

The 40th Session of the Student Body Senate

Florida International University

Miami, Florida

S.R. 04 032

FIU Sustainability and Environmental Resilience Action Plan Resolution

IN THE SENATE

April 1, 2024

Senate Floor Leader & USI Chair Karina Hernandez, Senator Jabari Baptiste, Senator Daniel Salup-Cid, Secretary of Sustainability & Innovation Kaitlyn Coll, Executive Administrator Natalie Martinez, Sustainable Panther Network Gabriela Sordo, Climate Leadership Engagement Opportunities (CLEO) Institute Regional Lead Organizer, Sarahi Perez, Dr. John Buschman, Director of the FIU Institute of the Environment, Dr. Todd Crowl, introduced the following resolution, which was presented on the Senate floor

A RESOLUTION

To call on FIU President, Kenneth Jessell to sign Second Nature's Climate Commitment and to urge that FIU administration collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to ensure the successful development and implementation of a Sustainability and Environmental Resilience Plan at FIU.

Be it enacted by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University assembled,

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change are a pressing global issue and one that has proven urgent to our time and with Florida facing specific threats like rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and economic disruption;

WHEREAS, Florida International University (FIU), is one of South Florida's leading educational institutions responsible for participating in this highly regarded designation by leading in sustainability and environmental resilience;

WHEREAS, "Environment and Environmental Resilience" is identified as one of the three initial pillars of strategic focus outlined in FIU's upcoming 2030 Strategic Plan¹;

WHEREAS, FIU is designated as the University of Distinction in Environmental Resilience by the Florida Board of Governors²;

WHEREAS, FIU has demonstrated commitment to sustainability through notable initiatives, such as the creation of the Office of University Sustainability in which, aligned with FIU's Strategic Plan, the Office aims to significantly reduce FIU's negative impacts on the natural environment by collaborating across university departments, enhancing student opportunities and internships, and developing community partnerships;

WHEREAS, in 2022, FIU achieved Level 1 Arboretum Accreditation by Arbnet Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum;

WHEREAS, The mission of the FIU Arboretum is to provide living/learning experiences for all members of FIU's diverse and engaged community while promoting ecological diversity, increasing tree canopy, and strengthening the culture of sustainability... and sequestering Carbon Dioxide;

WHEREAS, in October 2023, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced that the South Florida Climate Resilience Tech Hub, led by Miami-Dade County, has been designated as one of 31 Tech Hubs in the country, selected from a competitive pool of nearly 200 applicants across the U.S. and its territories. This designation will elevate and accelerate South Florida's advances in climate action and resiliency and unlock access to tens of millions of dollars in potential funding³;

WHEREAS, Second Nature's Climate Commitment provides a framework for the University to take ambitious action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a process to integrate resilience goals and strategies, and a network of other University campuses across the United States that are leading and implementing sustainability and environmental resilience action plans⁴;

WHEREAS, the developed sustainability and environmental resilience action plan should be embedded into the finalized FIU 2030 Strategic Plan to inform the University's goals and next steps towards sustainability and resilience;

WHEREAS, 9 Florida institutions, including University of Florida, University of Central Florida, University of Miami and University of South Florida have signed Second Nature’s Carbon Commitment, that solely focuses on reducing carbon emissions;

WHEREAS, FIU has the opportunity to become the first in Florida to sign the Climate Commitment to address greenhouse gas emissions *and* environmental resilience;

WHEREAS, according to the Environmental Systems Research Institute, sustainability looks at how current generations can meet their needs without compromising that ability for future generations and resilience considers a system's ability to prepare for threats, to absorb impacts, and to recover and adapt after disruptive events⁵;

WHEREAS, developing the aforementioned plan would benefit FIU by:

1. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs
2. Increased native indoor and outdoor plants on campus for improved air quality and heat adaptation
3. Eliminating/reducing single use plastics on campus
4. Regular composting of food waste and green waste
5. Continuation of urban agriculture on campus such as vertical gardening, aquaponics, etc.
6. Promoting energy independence via projects like retrofitting buildings, adopting renewable energy sources, and encouraging alternative transportation options
7. Enhancing FIU's reputation as a lead in sustainability and environmental resilience
8. Attracting environmentally conscious students and faculty
9. Promoting innovation and research in clean technologies
10. Strengthening South Florida community partnerships
11. Reducing insurance reliability risk and cost
12. Creating a more resilient and sustainable campus community

WHEREAS, in September 2009, FIU submitted its first Climate Action Plan to Second Nature. This report outlines FIU’s greenhouse gas emissions and the University’s plan to reduce its environmental impact. It takes into consideration findings from the FIU Greenhouse Gas Inventory Summary Report submitted in 2008 by the FIU Presidents Climate Commitment Task Force⁶;

WHEREAS, the 2009 Climate Action Plan states, “Reductions will be achieved through mitigation strategies in the areas of transportation, building and energy, and solid waste. Other notable areas include sustainable efforts, and student sustainability initiatives. These strategies will be funded through related FIU departments and grants.”⁶ ;

WHEREAS, As part of the White House American Campuses Act on Climate, President Rosenberg issued a six-part pledge⁷ to promote low-carbon practices and operations throughout the university, including:

1. Build on the FIU Sea Level Solutions Center in the Institute of Environment research and activities that integrate low carbon adaptation into regional climate resiliency plans.
2. Build on its University City Prosperity Project, as a collaborative effort with Florida Department of Transportation, Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, Miami-Dade Transit, City of Sweetwater and others, to reinvent multimodal transportation, reduce emissions, and other low-carbon solutions.
3. Propose a green revolving fund for campus infrastructure or activities that reduce emissions.
4. Commit to an increase of 15 points in the university STARS rating by May 2016, target a gold rating by 2017 and platinum rating by 2020.
5. Begin submitting the university's STARS report annually.
6. Explore feasibility of expanding on-campus composting of dining facility food waste by bringing new industrial composter to FIU.

