

Recommendations to the President from the President's Task Force on Campus Sustainability

At this moment in history, the COVID-19 crisis is showing the world how vital it is that our institutions and our leaders are prepared to protect us from harm—and to take action even when the threat feels distant. Never have the failure of our health systems, justice systems and public policies collided so suddenly and violently. Brandeis has risen to the challenge, and can and should continue to do so in the face of the climate crisis.

The climate crisis is the greatest threat to public health and social justice in the history of our planet. In 2019, the Alliance of World Scientists [declared an emergency](#), representing 14,000 scientists globally, including some of Brandeis' own professors.¹

The COVID-19 crisis has shown in no uncertain terms what happens when we ignore scientists' warnings. By finally heeding the call of scientists and social justice advocates alike, Brandeis can fulfill its social justice mission more holistically than ever before, and help create a better, safer, more just life for generations to come. This shift requires bold, coordinated action and leadership. The pandemic has proven that this isn't easy—but that it can be done.

The President's Task Force on Campus Sustainability puts forth the following recommendations pursuant to its [charge](#). These recommendations are a result of the deliberations of the four working groups (Campus Operations, Community Engagement, Education, and Resilience). They address both the urgency of the climate crisis, as well as the need for additional sustainability best practices. The Task Force understands that implementation of these recommendations may be impacted given Brandeis' many near-term health, safety and academic priorities for responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

1. **Articulate a strong commitment to addressing climate change in [the Framework for the Future](#).** The Framework is the university's only visible document for strategic guidance for the future. This is where the university's commitment to a *sustainable* future must therefore be forcefully articulated. **The Task Force has suggested language for the Framework in [this document](#) (see highlighted passages).**
2. **Sign the Climate Commitment**, committing to a goal of carbon neutrality of our scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, while pursuing ways to go carbon negative². The science is clear: neutrality is not enough. We must find ways to reduce more carbon than we are responsible for. Additionally, the Climate Commitment binds us not only to reduce our campus carbon footprint, but to plan for future extreme weather and associated impacts through climate resilience planning. In pursuit of these goals, we should:
 - a. Conduct a **campus energy master plan** that includes recommendations for deep energy efficiency retrofits, electrification, and savings reinvestment strategies to transform how we use energy (<\$250,000).
 - b. **Adopt the proposed new green building standard** to inform design and construction of new buildings and renovations (see Appendix in Climate Action Plan).

¹ The warning was also published: William J Ripple, Christopher Wolf, Thomas M Newsome, Phoebe Barnard, William R Moomaw, World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency, *BioScience*, Volume 70, Issue 1, January 2020, Pages 8–12, <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biz088>

² Scope 1 and 2 emissions include those from campus electricity, natural gas, Brandeis-owned vehicles, and use of refrigerants in campus equipment.

- c. **Consider alternative financing options for building improvements**, such as energy savings agreements, green revolving funds, and/or other options outside of a typical capital budget, to help improve the energy efficiency of our buildings faster.
 - d. **Use high-quality financial instruments to achieve carbon neutrality (Approx. \$200,000 annually)**. Carbon neutrality by 2030 cannot be achieved without the use of financial instruments in the short term, such as renewable energy certificates and carbon offsets. "High-quality" financial instruments follow the industry best practice of providing additionality, meaning carbon would not have been avoided but for Brandeis' investment.
- 3. **Divest from fossil fuels.** The Board of Trustees adopted a [set of policies](#) related to fossil fuels in 2018, and committed to review them in three years to evaluate their impact and consider future action. This review and decision should not be delayed. Continued support of the fossil fuel industry is incompatible with the swift and urgent action necessary to avoid the worst impacts of [the climate emergency](#).
 - a. **Include investments in fossil fuels in our carbon footprint.** While we understand our carbon footprint from campus operations very well, our footprint should be expanded to include a reasonable estimate of our emissions that result from our investments in fossil fuels.
 - b. **Investigate carbon-free retirement plan alternatives** and make these available to all employees.
- 4. **Improve climate change and sustainability education**
 - a. Make the 2021-22 academic year the Year of Climate Change at Brandeis.
 - b. Develop a climate literacy requirement for all undergraduates in the Brandeis Core.
 - c. Demonstrate a stronger commitment to education on climate change by adding more faculty positions with relevant expertise and incentivizing all faculty to incorporate climate change into their courses.
- 5. **Implement best practices in transportation for sustainability and equity**
 - a. **Subsidize public transportation** for the commuter rail and local subway/bus lines to improve equity in sustainable access to campus.
 - b. Task the sustainability committee (once established) with helping to create **a plan for parking fees that is fair and equitable**.
 - c. **Encourage managers and supervisors to allow their staff to telecommute.** Through our community feedback processes, we learned that the telecommuting policy was not applied equally. The COVID-19 crisis has taught us that widespread telecommuting is not only possible, but successful. Brandeis should continuously encourage managers and supervisors to allow telecommuting as a regular practice.
 - d. **Consider conducting a transportation demand management study** to further plan how to reduce our community's dependence on single-occupant vehicles and reduce costs associated with increased demand for parking.
 - e. **Commit to purchasing only electric vehicles for our campus fleet** going forward, unless an electric vehicle of the needed type is unavailable. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure on campus should be expanded as necessary to support these vehicles.
 - f. **Commit to improving biking and pedestrian infrastructure** that prioritizes safety and accessibility.
- 6. **Implement sustainable procurement practices**
 - a. **Pursue greater sustainability goals in our food service operation.**
 - b. In the next year, Brandeis should **thoroughly investigate the feasibility of a successful transition to self-operated dining**. Self-operated dining is the optimal way to ensure that Brandeis' dining dollars are financing a food system that aligns with our institution's founding values: one that champions diversity, equity, inclusion, operates with just, equitable and

sustainable practices, ensures quality and representation of food options, and most importantly, responds well to unexpected situations akin to COVID-19.

- c. **Make and follow a plan to reduce purchases of single-use disposable items on campus,** not only in dining but also in offices and departments.
 1. **Continue the phase-out of bottled water that began in 2019** at retail locations on campus, and, at the time of our next beverage contract renewal, commit to zero sales of bottled (flat) water on campus.
 - d. **Make and follow a plan to improve the sustainability profile of all of our purchases.** This includes working with our Procurement office to review our policies and follow best practices across purchasing categories.
7. **Improve water conservation and management**
- a. **Create a hazard mitigation plan** that includes the potential for flooding during extreme precipitation events, both inside buildings with previous flooding issues and along South St. evacuation routes.
 - b. **Install water meters** in strategic locations to better measure campus usage where possible.
 - c. **Adopt more sustainable landscape management practices to conserve water.**
 - d. **Build and maintain an emergency water supply,** following best practices and working with our campus food service vendor.
8. **Create a sustainability committee to hold Brandeis accountable for our commitments, and to recommend and implement future sustainability initiatives.** The new sustainability committee should, at a minimum, include subcommittees for education, campus infrastructure, dining, and transportation that prioritize actions and work towards measurable goals, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. The committees' membership should include faculty, staff and students representing the diversity of our campus community, and should report to the Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration and the Provost.