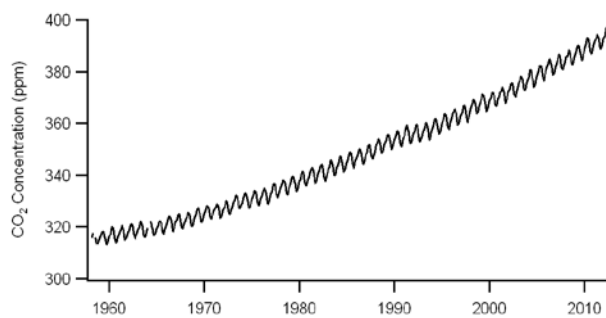


UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
Committee on Campus Operations
Prefiled Resolution
(Final; Action)

CO.13.03 Resolution in Support of the Illinois Climate Action Plan

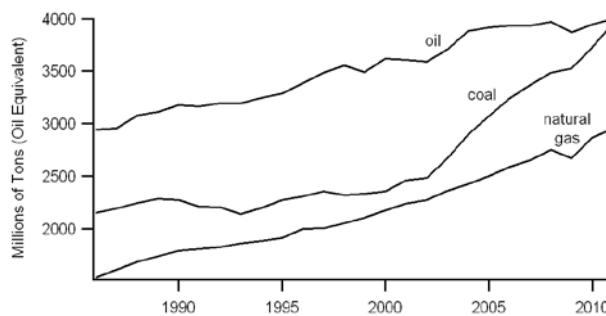
BACKGROUND

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. Today, the atmospheric CO₂ concentration is approaching 400 parts per million (ppm), which climate scientists agree is already high enough to significantly impact Earth's climate. In recent decades, global average temperatures have clearly been rising: a recent report from NOAA stated that November 2012 was the 333rd consecutive month with global average temperature above the 20th-century average. The variability in climate conditions is also increasing, and many have suggested that recent events such as the Midwestern drought of 2012 and Hurricane Sandy may be related to climate change.



Source: Scripps CO₂ Program; Mauna Loa Observatory

Global average temperatures and climate variability are expected to further increase if atmospheric CO₂ levels continue to rise, and there are concerns that a "tipping point" may be reached that will irreversibly alter the climate on human timescales. Potential impacts, in addition to the burden of unusual weather, range from the flooding of coastal communities due to sea-level rise to profound changes and decreased yields in Midwestern agriculture. The obvious, but difficult, solution is to stop polluting the atmosphere with CO₂. However, the



Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2012

continuing growth of the world economy is leading to an increase in fossil fuel consumption; in recent years most of the growth has been in coal, which has the highest CO₂ emissions. The fact that oil production has plateaued despite record high prices has led many observers to suggest that a peak in world oil production is imminent; such a peak is inevitable because the Earth is finite, although the timing is still uncertain.

Obviously, the University of Illinois cannot solve these problems on its own. However, it can (and should, in our opinion) take a leadership role by becoming carbon neutral as soon as possible; our efforts can serve as a model for other universities and other large organizations. Just as importantly, proactively reducing our use of fossil fuels is financially prudent as it will limit our exposure to volatile and generally rising energy prices, as well as any emissions-based taxes that may be implemented in the future. In the long term, the use of non-renewable energy resources may be an existential threat to the University, since practices that are unsustainable cannot (by definition) be sustained.

In 2008, Illinois signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which committed our campus to carbon neutrality by the year 2050. In May 2010, Interim Chancellor Easter presented the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP), which consists of broad goals and strategies to achieve this goal. Since that time, the campus has made progress in reducing its energy usage, and exceeded many of its initial goals. However, it is clear

that substantially more resources will need to be invested 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, and we believe it is time for the Senate to make a strong statement in support of sustainability, and to call on the administration to make the implementation of the iCAP goals on the stated timeline a top priority for the allocation of funding and human resources. The very future of the University may depend on it.

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

WHEREAS this increase is predominantly due to human 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 these changes may already be occurring, as evidenced most recently by the extreme Midwest drought of 2012 and the "superstorm" Sandy, and

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

WHEREAS it is likely that the price of fossil fuels will be volatile and continue to rise in the future, as demand continues to increase in the face of finite supplies,

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the reputation of the University of Illinois would be enhanced by taking a leadership role in demonstrating how large organizations can effectively eliminate their carbon footprint, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the financial stability of the University of Illinois would be improved by making substantial up-front investments to reduce long-term energy costs, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Senate recommends that the administration make it a top priority, in terms of allocating both funding and human resources, to fully implement the goals of the Illinois Climate Action Plan on time or, preferably, ahead of schedule.

Committee on Campus Operations

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