WHEREAS, these past efforts, while valuable, lack adequate administrative support and comprehensive framework to achieve significant and measurable progress;

WHEREAS, past FIU president, Modesto Maidique, signed the Second Nature's American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), in June 2007, however FIU was removed as a signatory in 2022, due to inactivity and not fulfilling public reporting disclosure requirements;

WHEREAS, signing Second Nature's Climate Commitment would grant FIU access to a valuable community of practice, guiding its journey towards true leadership in sustainability environmental resilience;

WHEREAS, student awareness and input are crucial for successful implementation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the FIU Student Government Association calls on the university administration to:

1. **Sign the Climate Commitment** and develop a comprehensive Sustainability and Environmental Resilience Action Plan that sets clearly defined, ambitious goals and actionable strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing environmental resilience.
2. **Increase accountability through student awareness** via educational campaigns, engagement opportunities, and clear sustainability guidelines for events and organizations.
3. **Establish a committee/task force** that designates at minimum four student positions, to oversee plan implementation and progress, ensuring transparency and accountability through regular reporting to the FIU community.
4. **Create a University Chief Sustainability Officer position in the Office of the President** to facilitate the creation of the Sustainability and Environmental Resilience Action Plan and following campus-wide projects and to apply for relevant grant funding to cover the associated project expenses.



NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that FIU Student Government Association will actively partner with the university administration, faculty, staff, and student organizations to ensure the successful development and implementation of the Sustainability and Environmental Resilience Action Plan.

Works Cited:

1. *ACUPCC FIU Commitment*. FIU Office of Sustainability . (2019a, November 5). <https://sustainability.fiu.edu/acupcc/>
2. *American Campus Act on Climate Pledge*. FIU Office of Sustainability . (2019b, November 4). <https://sustainability.fiu.edu/american-campus-act-on-climate-pledge/>
3. Beyhar, E. (n.d.). *FIU 2030 strategic plan*. FIU Office of the Provost. <https://provost.fiu.edu/strategicplan/>
4. Carnow, A. (2024, April 5). *Resilience and sustainability, the definitions, difference, and applicability of GIS*. Industry Blogs. <https://www.esri.com/en-us/industries/blog/articles/resilience-and-sustainability-the-definitions/>
5. *Commitments Implementation Handbook*. Second Nature. (2023, January 30). <https://secondnature.org/signatory-handbook/commitments-implementation-handbook/>
6. Costa, R. (2023, March 24). *FIU helps lead White House Climate Forum*. FIU News. <https://news.fiu.edu/2023/fiu-helps-lead-white-house-climate-forum>
7. Jaramillo, N. (n.d.). *South Florida region designated as National Tech Hub for Resilience*. Miami Dade County Web. https://www.miamidade.gov/global/release.page?Mduid_release=rel1698026178244729#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20U.S.%20Department%20of,the%20United%20States%20and%20its

Senate Resolution Transmission Form

This resolution is presented by the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University. It is presented by the Senate President Pro-Tempore and affixed with the signature of the Senate President. Both the Senate President and the Senate President Pro-Tempore affirm that the information presented below is accurate and that the resolution has successfully passed in the Senate of the Student Body. The resolution is presented on this day and at this hour for signature or veto.

<i>SR 04 032</i>			
Date Introduced:	04/01/2024		
Committees Assigned:	(1) University Sustainability & Innovation Committee (2) Rules and Administration Committee		
Sustainability and Innovation: 04/01/2024	2 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
Rules and Administration: 04/02/2024	4 <i>For</i>	0 <i>Against</i>	0 <i>Abstaining</i>
Vote on the Senate Floor: 04/08/2024	17 <i>For</i>	1 <i>Against</i>	1 <i>Abstaining</i>
			
Signature of the Senate President	Signature of the Senate President Pro Tempore		

Presidential Signature of a Senate Resolution

On this day, at this time, and in this place, the Senate of the Student Body at Florida International University does hereby present this resolution to the desk of the President of the Student Body for signature or veto. The Senate has passed this resolution and all its accompaniments, in accordance with the Constitution and Statutes of the Student Government Association at Florida International University. It is presented in good faith, whereas the officers of the Senate have affixed their signatures to affirm that the resolution has followed due procedure and is valid. The Senate will await your decision.

SR 04 032



Kaily LaChapelle, Senate President



Tiara Campbell, Senate President Pro-Tempore



Karina Hernandez, Senate Floor Leader



Alexander P. Sutton, Student Body President

