Climate Commitment Advisory Council – Monthly Update

April 2025

Leadership Team

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

- **Three-Year Plan and Next Steps Presentations**: Each subcommittee presented a high-level summary of their three-year plans as well as their plans to make progress on the recommended initiatives during the summer and fall. Members of the CCAC Leadership Team were impressed with the direction each subcommittee is heading and provided recommendations of ways to connect their work to other subcommittees and other programs and initiatives at Duke like FOCUS and alumni education and engagement.
- **Planning for Summer Efforts**: Tavey Capps and Jason Elliott (OCS) will develop a streamlined three-year planning document that will be shared publicly as well as the process for gathering feedback from the broader Duke and Durham communities. They will also onboard new students, staff, and faculty who are joining the CCAC in the fall.
- **Reflecting on the Past Year**: Members of the Leadership Team shared their thoughts on the past year of the CCAC. Each subcommittee had a dedicated, core groups of members who participated actively in each meeting and strategized ways to further increase participation next year. For the dedicated members, subcommittee chairs would like to find ways to recognize their efforts as they were instrumental in the success of each subcommittee's final deliverables. Toddi, Tavey, and Brian expressed their gratitude to each member of the Leadership Team for their passion and participation and that the recommendations they provided are central to the future of the Duke Climate Commitment.

Education Subcommittee

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

- **Finalizing Three-Year Plan:** Subcommittee members voted on their level of agreement with the plan in its current draft (updated since previous meeting); broad support for the revised draft was given, with only a few minor tweaks. The plan articulates three goals for activating the campus community to make climate and sustainability (C&S) education: (1) widespread and accessible; (2) experiential and innovative; and (3) career-relevant, and personally meaningful for all Duke learners – students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
- **Previewing Competencies Task Force Work:** A task force of the subcommittee proposed a heuristic as a way to guide schools in shaping their own C&S competencies. Questions arose around balancing discipline-specific approaches with shared climate fluency goals, recognizing the importance of foundational climate knowledge alongside broader ways

of thinking and doing. Discussion also connected back to the C&S Fluency Framework and a need to connect the competencies task force to that document – in the form of revisions to the existing document.

- **Reflecting on AY 24-25:** The subcommittee reflected on the year's accomplishments and challenges. Highlights included expanded partnerships and integration of C&S content across different parts of the university (e.g., through the Nasher Museum's Second Nature exhibit). Recommendations were given for ways to foster deeper collaboration within the subcommittee and across to other subcommittees. There was a shared sense of pride in the work and a strong commitment to continuing these endeavors.

External Engagement Subcommittee

Chair: Lydia Olander (Nicholas Institute)

- **Closing Out the Year:** At the final meeting, subcommittee members discussed the three-year strategic plan and discussed an outreach plan across the Duke community. Members discussed how to best speak with different audiences about their priorities and needs with regards to external engagement.
- **External Engagement Outreach Underway:** Initial meetings with university leaders are underway and a student town hall for Fall 2025 is planned. Subcommittee members have signed up to meet with their colleagues and leaders in their schools/units. The subcommittee hopes to complete these feedback discussions by the middle of the fall semester.
- **Climate Leaders in Residence (CLIR) Update:** CCAC Leadership, with support from the subcommittee, selected two new Climate Leaders in Residence for 2025-2026. They will be announced publicly in the coming months.
- **Climate Collaboration Symposia Update:** Plans are underway for three Fall 2025 Climate Collaboration Symposia. The symposia series is meant to accelerate climate solutions by fostering new collaborations between Duke researchers and external partners and the External Engagement subcommittee selects each year's symposia. Topics include health system sustainability; just, climate-appropriate food systems; and geothermal energy possibilities at Duke and peer institutions. Dates for these symposia will be announced as soon as they are scheduled.

Operations Subcommittee

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

- **Final Three-Year Plan Discussion:** Subcommittee members discussed the final draft of the three-year plan draft and provided feedback. There were questions related to community engagement work that is ongoing on campus and how that should be incorporated into the plan. Duke Facilities Management Department has a placeholder in the three-year plan as they work through the five-year capital planning process, and this section will be updated pursuant to the completion of that process.

- **Health System Update:** Duke University Health System (DUHS) previously had a placeholder as they work through their own planning process (taking place over summer). However, DUHS staff provided high level goals for the final draft of the three-year plan that will be fleshed out as their work progresses. Julie Somarriba (DUHS) provided an update on what that summer planning process looks like and gave context to the high-level goals in the final draft of the plan.

Research Subcommittee

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

- **Year-in-Review Highlights** - The subcommittee reviewed successful initiatives from the past academic year, including the Catalyzing Climate Connections Researcher Forum and the university-wide Research Day. These events facilitated cross-disciplinary dialogue and showcased research aligned with strategic climate areas.
- **Climate Justice Gathering** – Subcommittee members heard a recap of the Just Futures dinner held earlier in April with faculty working in climate and environmental justice. This event at JB Duke Hotel was an opportunity to open dialogue about forwarding climate justice work, especially in our new circumstances. Review the notes here.
- **Duke Kunshan University's Director of Research Overview –** The subcommittee was delighted to hear from member Kai Huang who detailed his Director of Research role at DKU, emphasizing the focus on sustainability and student-led research. He noted significant potential for deeper collaboration between Duke and DKU, particularly around shared climate and sustainability goals, building on existing efforts to integrate DKU's work with Duke's broader climate initiative.
- **Three-Year Plan Progress** - Discussions covered advancing the subcommittee's draft three-year plan. Key items in the plan include developing an evaluation framework for the seed grant program, supporting postdoctoral efforts to foster interdisciplinary work and creating a comprehensive inventory of climate research using tools like Scholars@Duke and potentially AI analysis.

Community Partnerships Working Group

- **Future Planning**: Tavey Capps, Executive Director of Climate and Sustainability, will continue to convene Duke Community Affairs staff connected to Duke's Climate Commitment this summer. They will work to refine draft recommendations for the Community Partnerships pillar of the Duke Climate Commitment, which will be shared out during the fall semester.

***Current CCAC Membership List**