Climate Commitment Advisory Council – Monthly Update

February 2025

Leadership Team

Chair: Toddi Steelman (OCS), Vice-Chairs: Tavey Capps (OCS) and Brian Murray (Nicholas Institute)

- **State of the University Update**: Toddi Steelman provided an update on discussions with senior leadership and the recent Board of Trustees meeting. Members of leadership and the Board of Trustees shared their resounding support of Duke's Climate Commitment and are excited for the continued progress on climate and sustainability goals.
- **Fundraising Campaign Public Launch**: Emerson Beyer (Alumni Engagement and Development) shared that Duke publicly launched its "Made for This" fundraising campaign in February which has four focus areas: Climate, Science and Technology, Student Experience, and Health.
- **Communications Update to BOT External Engagement Committee:** Kirsten Khire, who joined in late November as the new Director of Marketing and Communications for Climate and Sustainability, provided an update on climate communications and future communications plans at the Board of Trustees external engagement committee on Feb. 21. Progress in early 2025: new marketing campaign (Climate Road Trip), media outreach (wildfire research), new series (Climate Pathfinders), reactivated channels (newsletters, websites and social media).
- **Recommendations on 3-year Strategic Plans**: Tavey Capps provided guiding principles and timelines for standardizing 3-year strategic plans that each subcommittee are developing. There was discussion on gathering feedback on the draft 3-year plan materials from key stakeholders and the Education Subcommittee chairs shared about their experience engaging with leadership at the Sanford School of Public Policy, Pratt School of Engineering, and the School of Nursing. The Leadership Team also discussed which resources are needed to be successful in the 3-year plan and Toddi shared that the fundraising campaign will be central to future support of the Climate Commitment strategy.

Education Subcommittee

Chairs: Valerie Sabol (School of Nursing) and Dan Vermeer (Fuqua)

- **Reporting on School Engagement/Listening Sessions:** Dirk Philipsen (Sanford) and Katie Douglas (Office of Climate and Sustainability) provided report-outs from the first meeting that CCAC Education Subcommittee leadership held with leadership from the Sanford School of Public Policy. Sanford's leadership is committed to advancing climate and sustainability (C&S) as a key priority, and Sanford brings interdisciplinary strength to dialogues and explorations of C&S topics. Key areas to address in future dialogues include (1) faculty members' sense of uncertainty about whether and how C&S relates to their teaching and research; (2) student emotions around C&S; and (3) the need to foster a sense of agency among learners.
- **Discussing Future School Engagement:** In response to Sanford report-out, the subcommittee engaged in discussion about meeting students' needs, promoting self-efficacy and collective efficacy among learners, and the necessity of interdisciplinary solutions. The subcommittee's

leadership will be engaging in analogous dialogues with leadership from the Pratt School of Engineering and the School of Nursing in the coming weeks. During the March meeting, subcommittee leaders will report out from these dialogues.

- **Reviewing the 3-Year Plan Draft:** An initial draft of the three-year plan was presented to the subcommittee. This plan articulates the educational goals for the Climate Commitment over the next three years. Breakout group discussions highlighted key challenges, which include the need for expanding capacity over mandating participation, providing instructors with resources, improving communication, and engaging diverse stakeholder groups across campus. Draft recommendations were collated and are being addressed in the "Fluency Fridays" working group, which is tasked with incorporating feedback and providing additional revisions to the plan. The next draft will be presented at the March subcommittee meeting.

