

ACADEMIC SENATE
Resolution 17/18-001

Procedure:

1. A motion should be typed or hand-printed.
2. A motion should first be offered to the Executive Board for review and advice on editing and parliamentary implication.
3. If changes are necessary, the motion should be recopied on another form. Amendments may be indicated in the margin or on the reverse of this form.

USC's commitment to sustainability

WHEREAS, USC has made important progress towards many of the goals of the University's [Sustainability 2020 Plan](#), and

WHEREAS, the Senate – along with the Staff Assembly, the Graduate Student Government and the Undergraduate Student Government – has previously endorsed a report from the Senate Sustainability Committee "[Sustainability Strategy 2030](#)", which provides a vision for the long-term goals that USC might set itself, and

WHEREAS, on April 2, 2018, student representatives from USC's Undergraduate Student Government, the Environmental Student Assembly, and the Environmental Core launched a petition [Exhibit 1] and wrote to President Nikias [Exhibit 2] urging USC to adopt far more ambitious environmental goals than those to which the university has so far committed,

WHEREAS, the demands expressed by the students are congruent with the goals articulated by the Faculty Senate in the Sustainability Strategy 2030, and

WHEREAS, the University responded with a letter [Exhibit 3] which summarized the university's progress towards the goals of the Sustainability 2020 plan, but with little discussion of any plans or goals beyond 2020,

Therefore, Be it RESOLVED, That the Academic Senate reaffirms its support for the Sustainability Strategy 2030, expresses its support for the students and their advocacy, and joins with them in urging President Nikias to make USC a leader in this momentous struggle for the future of the planet, by articulating a timeline for reaching the overarching goals of (a) net zero carbon emissions, (b) net zero waste, (c) net zero water, and (d) comprehensive campus-wide sustainability research and education, and by assuring transparency in, and accountability for, progress toward these goals.

Resolution Number: **17/18-01**

Date: April 16, 2018

Motion by: Executive Board

(No second required when moved by committee)

To be presented at the Senate meeting on April 18, 2018

Action taken:

APPENDIX 1: STUDENTS PETITION

(<https://www.bit.ly/dobettersc>)

Do Better SC: Rally for Sustainability

As released by the USC Environmental Core, with support from the Environmental Student Assembly and the Undergraduate Student Government in April of 2018:

Despite the University of Southern California's impressive role as a leading higher education and research institute, USC is far behind its peer institutions in the realm of environmental sustainability.

As a university, USC has failed to:

1. Set goals to achieve carbon neutrality
2. Create clear policy for sustainable product procurement
3. Implement campus-wide recycling AND composting programs
4. Landscape campus with California native plant species (beyond small-scale, student-run efforts)
5. Divest from fossil-fuel companies
6. Design buildings to be energy efficient and climate resilient
7. Set effective standards for practicing green business
8. Incorporate sustainability into core education and university values

For USC to recognize and resolve its shortcomings in environmental sustainability, strong and clear leadership must come from the senior-most levels of university administration.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, therefore urge USC President, C.L. Max Nikias, to join top administration from peer institutions, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, George Washington University, New York University, The University of Pennsylvania and 600 other higher education institutions, in signing the Presidential Climate Commitment and joining the Presidential Climate Leadership Network.

This commitment pledges USC to developing a comprehensive, long-term Climate Action Plan (which we currently do not have); creating a joint campus-community climate task force to facilitate action; submitting annual evaluations of progress; and integrating goals of carbon neutrality, climate resilience, and sustainability education into core university values.

To view the Presidential Climate Commitment: <https://bit.ly/2pSfvhm>

To view the Presidential Climate Leadership Network: <https://bit.ly/1GRflpZ>

To view the 600+ higher education institutions that have signed this commitment: <https://bit.ly/2uzCMcz>

APPENDIX 2: STUDENTS LETTER TO PRES NIKIAS

Dear President Nikias,

We hope this letter finds you well. We, Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, Olivia Pearson and Philine Qian, are writing to you on behalf of the Environmental Core, The Environmental Student Assembly, and the Undergraduate Student Government. As directors in these organizations, we represent three main student groups working to advance environmental sustainability on this campus.

