

Columbia Sustainability Resolution

WHEREAS, perhaps the most pervasive and important global issues facing our generation are environmental degradation and neglect, and

WHEREAS, the research of the university's Earth Institute and faculty concerning the grave need for global action to curb the negative effects of human action on the environment, ought to be followed up with specific commitments by the university to reduce its own effect on the environment, and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Ivy League-wide resolution on climate-neutrality includes more general goals that apply across the school, and for such goals to have any meaning, more direct and local action is necessary, and

WHEREAS, Columbia is in a unique position as an academic leader to create a campus conducive to finding solutions to these great problems by promoting environmental sustainability in its purchasing, building, and education decisions, and

WHEREAS, CCSC has the ability to lobby the administration and has an interest in serving the needs and demands of students in areas of greater social concern,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED,

The university ought to more effectively audit its own environmental impact. Understanding the social and environmental impacts of the university's daily operations is a critical first step towards mitigating them. A reasonable model for this is the Penn State Indicators Report, released in 1998 (second edition 2001)¹. Such research can be conducted by an outside institution (Carbon Disclosure Project²) or can be conducted more beneficially by a collaboration of administrators, staff, students, and faculty. Results from such research should be posted for open access by the Columbia community as the results come in.

Also along the lines of greater transparency and information, it is necessary that the university install effective per-building monitoring systems to gauge energy and water-consumption and waste output. By measuring per-building usage, energy-saving can be encouraged by informing students, faculty, and administrators of exactly how much energy and water they are using.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

In order to reduce energy and water usage, systems should be installed that are more efficient. The university should more rapidly expand its installation of water saving mechanisms, including dual-flush, low-flow toilets, front-load washing machines, low-flow shower heads, and water-free urinals, to all parts of the university. Where at all feasible, all lighting should be

¹ Bio.psu.edu/greendstiny/pyublications.html

² www.cdproject.net

converted to high-efficiency fluorescent bulbs, and dimming settings and motion and light sensors added to all switches. While these energy and water saving mechanisms are available in certain parts of the university, they must be more quickly implemented. Moreover, a concrete timeline—not merely a general goal—must be established by the university.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

All new construction and major building renovations should meet LEED³ standards for environmental friendliness. This is particularly important as the university considers expansion into West Harlem.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

CCSC ought to help the cause of supporting sustainability education of the Columbia community. This could be possible through supporting energy contests (e.g. Recyclemania), coordinating with NSOP for an event on sustainable living, provide information on green living in each housing packet that goes to incoming first-years, and increasing the reach of the presence of the Eco-Reps program by fostering a relationship with the RA program.

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Contributing Groups,

EarthCo.
Green Umbrella
Students for Environmental and Economic Justice

³ Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. < <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>>