

# SUSTAINABILITY AT SUNY



## SUNY COMMITMENT TO NEW YORK'S CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- SUNY Chancellor John King, Jr. stated in his first State of the University speech that “With 40% of the state’s public buildings, New York State won’t meet our ambitious net zero targets without SUNY doing our part. ... So we will lead the way on sustainability on our campuses. We will lead the way preparing the green economy workforce. And we will lead the way in cutting-edge research to discover and deliver the climate solutions our world needs.”
- SUNY facilities are decarbonizing and are at the forefront of the green energy transition ushered in by New York’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and its goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 from 1990 levels and 85% by 2050 through energy efficiency, new sources of renewable energy and storage, and reductions across buildings, transportation, electric power generation, waste, industry, and agricultural sectors.
- SUNY is using our sustainability programs to train the next generation of environmental leaders, and is meeting or exceeding the requirements of Executive Order 22 for early action and leadership by state agencies by appointing a sustainability lead in each agency; no fossil fuel in new buildings after 2024 “to the fullest extent feasible”; reducing energy by 11 TBtu by 2025 (4.4 TBtu for SUNY); using 100% carbon free electricity by 2030, subject to available supply; building renewable energy and storage projects; converting to a 100% ZEV light duty fleet by 2035 and 100% ZEV medium/heavy fleet by 2040; reducing waste by 10% a year until 75% less than baseline; reducing embodied carbon in construction by requiring environmental product declarations in contracts for concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass; reforming procurement to reach goals on habitat, biodiversity, low impact development, toxic substance and pollution reduction, water conservation, bottled water, and climate assessment.

## SUNY'S LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE ACTION

- **Energy track record:** SUNY has reduced its GHG by over 36% from 1990, after decades of energy efficiency investments, approaching early completion of the CLCPA's 40x30 goal. This is based on a 20% reduction in Energy Use Intensity from 2010-2020 despite growth of facilities footprint, the construction of 28,000 MWH in renewable energy on campuses (plus 12,000 MWH fuel cell at Downstate), and requiring all new buildings and retrofits to follow a SUNY standard (SUCF Directive 1B-2) that all buildings and major retrofits stop using fossil fuels, achieve net zero carbon and electrification-ready, follow the stretch energy code and deep energy retrofits. SUNY is also applying sustainability factors to its prioritization of capital projects.
- The GreenNY annual report on EO22 progress cites SUNY extensively, with over 30 examples, for our work on energy (e.g., the report cover is of University at Buffalo's new solar field along the Audubon Parkway, North Campus, and a featured project is the renovation of SUNY Oneonta's Alumni Hall, which is now completely heated and cooled with 39 geothermal heat pumps located under a parking lot), water conservation (e.g., Farmingdale State College installed over 250 low-flow aerators on faucets across campus that will save water and reduce energy use), green infrastructure (e.g., University at Albany's ETEC building has a green roof and manages all stormwater on site), waste (e.g., SUNY New Paltz eliminated plastic bottle sales and transitioned to highly recyclable aluminum cans), and procurement (e.g., SUNY ESF created a Green Purchasing Guide with products that meet the GreenNY specifications, hold third-party certifications, or meet its green standards).
- **Governance:** SUNY's first Chief Sustainability Officer was appointed to build a sustainability team, lead a system network of sustainability and energy leads at 64 campuses to share best practices, and establish a new presidential-level Sustainability Advisory Council that is developing a climate action plan integrating our workforce development, research, and education programs.
- **Decarbonization:** SUNY is in the process of completing Clean Energy Master Plans for reducing carbon emissions 85% by 2050 at 29 State-operated campuses. In addition, seven SUNY campuses are part of NYPA's Decarbonization Leadership Program and conversions from fossil fuel heating and cooling to geothermal wells and thermal energy networks are underway at several campuses (e.g., renovation of SUNY Oneonta's Alumni Hall). This work will require billions of dollars in investments.
- **Plastics:** A SUNY Task Force developed a system-wide policy and schedule for phasing out single-use plastics across all campuses.

- **Green workforce development:** SUNY has established the Off-shore Wind Training Institute at several campuses in addition to programs at community colleges on renewable energy, HVAC, electric vehicle and charging, water, and wastewater maintenance and construction. SUNY also has widely-recognized degree programs for sustainability, environmental studies, engineering, and other programs for the next generation of leaders.
- **Research and economic development:** SUNY climate work includes nation-leading battery technology research at Binghamton University, cutting-edge work on sustainable agriculture at SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Morrisville, one of the country's few meteorology programs at SUNY Oswego, the exciting partnership between SUNY ESF and Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to transform upstate NY into an innovative bioeconomy, and the new Climate Exchange campus on Governor's Island led by Stony Brook University.
- **Applied learning:** The SUNY Climate Corps internship program will support 40 students a year at state environmental and energy agencies. Many academic programs use campuses as "living labs" to apply classroom learning and research to real-world situations.
- **Peer recognition:** SUNY has received sustainability awards from numerous institutions, including the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education ratings of platinum (Cornell University, SUNY ESF), gold (University at Albany, University at Buffalo, Binghamton University, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Oswego) and silver (SUNY Farmingdale State College, SUNY Oneonta) and Practice Greenhealth's Top 25 award (to Stony Brook University Hospital.)

## LEGISLATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- **Program Funding:** The SUNY Board of Trustees approved the following budget request in its December 2023 meeting:

**Clean Energy Implementation Fund:** To aid in SUNY's contributions to New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLPCA) goals, SUNY is proposing the creation of a \$100 million "SUNY Clean Energy Implementation Fund". These funds, seeded by bonded State capital and supplemented by existing funds such as the Clean Energy Bond Act, State, Local, and Federal Grants, and ultimately reimbursed to the State through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Direct Pay benefits, would accelerate the implementation of the Clean Energy Master Plans developed at the SUNY State-operated campuses. Funds would support the design and construction of geothermal networks, energy efficiency retrofits, full campus electrification, and other clean energy projects.

- **Project Funding:** In 2023 the Legislature provided \$30 million for chillers at University at Albany, a crucial first step that will unlock its decarbonization plans. This year, potential projects developed in conjunction with the Upgrade NY environmental justice and labor coalition include \$40 million for an emissions-free heating and cooling thermal network at SUNY Purchase and \$50 million to allow the University at Buffalo to advance key work in Phase 1 of an emissions-free heating and cooling network on its South campus.
- **Solid waste:** SUNY campuses seek the the ability to donate or otherwise beneficially transfer surplus personal property so that we do not have to landfill desks, chairs, and other equipment that can be reused. This would require changes to existing programs and disposal criteria.
- **Grant programs:** SUNY campuses are not eligible for certain water, wastewater, tree planting, and other grants that are designated for municipalities. Expanding eligibility to SUNY would recognize that our campuses are larger than many towns, villages, and hamlets.