External Engagement Subcommittee

Chair: Lydia Olander (Nicholas Institute)

- **Strategic Planning, Action Plan Development, and Outreach:** The subcommittee has completed an action plan and drafted a 3-Year Strategic Plan which proposes several avenues for increasing engagement and collaboration across Duke through targeted programming and establishing a Climate Engagement Hub. Both documents should be ready for sharing with others at Duke to gather broader input by the end of March. To ensure the goals discussed in these documents truly align with campus values we are discussing a cross-Duke outreach strategy currently planned to run through summer 2025.
- **Cross-Committee Collaboration:** To gain further perspectives on our work, the EEI Subcommittee leadership is exploring joining listening sessions organized by the Education Subcommittee with representatives at Sanford School of Public Policy, Pratt School of Engineering, and the School of Nursing in the coming weeks. Through our participation we hope to gain broader perspectives on what university leadership are seeking in their climate collaborations, and to explore ways to support committee work across the broader CCAC.
- **Climate Leaders in Residence (CLIR):** Our first Climate Leader in Residence for 2025, Dr. Jessica Castner, will formally begin her residency on March 3rd. During her one-year appointment Castner will work closely with university leaders in and outside of the health system to push forward Duke's work at the nexus of climate and health. She is hosted by Dr. Valerie Sabol (Nursing) and housed at the School of Nursing. Additionally, the subcommittee is reviewing new 2025 CLIR nominees to recommend our second 2025 resident. The latest round of nominees have backgrounds from international trade law to clean tech venture capital and just energy transition. A final selection will be made in mid-March.

Operations Subcommittee

Chairs: Lindsay Batchelor (OCS) and Russell Thompson (Facilities)

- **3-Year Sustainable Operations Strategy Development**: The Operations Subcommittee continued discussions on setting goals for sustainable campus operations. Setting goals for

operational sustainability topics (e.g. GHG emissions, transportation, waste, etc.) requires in-depth understanding of current state and existing data for each topic before being able to set strategic priorities. There are various groups being convened (e.g. the Alternative Transportation Working Group) to develop the baseline understanding of where Duke is today and which goals Duke can feasibly achieve. The process for including Duke University Health System (DUHS) in this strategy was also discussed.

- **Sustainable Operations Data**: Subcommittee members emphasized the need for actionable data being gathered and assessed regularly (e.g. annually) to fine tune the strategy going forward. Also, it was recognized that some operations topics have easier access to data (e.g. energy and GHG emissions) while other topics are more difficult (e.g. waste and transportation).

Research Subcommittee

Chairs: Norman Wirzba (OCS/Divinity) and Prasad Kasibhatla (Nicholas School)

- **Open Discussion on Federal Funding Changes & Impacts on Research**: The subcommittee discussed the unpredictable landscape of federal research funding due to administrative changes at the federal level. Concerns were raised about potential drastic cuts to National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Science Foundation (NSF) budgets, proposed layoffs affecting NSF staff, and the reduction of indirect costs on federally funded research. Additionally, potential new policies taxing university endowments and the increased competition for private funding were discussed.
- **Review of Climate Commitment Research Funding Database**: A new internal database has been created to track Climate Commitment-funded research projects for tracking and evaluation. The subcommittee reviewed the system in preparation for their evaluative review. This spring members will conduct a gap analysis on awarded projects, preparing for a more in-depth review of grant effectiveness relative to project success/impact in the autumn. Committee members were tasked with reviewing the RFP database to begin identifying gaps in funding distribution, recommending success indicators, and suggesting structures/process for the review process. Direct outreach to PIs and a standardized survey were suggested to enhance the evaluation of project impacts.
- **Climate Justice event**: A Climate Justice Research Networking Event has been scheduled for April 1st at JB Duke Hotel to convene multiple faculty working in the EJ/CJ space to clarify the network at Duke, build communications channels, and discover shared vision and opportunities.
- **Research Webinar**: A webinar on research infrastructure and support for climate researchers was hosted the day after the meeting by Office of Research Initiatives on February 13th.

Community Partnerships Working Group

While Community Partnerships is a pillar of the Climate Commitment, it is not a separate CCAC subcommittee. Instead, there are Duke Community Affairs staff members on each subcommittee with the goal of infusing community partnerships across the other Climate Commitment pillars.

- **Climate Commitment Student Town Hall**: On March 24th from 6-8pm, the Office of Climate and Sustainability, in collaboration with Duke Community Affairs, is hosting its semesterly student town hall. Please encourage interested students to register in advance of the town hall.

***Current CCAC Membership List**