

University Senate

Proposed: September 23, 2016

Adopted: September 23, 2016
by unanimous vote of 56 senators present

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT

SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES FOR COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

WHEREAS we recognize the potential impact of climate change on Columbia and the world, and

WHEREAS we note global consensus on the importance of mitigating climate change as expressed in the recently signed Paris Agreement, and acknowledge prevailing student sentiment in favor of a more sustainable Columbia, and

WHEREAS many of our peer institutions have drafted guiding documents concerning sustainability, and

WHEREAS the Student Affairs Committee supported and participated in the drafting of sustainability principles during the past academic year by the Office of Environmental Stewardship, along with Facilities and members of the Earth Institute faculty, and

WHEREAS President Bollinger on September 12 announced a final set of sustainability principles for Columbia (attached), and the Senate's Committees on Student Affairs and on Campus Planning and Physical Development committees have since voted to endorse them;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate support the new Columbia University Sustainability Principles, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Sustainability Principles serve as a foundation for an aggressive and comprehensive program to reduce Columbia's environmental footprint, including concrete, measurable goals such as greenhouse gas reduction targets, and specific strategies to achieve these goals.

Proponent:

Student Affairs Committee
Campus Planning and Physical Development Committee

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:
STATEMENT ON SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

Recognizing climate change's potential impact on Columbia and the world, noting global consensus on the importance of mitigating climate change as expressed in the recently-signed Paris Agreement, and acknowledging prevailing student, faculty, and staff sentiment in favor of a more sustainable Columbia, we urge the University to adopt the Sustainability Principles that have recently been drafted by the Office of Environmental Stewardship, representatives from Facilities, students, and the Earth Institute faculty. We further recommend that the Sustainability Principles serve as a foundation for an aggressive and comprehensive program to reduce Columbia's environmental footprint.

Although Columbia has already made significant progress in this area thanks to the laudable efforts of the Office of Environmental Stewardship, Facilities, and others, we believe it is essential that the University take a more strategic, coordinated approach to improving sustainability at an institution-wide level. The Principles represent a first step in this process, and their adoption should be followed by the establishment of concrete, measurable goals (e.g. greenhouse gas reduction targets) and specific strategies to achieve these goals. We call for a coalition of students, faculty, and staff to identify these goals and strategies and, based upon them, draft Columbia's first Sustainability Management Plan, a guiding document which many of our peer institutions already have.

We understand that this statement comes at a sensitive moment following recent protests by Columbia Divest for Climate Justice on the subject of fossil fuel divestment, but for this same reason, we believe that it is of particular relevance. While we urge the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing to consider [the proposal on University Investment Policy signed by 30 members of the Earth Institute Faculty](#), we also feel strongly that action should be taken to reduce the environmental impact of operations under Columbia's direct control. At the same time Columbia University faculty, researchers, and students encourage others to have smaller footprints, it is necessary for the University to take concerted action to reduce its own footprint.

The Sustainability Principles are an important milestone on the route to a more sustainable Columbia, and we place our full support behind them.