USUSA Sustainability and Climate State of Emergency Resolution

The purpose of this resolution is as follows: creates a collaborative student taskforce to work in conjunction with the USU Faculty Senate Sustainability Subcommittee, the USU Sustainability Council, and the USU Sustainability Office in order to effectively reach Utah State University’s previously established climate and carbon neutrality goals; emphasizes the importance of reducing our previous carbon neutrality timeline by 18 years from 2050 to 2032; shows USUSA’s support of the recently passed Faculty Senate Resolution to Reduce Utah State University’s Greenhouse Gas Pollution; and requests for President Cockett to declare a State of Emergency surrounding Climate at USU.

WHEREAS according to Utah State University’s Sustainability Policy (106), “Utah State University (USU) is one of the nation’s premier, student-centered, land-grant, and space grant universities; and the University is committed to enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities by promoting sustainability in its operations and academic and service missions.”

WHEREAS energy resources we utilize as a university and as a community significantly impact public health and safety, including the economic and social well being of current and future members of the Aggie family and the USU community,

WHEREAS the protection, conservation, and reasonable management of the natural environment are essential principles of responsible stewardship,

BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED THAT the USUSA commits to working constructively alongside the USU Sustainability Office, Sustainability Council, Faculty Senate, upper Administrators, and members of the local cache valley community, using our heritage of technological ingenuity, innovation, and leadership to support the development of economically and broadly supported solutions to the aforementioned climate issues affecting our community.

WHEREAS there is scientific consensus regarding the reality of climate change and the connection between human activity, especially the combustion of fossil fuels that create greenhouse gases, and warming of the planet, and
WHEREAS the Department of Health has issued a report outlining the increased risk of extreme weather events, including wildfires, water scarcity, and flooding,

WHEREAS the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently issued a combined report in October of 2018 on the statistical, social, and environmental outcomes of our effect on climate change, under the direction of the WMO and the UNEP,

WHEREAS in that same report the IPCC expressly communicated the immediate need for reduced carbon emissions and reduced the effective carbon emission timeline by 18 years from 2050 to 2032.

WHEREAS Utah State University, and the greater Cache County area, is already experiencing the effects of climate change locally through increased temperatures, changes in water systems, extreme weather events, and other disruptions that threaten the health and overall quality of life of our community members,

WHEREAS in July 2018, Utah Governor Gary Herbert issued an executive order declaring a State of Emergency for the entire state of Utah relating to the effects of climate change on our communities,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the USUSA recognizes the impacts of a changing climate on the community members of Utah State University, and the need for a reduced timeline to our previous climate commitment signed in 2007 by former University President Stan Albrecht, from 2050 to 2032 in order to reflect the recent IPCC report of the same nature.

WHEREAS the transition to a low carbon community reliant on the efficient use of renewable energy resources will provide a range of benefits including improved air quality for public health, reduced reliance on finite resources, and a myriad of other positive outcomes,

WHEREAS The USUSA is committed to helping the previously mentioned, appropriate bodies and departments develop systems for managing environmental, social, and economic sustainability programs with specific goals and objectives in order to support the goals of the USU statewide system to prepare students, faculty, and staff to proactively contribute to a high quality of life for present and future generations,

WHEREAS emissions from electricity generation are the largest component of both the USU and Cache valley community carbon inventories, making up more than 50% of all greenhouse gas emissions for both footprints, according to the 2016 Logan City Air Quality report and the USU Overall Energy Use by Building report,

WHEREAS any efforts to mitigate the risks of, prepare for, or otherwise address our changing
climate and its effects should not constrain the fiscal nor social competitiveness of our university,

WHEREAS according to our new goal to be carbon neutral as a university by 2032,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the USUSA expresses its full support of the Faculty Senate Resolution to Reduce Utah State University’s Greenhouse Gas Pollution by creating an appointed student taskforce that shall act in conjunction and under the appropriate direction of both the Sustainability Council and the USUSA, as a complementary student-led helpmeet, to address causes of a changing climate and support innovation and environmental stewardship in order to realize positive solutions.

WHEREAS as the USUSA Executive Council and Academic Senate have engaged in lengthy conversations as to who will comprise this appointed student sustainability taskforce,

WHEREAS at the beginning of every academic school year it is the responsibility of the individual USUSA Academic Senators to appoint 8 students to approve sustainability grants throughout the year,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the proposed student Sustainability Taskforce will be comprised of the 9 students that are appointed by the USUSA Academic Senators at the beginning of every academic school year,

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the USUSA Student Advocate Vice President to represent student concern and opinion to student services, auxiliary services, student government, and university administration,

WHEREAS it is also the responsibility of the USUSA Student Advocate Vice President to represent student concern and opinion to local, state, and federal governments,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the student Sustainability Taskforce shall reside under the Charter and direction of the USUSA Student Advocate Vice President.

WHEREAS the scope and size of the student Sustainability Taskforce’s authority and impact has also been a debated topic on both the governing bodies within USUSA,

WHEREAS the role of the USUSA Executive Council (the primary governing body under which the proposed student Sustainability Taskforce will reside) is to enhance the quality of student life through academics, student concerns, activities, public relations, athletics, clubs, organizations, extension, graduate, and legislative student representation,

WHEREAS it is only within the authority of the USUSA to act within their areas of concern
and within their allotted annual budget,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the purpose and role of the USUSA Sustainability Taskforce is twofold: to work in conjunction with the USU Faculty Senate Sustainability Subcommittee, the USU Sustainability Council, and the USU Sustainability Office to both make and receive recommendations to/from the aforementioned organizations; and to both make recommendations to the USUSA on sustainability initiatives and then to carry out approved sustainability initiatives.

