



May 10, 2019

University of Oregon community,

The University of Oregon's updated Climate Action Plan (CAP) continues to work toward carbon neutrality. This work began in 2010 when we first created a plan to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The updated CAP includes immediate actions that the UO will take to reduce emissions, and it commits to vital studies needed in order to establish long-term, achievable emissions reductions.

Since rolling out the initial CAP in 2010, the university has produced significant accomplishments. We have:

- Completed regular greenhouse gas emissions inventories;
- Increased understanding of and responsibility for reducing institutional emissions;
- Created the Oregon Model for Sustainable Development, which reduced energy use in campus buildings through green design; and
- Established a green revolving loan fund to finance energy-efficiency projects.

Building on these successes, the next iteration of the CAP further advances the UO's commitment to meaningful emissions reductions. It commits the UO to review progress annually, and requires a complete reassessment of and recommitment to the plan every five years.

The actions detailed in this plan will move the university toward our ultimate goal of carbon neutrality. As enticing as a specific target date for complete neutrality might be, we simply do not have the data to make such a commitment in an informed, responsible way. This new CAP solves that problem in both the short- and long-term. We will revise the CAP again in 2024 to include further actions informed by the data gathered and progress made during our current cycle. Over the next five years, we will:

- Continue to track and report greenhouse gas emissions to the UO community on an annual basis;
- Complete an array of actions (listed on the CAP website) that will improve campus operations overall while reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Request that the secretary to the University of Oregon Board of Trustees add an annual report on emissions management and climate action to the board's agenda; and
- Conduct several studies that will inform decision-making so that we target our energy and resources where they can have the most impact. These studies will investigate:
  - how we will plan long-term to heat campus using low carbon energy sources;
  - internal carbon pricing to explore potential revenue sources that can fund direct emissions reductions on campus;
  - the costs and carbon-reduction impacts of a campus-wide LED retrofit;
  - alternative commute options to lessen the impact of our faculty, staff, and students traveling to and from campus; and
  - the feasibility and impact of a winter break "turn down" and temperature set-point policy to shrink our energy consumption.



Some additions to our new CAP come via the advocacy of UO students who shared their perspective with me after gathering the support of hundreds of students and 45 members of faculty and staff. In response, I affirm the University of Oregon's commitment to being guided by the best available science and data when making decisions that affect the UO's emissions and climate action goals. As such, I will ask our Vice President for Finance and Administration to convene a committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students to review and inform progress on the new CAP and to recommend actions to be included in the next iteration. I also endorse the students' recommendation to expand educational opportunities around climate change, including using our campus resources as a laboratory for student engagement, professional experience, teaching, and discovery.

The UO is a national leader in research and teaching around climate change, resiliency, and environmental studies. Our campus boasts over 130 faculty members focused on deepening human understanding of these subjects, from the arts and humanities to the physical and social sciences, and the professional schools. Further, our faculty exhibit a commitment to creating academic and research opportunities that are rigorous, inspirational, impactful, and solutions-oriented. While not a formal component of the updated CAP, our community's strengths around research and teaching related to climate change and sustainability highlight our local and global impact. As president, I am committed to increasing our capacity to contribute to climate change-related research.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Oregon State Legislature is currently debating a cap-and-trade bill, HB 2020, which will enforce statewide emissions reductions. The bill would reduce regulated emissions to at least 45 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2035 and at least 80 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2050. In the bill's current form, the UO's emissions would be exempt from regulation. While we do not want to make commitments until all components of the bill are settled, if the legislation passes, I will ask my staff to study the new law and recommend whether the UO should voluntarily opt in. If we were to do so, the UO would participate in a state-regulated effort to reduce emissions at a much larger scale. A statewide cap-and-trade program could potentially provide the UO with flexibility and help deliver emissions reductions far beyond what the UO could accomplish on its own.

The UO is proud of our achievements in environmental sustainability, but we know there is more to do. Addressing the challenge of climate change calls for clear and thoughtful action and achieving carbon neutrality will require commitment and action at every level of the institution. We will not shy away from doing this hard work. The ideas, technologies, and regulations that shape emissions reduction initiatives are rapidly evolving, and we will remain open to better ideas and ready to take advantage of new discoveries. I look forward to the challenges and opportunities to come.

Sincerely,

Michael H. Schill  
President and Professor of Law