It is no secret that the University of Southern California excels in many realms: academics, research, athletics, alumni connections, career preparedness; the list goes on. Thank you for the time, care, and effort that has gone into achieving these remarkable standards of excellence. For them, we are deeply appreciative and proud to attend this world-class institution. Understanding our appreciation, it is also no secret that we, as a university, are far behind our peer institutions, our city, and our state in the realm of environmental sustainability. USC, collectively, has failed to make environmental sustainability a strategic university priority. A few immediate shortcomings, to our understanding, come to mind:

- (1) No clear goals for achieving carbon neutrality
- (2) No university-wide policy for sustainable product procurement
- (3) No campus-wide recycling *and* composting program
- (4) No effort to landscape with California native plant species (beyond small-scale, student-run initiatives)
- (5) No discussion on divesting from fossil-fuel companies
- (6) No standards for practicing green business with university partners
- (7) No standard to design buildings at a consistent level of energy efficiency and climate resilience
- (8) No incorporation of sustainability into core education and university values

As a global leader in research and higher education, USC has a *duty* to, at the very least, contribute to the environmental movement that has grown and continues to grow nationally and internationally every day. USC is located in the heart of Los Angeles, one of the most important cities in the world. As the largest private employer in a city that impacts state and national policy, USC has the potential to be a core leader in forming policies and attitudes that address what is, arguably, the most important issue facing mankind in the 21st century.

Though you are not solely responsible for USC's current, less-than-ideal position, you have the ability to change it. Therefore, we, as environmental campus leaders, urge you to make sustainability a university priority by signing Second Nature's [Presidential Climate Commitment](#). This commitment pledges USC to developing a comprehensive, long-term Climate Action Plan. It also pledges that USC will create a joint campus-climate task force to implement action; submit annual evaluations of progress; and integrate goals of carbon neutrality, climate resilience, and sustainability education into core university values.

Presidents and chancellors from our peer institutions, including UCLA, New York University, George Washington University, The University of Pennsylvania and [600 other universities](#) have signed onto this commitment to join the [Presidential Climate Leadership Network](#).

As made clear by USC's remarkable rise in academic rankings over the past 25 years, when this university commits to a long-term goal, that goal is met. The next strategic, long-term goal this university must adopt is that of environmental sustainability, especially in the form of carbon neutrality and climate resilience. The urgency for environmental sustainability will only become more pressing, with some scientific projections predicting destabilizing climate change in as little as 15 years. USC must change its role in this conversation, or we will find ourselves behind and suffering the consequences.

We, as students, are on your side in making this university the best it can be. We thank you for the effort and work that comes from your team, daily, to make our experience at this university exceptional. Because we love this university, we believe it can also do great things for environmental sustainability. We hope you will consider and agree to sign onto the Presidential Climate Commitment. We will be rallying for this initiative to pass on **Friday, April 6** from **1pm-3pm** at Tommy Trojan. We would appreciate having a meeting with you and your executive team to discuss the commitment and its specifics in more detail before the semester concludes. Please be in touch with your response, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Fight On for Sustainability,

Tianna Shaw-Wakeman
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Philine Qian
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APPENDIX 3: UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE

MEMORANDUM

To: Tianna Shaw-Wakeman, Olivia Pearson, Philine Qian

From: Mark Ewalt

Date: April 11, 2018

Subject: Response to Environmental Core Letter to the President, dated April 2, 2018

Directors Tianna, Olivia, and Philine:

Thank you for your letter to President Nikias regarding sustainability at USC, dated April 2, 2018. Thank you as well for your commitment to USC and sustainability in general. Your continued support, passion, and involvement as students and student government leaders is crucial to keeping sustainability in the public eye and moving our sustainability programs forward.

I have been asked to respond to your letter and reiterate USC's commitment to making sustainability a strategic university priority. I believe that USC made this commitment clear when on January 27th, 2010, the University of Southern California Campus Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees approved six strategic resolutions that specifically address energy, water, waste, transportation, and construction.*

Additionally, in 2015, after several years of research, planning, writing, and working with all of the affected schools and departments on campus via the Office of Sustainability, Provost Michael Quick, Senior Vice President Todd Dickey, and the presidents of the Academic Senate, the Staff Assembly, the Graduate Student Senate, and the Undergraduate Student Senate launched the Sustainability 2020 Plan, a comprehensive collection of seventeen ambitious and high-impact sustainability goals that are all on track to be completed by the end of the 2020 academic year.** The Sustainability Steering Committee that was formed in 2008 – on which USG serves – and that designed the 2020 Plan now is tasked with managing its implementation by developing projects to achieve its goals and communicating progress to all the committee members' constituents.***

With the guidance, support, and dedication of all the hard-working committee members and all the students, faculty and staff members who have been involved with Sustainability 2020 over the past 3 short years the University has been able to design, fund, and implement numerous high-impact projects and initiatives that speak directly to the concerns you identified in your letter.

