

FUTURE Act - Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions

We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly to stem the worst impacts of climate change while also addressing the inequities in Maryland communities most impacted by climate change. The University System of Maryland is the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the state government. Universities represent youth building better futures for themselves and researchers who are at the forefront of climate science. It would be irresponsible for universities to not take strong action to curb their own climate impact as well as to advance climate education and environmental and economic justice.

The Policy Solution

1. [Mandate carbon neutrality for Maryland public four-year universities by 2035 \(scopes 1 and 2 by 2025\)](#)

Maryland public universities must achieve complete carbon neutrality by 2035, with an interim goal of carbon neutrality for direct emissions and purchased electricity by 2025. Universities cannot purchase carbon offsets to achieve neutrality for scopes 1 and 2 after 2055.

- **Direct emissions** (Scope 1) includes emissions produced on campus (boilers, central heating plants, university owned vehicles, etc.)
- **Purchased electricity** (Scope 2) includes emissions from purchased electricity
- **Induced emissions** (Scope 3) includes emissions burned on behalf of the university (air travel for faculty and staff, commuting, etc.)

2. [Create Environmental and Economic Justice Scholarship Fund](#)

By adding carbon to the atmosphere, universities are contributing to climate change and adding co-pollutants to their communities. These harms are falling disproportionately on low-income and minority communities. The Economic and Environmental Justice Scholarship Fund will reduce the cost of higher education for students from Maryland communities suffering from climate change and/or from disproportionate pollution burden and health disparities. When universities purchase carbon offsets, the cost of each carbon offset will be subtracted from the social cost of carbon and the difference will go to the Fund. The structure of the Fund forces the universities to pay the entire social cost of carbon to realize the full damages from climate change.

3. [Create/strengthen Offices of Sustainability](#)

To ensure the bill's requirements are met, universities must establish an Office of Sustainability. Sustainability staff can create greater understanding of climate science, energy consumption, waste systems, and environmental injustices so our public universities can continue to produce well-rounded and well-informed students.

By requiring that offices meet regularly and share best practices and resources, the bill attempts to reduce resource inequities that exist among institutions. The communication between offices will foster new cross-university relationships, programs, and create a coalition of sustainability in Maryland higher education.

4. [Lay the foundation for a Sustainability General Education Requirement](#)

The bill requires a feasibility study on implementing a Sustainability General Education Requirement. Sustainability education guarantees that all graduates of a public institution in the state have a strong understanding of climate science and environmental justice.

What's Happening at Colleges and Universities in Other States

According to [*Second Nature*](#), a nonprofit organization that works with faculty and administrators at hundreds of colleges and universities to help make sustainability principles fundamental to every aspect of higher education, fewer than 10 U.S. colleges and universities have achieved carbon neutrality. These institutions of higher education operate such that their input of energy, water, food, etc. is equal to or less than their output. In other words, they have a “net-zero” carbon footprint. Maryland public colleges and universities should join the list of carbon neutral institutions.

For more information contact MaryPIRG Student Climate Action Coalition at mscacoalition@gmail.com.