

# American College & University Presidents

## Climate Commitment

April 22, 2008

We, the undersigned presidents and chancellors of colleges and universities, are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects. We recognize the scientific consensus that global warming is real and is largely being caused by humans. We further recognize the need to reduce the global emission of greenhouse gases by 80% by mid-century at the latest, in order to avert the worst impacts of global warming and to reestablish the more stable climatic conditions that have made human progress over the last 10,000 years possible.

While we understand that there might be short-term challenges associated with this effort, we believe that there will be great short-, medium-, and long-term economic, health, social and environmental benefits, including achieving energy independence for the U.S. as quickly as possible.

We believe colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by modeling ways to minimize global warming emissions, and by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates to achieve climate neutrality. Campuses that address the climate challenge by reducing global warming emissions and by integrating sustainability into their curriculum will better serve their students and meet their social mandate to help create a thriving, ethical and civil society. These colleges and universities will be providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to address the critical, systemic challenges faced by the world in this new century and enable them to benefit from the economic opportunities that will arise as a result of solutions they develop.

We further believe that colleges and universities that exert leadership in addressing climate change will stabilize and reduce their long-term energy costs, attract excellent students and faculty, attract new sources of funding, and increase the support of alumni and local communities.

### Accordingly, we commit our institutions to taking the following steps in pursuit of climate neutrality:


1. Initiate the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible.
  - a. Within two months of signing this document, create institutional structures to guide the development and implementation of the plan.
  - b. Within one year of signing this document, complete a comprehensive inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions (including emissions from electricity, heating, commuting, and air travel) and update the inventory every other year thereafter.
  - c. Within two years of signing this document, develop an institutional action plan for becoming climate neutral, which will include:
    - i. A target date for achieving climate neutrality as soon as possible.
    - ii. Interim targets for goals and actions that will lead to climate neutrality.
    - iii. Actions to make climate neutrality and sustainability a part of the curriculum and other educational experience for all students.
    - iv. Actions to expand research or other efforts necessary to achieve climate neutrality.
    - v. Mechanisms for tracking progress on goals and actions.
2. Initiate two or more of the following tangible actions to reduce greenhouse gases while the more comprehensive plan is being developed.
  - a. Establish a policy that all new campus construction will be built to at least the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard or equivalent.
  - b. Adopt an energy-efficient appliance purchasing policy requiring purchase of ENERGY STAR certified products in all areas for which such ratings exist.
  - c. Establish a policy of offsetting all greenhouse gas emissions generated by air travel paid for by our institution.
  - d. Encourage use of and provide access to public transportation for all faculty, staff, students and visitors at our institution.
  - e. Within one year of signing this document, begin purchasing or producing at least 15% of our institution's electricity consumption from renewable sources.
  - f. Establish a policy or a committee that supports climate and sustainability shareholder proposals at companies where our institution's endowment is invested.
  - g. Participate in the Waste Minimization component of the national RecycleMania competition, and adopt 3 or more associated measures to reduce waste.
3. Make the action plan, inventory, and periodic progress reports publicly available by providing them to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for posting and dissemination.

In recognition of the need to build support for this effort among college and university administrations across America, we will encourage other presidents to join this effort and become signatories to this commitment.


Signed,

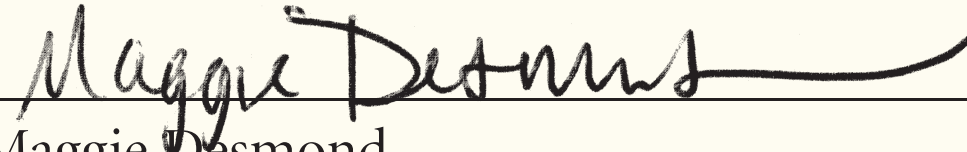
  
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President Steven Knapp  
The George Washington University

