAP reporting process.
2. Review and if necessary, update the Climate Action Plan by October 13th, 2028, and every five years thereafter.
 - a. Review the existing CAP and determine if new targets and actions are needed
 - b. Use the reporting platform to learn from fellow signatories and benchmark targets
 - c. Create a new report or amend a current report with new actions

II. United Nations Race to Zero Campaign:

The United Nations Race to Zero Campaign for Universities and Colleges is an official partner of the Race to Zero Campaign. It is run in partnership with The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (EAUC), Second Nature, and the UN Environment Program. By committing to the Race to Zero Campaign for Universities and Colleges, Emory was automatically added to the UNFCCC Race to Zero Campaign. Race to Zero differentiates “starting line” criteria—the minimum requirements for membership—and “leadership practices” criteria. This memo delineates “starting line” criteria. “Leadership practices,” which may be helpful in future climate and sustainability planning, can be found [here](#).

Race to Zero requires that signatories:

1. Pledge at a head-of-organization level to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and by mid-century at the latest, in line with global efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees C, and set an interim target to achieve in the next decade, which reflects maximum effort towards or beyond a fair share of the 50% global reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 identified in the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees C. Signatories must set their targets within a year of signing the commitment (complete). Targets must cover all greenhouse gas emissions including:
 - a. Scopes 1, 2, and 3 for businesses and other organizations;
 - b. All territorial emissions for cities and regions;
 - c. For financial entities, including all portfolio/financed/facilitated/insured emissions;
 - d. Land-based emissions.
2. Plan within 12 months of joining the commitment. Create a plan to explain what actions will be taken toward achieving both interim and longer-term pledges, especially in the short-to-medium term (complete).
 - a. Include what actions will be taken within the next 12 months, within 2-3 years, and by 2030.
3. Proceed to take immediate action toward achieving net zero, consistent with delivering interim targets specifically (ongoing).
4. Publish progress against interim and long-term targets, as well as actions being taken, at least annually. Signatories have one year after signing to develop their annual report (ongoing).
 - a. Report in a standardized, open format, and via platforms that feed into the UNFCCC Global Climate Action Portal.
5. Persuade and align the institution's influencing capacities with its net zero commitments.
 - a. Within 12 months of joining, align external policy and engagement, including membership in associations, to the goal of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching global net zero by 2050 (complete through the completion of Emory's CAP).

Implementation and Reporting

Reporting may be done through any public channel, ideally including those that feed into the UNFCCC's Global Climate Action Portal, an aggregator that relies on partnerships with data providers. Emory has determined that its annual greenhouse gas emissions inventories, reported through SIMAP, appropriately meet this reporting expectation.

Next Steps Toward Race to Zero Commitment

To continue to honor its Race to Zero commitment, Emory must:

1. Continue to publicly report annual greenhouse gas emissions inventories on SIMAP and update Emory's website with information about steps taken toward its climate goals.
2. Continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach a 50% reduction from 2010 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050.
3. Continue work to align external policy and engagement with Emory's reduction goals.

Resources and Contacts

- [Implementation Guide](#)
- [Lexicon](#)
- [Pivot Point Report on best practices](#)
- [Contact Page](#)

III. Emory's Progress Toward Its Climate Commitments

Emory's Climate Commitments call for Emory to halve its GHG emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The commitments also require conducting an annual GHG emissions inventory, convening a campus-community climate action task force, developing a campus-community resilience assessment, crafting a comprehensive CAP, and annually evaluating and reporting progress toward climate goals. Emory's CAP was publicly posted to Second Nature's online platform on October 13, 2023, and will be reviewed no more than five years after the completion of the plan and every five years thereafter.

Emory has made active efforts toward holistic sustainability including and especially GHG reductions and campus-community resilience, for decades. Emory's first GHG inventory, which was completed in 2010, benchmarked its 2005 emissions. Emory created its first CAP in 2011 and aligned with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change guidelines of the time in its 2015-2025 Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan. Emory's emissions reduction goals before signing Emory's Climate Commitments were to reduce GHG emissions by 45% from a 2010 baseline by 2030 and to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050. It is important to note that scientific consensus is evolving, and in its most recent report, the IPCC adopted a 2019 baseline for its emissions reduction recommendations. Emory's 2023 CAP recommends analyzing the impacts of aligning Emory's baseline with this recommendation.

Since Emory's climate commitments, the enterprise has taken the following steps to fulfill its climate commitments:

1. Emory established a Climate Action Task Force, comprised of nearly 40 university, municipal, alumni, and external community experts and stakeholders, including representatives of Emory student, staff, and faculty groups. The Task Force met eleven times over the 2023 fiscal year to inform the 2023 CAP. Emory also convened a series of six Community Conversations facilitated by Dr. Ed Lee III, Senior Director of Inclusivity for Emory College of Arts and Sciences, to connect students, faculty, and staff across Emory University and Oxford College campuses to share climate action planning priorities.

2. Emory completed and publicly reported its 2022 and 2023 greenhouse gas emissions inventories.
3. Emory partnered with two national environmental non-profits, Second Nature and the Nature Conservancy, to host a Community Resilience Building Workshop, a participatory workshop that brought together campus, municipal, and community stakeholders to assess resilience strengths, vulnerabilities, challenges, and priorities for the enterprise. The workshop culminated in Emory's Community Resilience Building Summary of Findings and Resilience Assessment. Steve Muzzy of Second Nature has confirmed that this report fulfills the resilience assessment requirement.
4. Emory's Climate Action Plan was publicly posted on October 13, 2023.