

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
Committee on Campus Operations
(Final; Action)

CO.16.01 Resolution in Support of the Illinois Climate Action Plan

BACKGROUND

The pioneering efforts of University of Illinois alumnus Charles David Keeling in the late 1950s and early 1960s led to the realization that the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in Earth's atmosphere rises and falls each year as the terrestrial biosphere "breathes," but is steadily rising over time. Based on a variety of evidence, it is now clear that this overall rise is primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels. The amplification of the greenhouse effect by rising CO₂ concentrations has been equally clear, resulting in the 16 hottest years recorded since 1880 all occurring from 1998-2015 (NOAA). As CO₂ concentrations continue to rise, driven largely by the continuing growth of the world economy, scientists forecast continued warming and climate variability, with long-lasting and potentially irreversible impacts on sea levels, biodiversity, and agriculture.

In 2008, Illinois signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which committed our campus to carbon neutrality—eliminating or offsetting all carbon dioxide emissions—by the year 2050. In 2015, Interim Chancellor Wilson endorsed an updated Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP), which lays out objectives and potential strategies in the areas of energy conservation and building standards, energy generation and purchasing, transportation, water conservation, waste management and recycling, landscaping and agricultural operations, carbon offsets, financing of new initiatives, and education, research, and outreach (<http://sustainability.illinois.edu/campus-sustainability/icap/>). We note that the campus has made progress in reducing its energy usage, and exceeded many of its initial goals set in 2010. It is clear, however, that substantially greater efforts will be required in order to fulfill the iCAP goals on time.

Our student body has long been at the forefront of pushing for reductions in the environmental impacts of our campus operations. We believe it is time for the Senate to strongly endorse support of sustainability, and to call on the administration to make the implementation of the 2015 iCAP goals on the stated timeline a priority for the allocation of funding and human resources while maintaining the university's tradition of excellence in scholarly activities. The very future of the University may depend on it.

Resolution in Support of the Illinois Climate Action Plan

WHEREAS the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has been steadily rising since the pioneering measurements of University of Illinois alumnus Charles David Keeling began in 1958, and

WHEREAS this increase is predominantly due to combustion of fossil fuels, and

WHEREAS the broad consensus of the climate science community (including experts at the University of Illinois) is that the increase of carbon dioxide concentration and that of other greenhouse gases is altering Earth's climate, increasing average temperatures, and increasing climate variability, and

WHEREAS such changes in Earth's climate have the potential to threaten the productivity of modern agriculture, disrupt coastal populations around the world, and cause profound economic damage, and

WHEREAS dependence on fossil fuels has a negative impact on air quality and human health, and

WHEREAS in 2008 Illinois signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which committed our campus to carbon neutrality by the year 2050, and

WHEREAS the 2010 Climate Action Plan established realistic goals for energy consumption that assisted us in reducing our energy use per square foot by 20% from FY08 to FY14, saving the campus over \$16 million, and

WHEREAS further steps toward carbon neutrality will require campus-wide support of significant new or additional efforts coordinated across the campus community,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the University of Illinois should reduce its carbon footprint as quickly as possible in order to help prevent devastating climate disruption, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Illinois should take a leadership role by demonstrating how large organizations can effectively eliminate their carbon footprint, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Senate recommends that the administration make it a top priority to allocate funding and human resources to the full and rapid implementation of the goals of the 2015 Illinois Climate Action Plan while maintaining the tradition of excellence in scholarly activities that define the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a world-leading research and teaching institution.

Committee on Campus Operations

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