A Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency

Resolution History

Driven by a sense of innovation and the desire to improve the relationship between humankind and the environment upon which we rely, the student body has been instrumental in guiding sustainability efforts at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder). CU students have consistently voted to implement green initiatives using their student fees and are a significant reason why the University is heralded as a national leader in sustainability.
Additionally, student-funded sustainability initiatives have enhanced the finances, efficiencies, and satisfaction ratings of the University of Colorado System (CU System). By implementing sustainability solutions, the CU System can foreseeably increase revenues, save money, and leverage purchasing efforts to heighten performance. Achieving these goals positions the CU System not only as a leader in sustainability but also as a leader in promoting and enhancing higher education for all students.

Throughout campus history, students have continuously translated their environmental vision into innovative leadership and decisive impact on the CU System. One such example comes from the student-created and operated Ralphie’s Green Stampede program. The first of its kind in the NCAA, this sustainable athletics program has received revenues in recent years of ~$500,000 per year, according to Buff Sports Properties. Furthermore, in response to demands from the student body, CU Boulder has committed to investing in LEED-Gold buildings, per the voluntary student referendum bonding allocation of student fees to pay for the Wolf Law School Building, the Koelbel Business School addition, and the Atlas Institute. That vote was contingent upon CU constructing those buildings resource-efficiently and meeting LEED standards, thus significantly reducing the long-term maintenance costs for CU Boulder. Students are also the leaders of the CU Boulder Environmental Center and the center’s actions throughout the past 50 years have done much to increase the accessibility, affordability, and accountability of higher education.

Today, students are turning their attention to an existential threat to the CU System, the Colorado community, and the world at large: climate change. Carbon emissions are increasing faster than ever before and average global temperatures are expected to exceed a 1.5°C increase from pre-industrial revolution times by 2030. In Colorado, the snowpack is expected to decrease by 50% in the coming century, wildfires have increased in frequency and intensity, pests such as mosquitoes and pine beetles now linger year-round, and floods similar to those seen in Boulder in 2013, are becoming increasingly common. The impact of such changes will be felt by all forms of life for centuries.

Students of CU Boulder expressed the necessity for climate action on September 20th of this year in a Climate Strike seeking four demands: the CU System must declare a climate emergency, commit to carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest, provide transparency into the University of Colorado Endowment Fund,
and adopt a system-wide sustainability plan created by collaborating groups of students, faculty, staff, community members, and administration at all campuses.

These student demands require immediate action from both Campus and System Administration. It must be recognized that sustainability and efficiency are one and the same for the CU Boulder and the CU System. By working together to propel sustainability initiatives, students and University Administration can turn an emergency into opportunity and drive the CU System into a new era of leadership in all aspects of higher education.

Whereas, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased by almost 50% since 1990.

Whereas, given current concentrations and on-going emissions of greenhouse gases, it is likely that by the end of 2030 the increase in average global temperature since pre-industrial revolution times will exceed 1.5°C.

Whereas, impacts of climate change have already been felt in the Colorado community and threaten the health of students, strategic University partnerships, and higher education in the state as a whole.

Whereas, major institutional change is cited by the IPCC as one of the few methods of ensuring that the global mean temperature does not rise 2.0°C above pre-industrial levels.

Whereas, 95% of CU Boulder students surveyed in 2017 think that climate change is a legitimate concern for their generation.

Whereas, 95% of CU Boulder students wish to lower their carbon footprint, and the declaration of an emergency gives the average student resources to achieve this.

Whereas, 92% of CU Boulder Students surveyed in 2017 indicate that it is important for CU Boulder to have a strong commitment to environmental sustainability.
Whereas, on September 20th, 2019, nearly 500 protestors gathered on Norlin Quad to voice the need for immediate action in regards to the climate emergency and laid out the four demands of the CU System.

Whereas, numerous students from all four CU Campuses participated in the 7,500-person strong Climate Strike at Colorado’s Capitol Building on that same date.

Whereas, student-led and student-funded sustainability initiatives including, but not limited to: Ralphie’s Green Stampede, LEED-certified buildings, the continued purchase of renewable energy credits, carbon-neutral student fee-funded buildings, the CU Boulder Environmental Center, the CU Boulder Recycling Center, the CU Boulder Student Bus Pass, the Sustainable CU Boulder Grant Fund, and the requirement for zero-waste campus and dining services have established CU Boulder as a leader in sustainability and markedly improved the University’s finances, efficiencies, and satisfaction ratings.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Legislative Council of the University of Colorado Boulder Student Government, THAT:

Section 1: The University of Colorado Student Government (CUSG) officially declares a Climate Emergency.

Section 2: CUSG honors the demands of the University of Colorado Boulder Climate Strike Student Protestors and calls upon the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Colorado System to a) declare a climate emergency, b) commit to carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest, c) provide transparency into the University of Colorado Endowment Fund, d) adopt and maintain a system-wide sustainability plan created by collaborating group of students, faculty, staff, community members, and administration at all campuses.

i. CUSG emphasizes A Resolution of Support to Rework the Conceptual Plan for Carbon Neutrality at the University of Colorado Boulder and the calls of student protestors to achieve these goals with the help of an updated Conceptual Plan for Carbon Neutrality at the University of Colorado Boulder.

ii. CUSG stresses that 2050 is a conservative deadline for carbon neutrality and that the elimination of carbon emissions is of the utmost urgency. To
maintain its position as a leader in sustainability and maximize increases in finances, efficiency, and satisfaction ratings, the University of Colorado System must strive for carbon neutrality by the earliest possible date.

iii. CUSG calls for any committee or group established within the University of Colorado System to create and maintain a system-wide sustainability plan to consist of at least one undergraduate and one graduate student who attend the campus to which the committee or group pertains.

Section 3: CUSG urges the leadership of the Regents of the University of Colorado System to establish a system-wide sustainability curriculum requirement including social equity, environmental protection, and economic development, following the Regent-approved model of the University of Colorado Colorado Springs' Sustainability Compass Curriculum Requirement.

i. In recognizing that sustainability is an important topic in all fields of study and to help students meet this requirement, CUSG insists that a unified sustainability curriculum be developed and integrated into all academic majors System-wide, per the UCCS approach and thus increasing campus ratings in the Sustainability Reporting, Assessment, and Reporting System (STARS).

ii. CUSG recommends that the sustainability curriculum requirement be announced at the 50th-anniversary celebration of the CU Boulder Environmental Center on April 22, 2020, and that the sustainability curriculum be implemented in the Fall 2020 semester.

Section 4: Upon passage, copies of this resolution shall be distributed to the student body, the Colorado General Assembly, the Board of Regents, CU President Mark Kennedy, CU Boulder Chancellor Phil DiStefano, CU Boulder Vice-Chancellor David Kang, Governor Jared Polis, Representative Joe Neguse, and the media.

Section 5: This resolution shall take effect upon passage by the Legislative Council and upon either obtaining the signature of two Tri-Executives or the lapse of six days without action of the Tri-Executives.
### Vote Count:

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**Ryan Passas**  
Student Body President

**Nicholas Kennedy**  
Student Body President

**Michael Martin**  
Student Body President

**Sarah Altshuler**  
President of Legislative Council

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**See attached Appendices:**
- Appendix A: LEED Certified Green Buildings at CU-Boulder
- Appendix B: Summary for Policymakers
- Appendix C: Impacts in Colorado
- Appendix D: Boulder Climate Strike 2019
- Appendix E: 2017 Campus Sustainability Survey