1. Carbon Neutrality – The Sustainability 2020 plan established USC’s first carbon reduction goal of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions per square foot by 20% from 2014 levels. According to our first official greenhouse gas assessment, completed this spring, the University has already reduced its greenhouse gas emissions 16% below 2014 levels. Also this spring, President Nikias approved three major energy efficiency projects – Indoor/Outdoor LED lighting retrofitting, HVAC automation, and comprehensive building recommissioning – at an estimated cost of 10.2 million dollars. These projects, once completed, will meet the Sustainability 2020 goal for carbon reduction.
2. Sustainable Procurement – As a result of USC Procurement’s Sustainability 2020 baseline performance research project that was approved and funded last fall, a university-wide sustainability policy has been created. Upon final approval, these procurement sustainability requirements will be posted on the university’s policy website.
3. Recycling and Composting
 - a. Last year, Provost Quick and CFO Jim Staten approved funding for a comprehensive waste management program that includes recycling. That plan is being implemented in four phases over the next 12 months. The first phase has been completed and the second phase is due to be completed this month.
 - b. USC’s Facilities Management division composts all of the green waste generated by our grounds management team.
 - c. For the past two years the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum achieved zero waste (90% diversion of all waste from landfills).
 - d. USC Hospitality separates food waste at all of their residential venues, their central kitchens and their restaurants. Kitchen grease is collected and recycled throughout all their venues. They also separate their recyclables in all of their venues, including: cardboard, clean plastics, cartons, frozen boxes, non-foil paper, milk bags in the box cartons, and bottles and kegs.
4. Sustainable Landscaping – USC uses a combination of native and drought tolerant plants in the campus’ non-turf planted areas. Some non-native drought tolerant plants are utilized because it allows the university to have a larger selection of plants to choose from. Drought tolerant plants are typically from similar climates and soils, so they tend to thrive in our region and use less water.
5. Divestment – The Sustainability 2020 Plan does not have any divestment goals.
6. Green Business – USC Procurement Services serves on the USC Sustainability Steering Committee with other university departments to integrate sustainability as a core value in USC’s strategic planning, to create proposals for major sustainability initiatives, and to establish, track, and report sustainability goals and activities.
7. New Building Design and Construction – USC maintains an extensive and comprehensive

series of new building and design standards, all of which ensure high levels of energy efficiency and sustainable construction practices.

- a. All new USC buildings meet or exceed voluntary standards promoted by the US Green Building Council (USGBC) and others.
 - b. Since 2005, five USC buildings have been LEED certified by the USGBC.
 - c. In the recent 2014-2017 “USC Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Summary,” prepared by Unlimited Carbon Assistance Network dated 2/9/2018, USC rated #2 of eight peer universities for emissions per 1,000 GSF resulting from burning fuels or using chemicals (natural gas, boiler, refrigerants, etc.) on campus; and #1 of seven peer universities for emissions resulting from generating electricity. In addition, USC rated #2 of eight peer universities for net emissions per student FTE resulting from burning fuels or using chemicals (see above) on campus; and #5 of seven peer universities for emissions resulted from generating electricity.
8. Core Education and University Values – In recognition of the importance of this subject as a “wicked problem,” Provost Michael Quick established the Sustainability and Security advisory group, chaired by Dean Yannis Yortsos, that will explore interdisciplinary, evidence-based, convergent approaches to studying this subject. It will partner with governmental and non-governmental organizations, community partners, philanthropic and private foundations, and all interested parties to address these crucial issues.****

The Campus Sustainability Resolutions, the Sustainability 2020 Plan, the ongoing service of the Sustainability Steering Committee, and countless hours committed to sustainability by USC students, faculty and staff consistently demonstrate USC’s commitment to sustainability and our collective pledge to make sustainability a strategic priority. I am confident that through these means USC will meet and exceed its Sustainability 2020 goals. I equally am confident that through the combined efforts of USG, GSG, the Staff Assembly, the Academic Senate, the Sustainability Steering Committee, and the Office of Sustainability that USC’s sustainability plan for the next decade and the 2028 Olympics will be even more ambitious and impactful.

Sincerely, Mark

Ewalt
Executive Director
Administrative Operations

*Please see full text at <http://green.usc.edu/2020-plan/campus-sustainability-resolutions/>.

**Please see details at <http://green.usc.edu/2020-plan/goals/>.

***For further information about the committee or the status of the Sustainability 2020 goals, please contact the Office of Sustainability at sustainability@usc.edu.

****Please see USC’s 2018 strategic plan at <https://strategic.usc.edu/>.