

*To President Pamela Whitten, Vice President Tom Morrison, and Provost Rahul Shrivastav*

We are writing on behalf of Concerned Scientists @IU\*, a grassroots, non-partisan campus and community organization consisting of scientists, students, community members, and supporters of science. On behalf of CSIU's 1200 members and its affiliate student organization, Advocates for Science @IU, **we write to express our strong support for visionary university action to address climate change.**

On June 20, 2021, nearly fifty of America's major scientific organizations issued a statement—copied below—advocating urgent and bold action to address the challenge of anthropogenic climate change, as emphasized in the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC21), and the Fourth U.S. National Climate Assessment. We are writing here to express our strong support for climate action at our own institution, Indiana University.

Throughout their history, America's universities have been leaders in addressing critical societal issues, from civil rights to religious freedom, from sustainable development around the world to diversity and equity at home. The challenge of anthropogenic climate change is arguably the existential issue of our time. It presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Indiana University to decrease its direct impacts on the global environment, thus setting a model in the state of Indiana, while promoting, on a global level, critical research, education, and community engagement for citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The global scientific community has come to a clear consensus on the major issues surrounding global climate change, as summarized in the most recent IPCC and U.S. National Climate Assessment reports:

- (1) Our understanding of climate science, including links to extreme weather, is stronger than ever. The human influence on Earth's climate system is now irrefutable.
- (2) Based on current trajectories, we are on a course to reach 1.5 °C warming over a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century baseline within the next two decades. Land areas—where people live and crops are grown—are warming at an even faster rate.
- (3) Limiting global warming below 2 °C by the end of the century—which is essential to mitigate the most severe impacts of climate change—is still attainable but requires transformational change.
- (4) The climatic changes we are already observing and experiencing are unprecedented in recent history and will affect every region of the globe.
- (5) Unless significant and rapid efforts are implemented to limit the course and effects of global climate change, these environmental changes will threaten our health and quality of life.

Climate change is prevalent today. It is no longer an issue with distant or far-future impacts. As multiple initiatives sponsored by Indiana University's own Environmental Resilience Institute have demonstrated, our own state of Indiana is experiencing the direct effects of climate change, including hotter temperatures, flooding, and more severe storms. As a consequence of human-caused climate change, other parts of the U.S. are enduring severe droughts and forest fires, disrupting many lives and livelihoods. The frequency and magnitude of these events will continue to worsen if we do not act, and our own students will pay the steepest price for inaction. As Americans, we belong to one of the world's leading carbon-emitting countries—our state is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in per capita carbon emissions—which empowers us with a singular responsibility and duty to do everything we can to set an example and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to help curtail their accumulation in Earth's atmosphere.

Indiana University has an opportunity to play a leadership role in addressing these challenges. Our scientists are developing more accurate models of the global climate system and tracking its impacts; social scientists are assessing the costs and benefits of climate mitigation and adaptation; our professional schools are contributing new policies directed toward resilience and sustainability, and our scholars in the humanities can articulate those policies and document the history of human interactions with the planet. IU's existing research centers with expertise in the environment, such as the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) and the Center for Rural Engagement, along with educational initiatives like IU's Educating for Environmental Change program, can contribute to this effort. And a visible and interconnected program of climate education and climate action, as evidenced by the success of our Interdisciplinary Program in the Environment (IPE), is essential to help attract and retain the best and brightest of the next generation of college students. If IU is to continue its leadership role in working with Hoosier communities on environmental stewardship, it must "walk the talk" and demonstrate its own decisive commitment to climate action. IU's laudable commitment to diversity must consider climate change as an existential threat to that commitment. It is precisely the IU students and Hoosier communities that have been historically marginalized socioeconomically who stand to lose the most.

Yet, in the absence of a well-defined plan for climate action, IU is rapidly becoming an outlier among prestigious public universities. **Of the 14 Big Ten universities, IU is one of only three without a formal plan for climate action.** Major leading public universities such as the University of Washington, University of Arizona, and UC Berkeley have already set ambitious climate action plans into motion, as have many of our neighboring Indiana universities, including Ball State and Notre Dame. As a major global institution, IU should join the 1,050 universities from 68 countries who have formally committed to halving their emissions by 2030 and reaching net-zero by 2050. IU's University Faculty Council, the Bloomington and IUPUI faculty councils, and IU Student Government have issued resolutions calling for the formation and rapid implementation of a Climate Action Plan.

On this basis, we request that the IU administration:

- (1) Make a formal commitment to create a university climate action plan that can realize a commitment to carbon neutrality by a specified date;
- (2) Convene a campus-specific, task force, co-led by faculty under the university's faculty council leadership, consisting of stakeholders from IU faculty, staff, student, and administrative groups, charged to create an implementation plan for climate action;
- (3) Charge the Task Force with addressing the full scope of IU's climate impacts, including direct and indirect greenhouse gas generation, as well as opportunities for conservation, renewable energy generation, carbon sequestration and offsets, and investment priorities;
- (4) Ensure that the creation of the task force involves collaboration with student and faculty governance organizations, incorporates relevant academic expertise on climate science and policy from IU faculty, and includes the full engagement of IU's Office of Sustainability;
- (5) Ensure that Task Force meetings and products are organized with a commitment to openness and transparency to the IU community.

Submitted on Wednesday, February 23, on behalf of Concerned Scientists @IU.

*\*Concerned Scientists @ IU is dedicated to strengthening the essential role of science in public policy and evidence-based decision-making. ASIU consists of students from diverse academic disciplines. While many of our members are faculty, students or staff at Indiana University, our organization does not officially represent the University.*

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**Joint Statement on Climate Action from 48 scientific organizations**

[A copy of the original statement and full list of signatories is available [here](#).]

*The undersigned major scientific organizations write to express the evidence-based urgency of boldly addressing climate change and encourage you to act quickly.*

*Observations throughout the world make it clear climate change is occurring and rapidly intensifying. Rigorous scientific research concludes greenhouse gases (GHG) emitted by human activities are the primary driver. The basic physical science behind climate change is well understood and not the subject of serious scientific debate. There is strong evidence that ongoing climate change is having broad negative impacts on society, including the global economy, our shared environment and oceans, and human health. The severity of climate change impacts is likely to increase significantly in the coming decades.<sup>[1]</sup>*

*To reduce the risk of the most severe impacts of climate change, anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions must be substantially reduced. Additionally, it is imperative we invest heavily in adaptation and mitigation strategies to improve resilience, including substantial infrastructure upgrades. Rapid action is necessary to avoid potentially disastrous consequences for health, biodiversity, food security, water availability, and national security.*

*Leading with science will be critical to understanding and addressing the effects of climate change, and the entire scientific community will play a role in addressing this emergency. Robust support for climate research and forecasting, including the social sciences to address human and ecological impacts, will be necessary to meet this global challenge.*

*The science makes it clear that bold action is needed to address the climate crisis. The undersigned scientific community is not only up to the challenge, but also stands ready to assist you with solutions.*