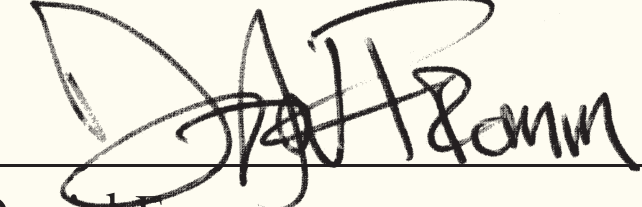
Co-signers,

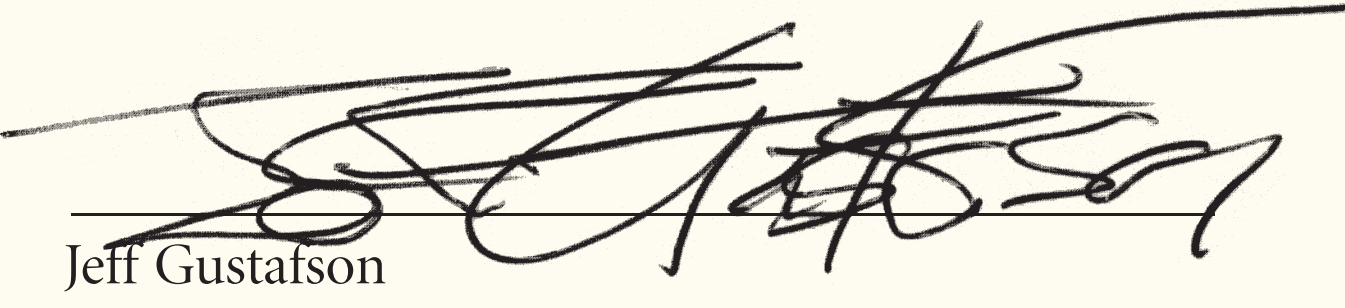
  
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Mark Starik, Co-Chairman  
The George Washington University Sustainability Task Force

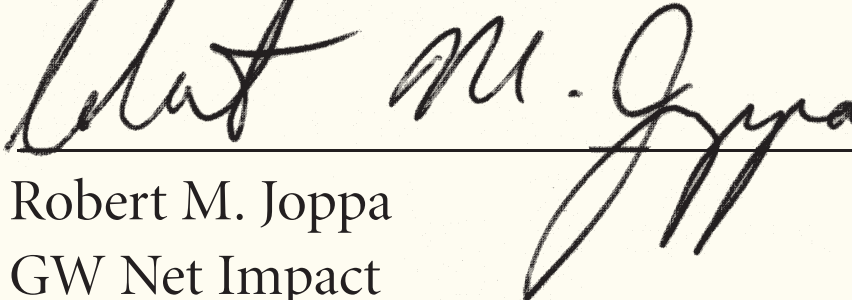
  
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Lev Rumford, Co-Chairman  
The George Washington University Sustainability Task Force

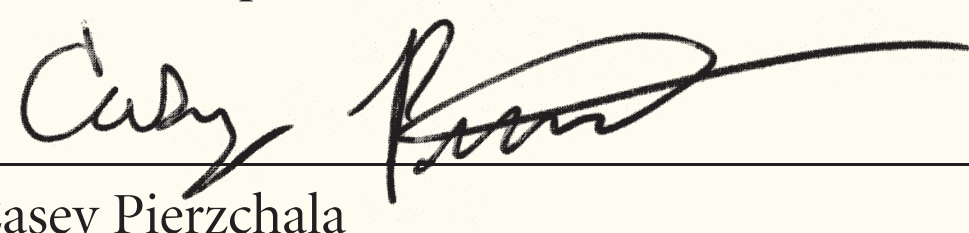
  
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Michael Aloi  
GW Students for Fair Trade

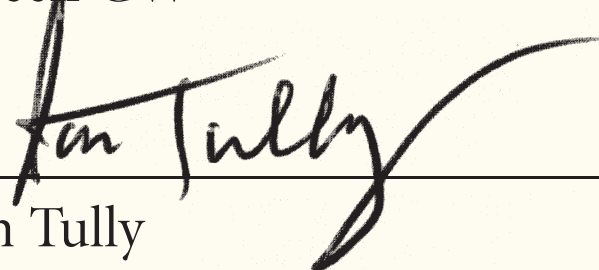
  
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Maggie Desmond  
GW Student Association

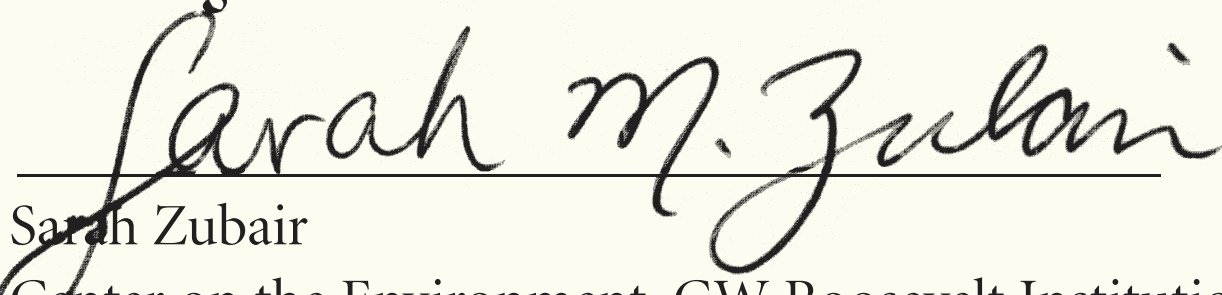
  
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GW Environmental Law Association

  
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