WHEREAS the previously mentioned USU Climate Commitment was signed by former Utah State University President Stan Albrecht in 2007,

WHEREAS great strides have been made by the university as a whole to accomplish our overall goal of carbon neutrality like converting our bus fleet to natural gas, all new buildings since 2007 meeting LEED Silver standard, shutting down our coal burning generators and switching to a co-generation system, among others,

WHEREAS our efforts as a university toward accomplishing the goals set forth in that commitment have not been met in aggregate according to the previously proposed timeline, nor are we on track to meet the future goals based on said timeline,

WHEREAS this resolution proposes a reduction to the previous university-wide carbon neutrality timeline from 2050 to 2032 pursuant to the October IPCC report,

WHEREAS in an effort to mobilize individuals, resources, and support from all levels of our university, a large-impact statement on the current climate situation is needed,

WHEREAS in times of extreme states of crisis, similar to that of concerns with mental health, the university president has issued a statement effectively declaring the situation as such,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT we, as the USUSA, call upon President Noelle Cockett to declare a State of Emergency surrounding Climate at USU (or according to the aforementioned Faculty Senate Resolution, a Climate Crisis), effectively setting the tone for the seriousness and need for collaborative university-wide efforts in meeting our previously mentioned goals and commitments.

WHEREAS it is already stated in the original 2007 USU Climate Commitment that an ‘action plan’ will be developed to accomplish our aforementioned and outlined goals,

WHEREAS it is also already stated in the same document that progress on the accomplishment of those goals be compiled and released as an annual report to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE),
WHEREAS in an effort to increase visibility and transparency of the combined, concerted exertions in accomplishing those goals and commitments,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT a regular annual report be released to the general student body from the combined Faculty Senate Sustainability Subcommittee and the proposed USUSA Student Sustainability Taskforce in order to increase transparency on our progress toward our new 2032 goal of carbon neutrality.

WHEREAS collaboration between the USUSA, the USU Faculty Senate, and upper administrators will be essential in order to effectively and efficiently carry out our lofty goals set before us,

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to the members of the USU Faculty Senate, with particular attention to the Sustainability Subcommittee, as well as the USU Stater’s Council.

Tags: Faculty Senate Resolution to Reduce Utah State University’s Greenhouse Gas Pollution, USU Sustainability Policy, USU Faculty Senate, USU Sustainability Office, USU Sustainability Council, The U.S. Department of Health, the IPCC, the WMO, the UNEP, the 2007 American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, President Stan Albrecht, USU Faculty Senate Sustainability Subcommittee, 2016 Logan City Air Quality report, USU Overall Energy Use by Building, LEED Silver Star Standard, President Noelle Cockett, Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), USU Stators Council

Sponsor: Joshua Johnson, USUSA Organizations and Campus Diversity Vice President

Co-sponsor: Sam Jackson, USUSA Student Advocate Vice President
Committee: Executive Council
In Attendance: President Jaren Hunsaker, VP Samuel Jackson, VP Bannon Greer, VP Meghan Tatom, VP Joshua Johnson, VP Jenna Stoker, VP Daria Griffith, Senator Kristin Hall, Director Braxton Moon, Assistant Brooke Jorgensen
Result: Passed

History:
This resolution was written in response to the wave of concerned students coming and speaking with multiple USUSA officers after the IPCC’s issuing of their recent October climate report. One student in particular, Angelia Klein, Vice President of the Access and Diversity Center’s Non-Traditional Student Association, was particularly passionate about getting something done at a student, and university level, through legislation. At that time the Organizations and Diversity VP, Joshua Johnson, decided to assist Angelia, and other students, along with the USUSA Student Advocate VP Sam Jackson. This resolution began being written before the news of the USU Faculty Senate’s decision to create a Sustainability Subcommittee, but since finding out that news, collaboration and coordination on this resolution with the Faculty Senate President-elect, Patrick Belmont, has been a priority in accurately writing this legislation. Based on the proposed legislation above, and several conversations with Dr. Belmont, included in the history of this legislation are recommendations from Dr. Belmont, and the Faculty Senate as a whole:

Purpose:
This resolution seeks to establish the following: recognizes the impacts of a changing climate on the community members of Utah State University; acknowledges Utah State University’s tradition of stewardship, innovation, ingenuity, and problem solving while simultaneously acknowledging our previously stated commitments and policies concerning the issue; recognizes the need for a reduced timeline to our previous climate commitment, placing an emphasis on the responsible stewardship and prudent management of our available resources; recognizes that as members of the USU community, all members of that community are responsible to pursue the calculated reduction of emissions through support of the growth in campus-based technologies and
services that will benefit the community; expresses commitment to create and support economically viable and broadly supported solutions for our community; requests for President Cockett to declare a climate crisis at USU.

**Pros:**

- Effectively brings all invested parties in the interest of sustainability at USU into one cohesive working relationship with one another – from the student level to the faculty, staff, and administrators
- Sets a precedent moving forward not only for our campus and community’s emphasis and interest in sustainability and climate change, but also establishes Utah State University as an innovator and leader for the same causes at a State and National level
- Advocates for and on behalf of the increased efforts toward accomplishing our previously set goals and commitments
- Creates systems at USU that can be long-lasting effective, and efficient in improving the natural environment surrounding us

**Cons:**

- Potential to be a divisive mechanism for individuals at USU that deny climate change
- Potential to create friction between outside institutions that deny climate change and USU