



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

—
January 12, 2026

Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Assembly of the
Academic Senate
Faculty Representative,
UC Board of Regents
Academic Senate

Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

senate.universityofcalifornia.edu

Academic Senate Division Chairs
Systemwide Academic Senate Committee Chairs

Re: Systemwide Senate Review of Proposal to Establish a Systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability

Dear Senate Colleagues,

I am forwarding for systemwide Senate review a proposal to establish a systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability.

The proposal, submitted by the San Diego and San Francisco Divisions and approved by the Academic Council for systemwide review, highlights the urgency of climate change and the need for a dedicated faculty body to participate in systemwide policy development and review related to UC's decarbonization goals. The proposed committee would be tasked with supporting systemwide coordination and shared governance on climate and sustainability issues and integrating sustainability more fully into the University's academic mission.

Please submit comments to the systemwide Academic Senate office at SenateReview@ucop.edu by April 21, 2026, to allow us to compile and summarize comments for the Academic Council's April 29 meeting, when next steps for this proposal will be considered. Even if a committee may consider these matters to be outside its jurisdiction or charge, we encourage feedback on the proposal to ensure broad consultation

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Academic Council

CAMPUSES
Berkeley
Davis
Irvine
UCLA
Merced
Riverside
San Diego
San Francisco
Santa Barbara
Santa Cruz

MEDICAL CENTERS
Davis
Irvine
UCLA
San Diego
San Francisco

NATIONAL LABORATORIES
Lawrence Berkeley
Lawrence Livermore
Los Alamos

cc: Academic Council
Senate Division Executive Directors
Senate Executive Director Lin



OFFICE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0002
TELEPHONE: (858) 534-3640
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May 13, 2025

Professor Steven Cheung
Chair, Academic Senate
University of California
VIA EMAIL

Re: Proposal to Establish Systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability

Dear Chair Cheung,

On behalf of the San Diego and San Francisco Divisional Senates, we are pleased to submit the attached proposal to establish a systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability. Independent efforts at San Diego and San Francisco began earlier this year to advance a proposal for a systemwide committee focused on climate change and sustainability. Following endorsement from our respective executive committees, our divisions came together to develop and submit this joint proposal. We respectfully request that the proposal be added to an upcoming Academic Council meeting agenda for consideration.

Sincerely,

Olivia Graeve

Olivia A. Graeve
Chair
San Diego Divisional Academic Senate

Steven Hetts

Steven Hetts
Chair
San Francisco Divisional Academic Senate

Attachment

cc: Todd Giedt, Executive Director, San Francisco Divisional Academic Senate
Lori Hullings, Executive Director, San Diego Divisional Academic Senate
Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director, UC Systemwide Academic Senate
Monica Lin, Executive Director, UC Systemwide Academic Senate
Errol Lobo, Vice Chair, San Francisco Divisional Academic Senate
Ahmet Palazoglu, Vice Chair, UC Systemwide Academic Senate
Rebecca Jo Plant, Vice Chair, San Diego Divisional Academic Senate
Senate Divisional Chairs
Senate Divisional Directors

Proposal to Establish Systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability

May 13, 2025

To: Steven W. Cheung, Chair, Academic Council

From: Olivia A. Graeve, Chair, San Diego Divisional Senate
Steven Hetts, Chair, San Francisco Divisional Senate

Introduction

The San Diego and San Francisco Divisions of the UC Academic Senate propose establishing a systemwide standing committee on climate change and sustainability. Given that all UC campuses will be dealing with campus decarbonization planning and construction for many years to come, as well as other issues arising from the climate crisis, it is both timely and prudent to establish a systemwide committee dedicated to addressing its impacts and formulating strategic responses at the UC level. This proposal outlines the rationale for the request and a proposed bylaw.

Independent efforts at San Diego and San Francisco began this year to advance a proposal for a systemwide committee. At UC San Diego, the divisional Committee on Campus Climate Change submitted a request to Senate Council (San Diego's executive committee) that was unanimously endorsed by Senate Council on January 13, 2025. At San Francisco, the San Francisco Division's Executive Council endorsed a similar proposal on January 9, 2025. Rather than duplicate efforts with competing proposals, our divisions came together to collaborate and submit this joint proposal.

Background

Currently, San Diego and San Francisco are the only Divisional Senates with standing committees dedicated to addressing campus climate change and sustainability. Three additional Divisions (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Riverside) have an ad hoc committee, and there are efforts on at least a few other campuses to establish Senate standing committees.

San Diego's Committee on Campus Climate Change

The San Diego Division's Committee on Campus Climate Change (CCCC) was established in 2020, following a recommendation from a Senate Task Force convened to consider how UC San Diego can address the climate crisis.¹ The Committee is charged with conferring and advising the Senate and administration on matters related to campus decarbonization, climate change impacts of campus activities, and campus policy.² Since its establishment, CCCC has worked with the San Diego Senate Council and other standing committees and the administration to bring forward ideas and proposals aimed at enhancing climate change education, incentivizing a decrease to carbon emissions originated from research, addressing industry bias in climate research and other research areas, and highlighting the need for greater

¹ July 14, 2020 Report of the Task Force on the Climate Crisis:

<https://senate.ucsd.edu/media/446537/climate-crisis-task-force-report-revised-07-16-20-final.pdf>

² See San Diego Divisional Senate Bylaw 187: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Bylaws/187>

emphasis on carbon emission reduction in capital projects. Members of CCCC have been added to administrative committees organized by the Vice Chancellor on Operations Management and Capital Programs on campus planning, sustainability, and transportation, augmenting existing committee representation from the Committees on Planning & Budget and Campus & Community Environment. This has allowed for better transmission of information from the administration to the Senate, a greater emphasis on climate in OMCP discussions, and increased cross-committee collaboration within the Senate.

Most notably, CCCC developed the draft that ultimately became the 2022 UC Academic Senate Memorial on Reducing Fossil Fuel Combustion. Locally, CCCC has used the decarbonization study to strengthen the Senate's relationship with the Sustainability Office and has received regular updates on the campus response. Additionally, CCCC put forward a proposal to establish a climate change education requirement for undergraduate students. This work culminated in the San Diego Divisional Senate's establishment of the Jane Teranes Climate Change Education Requirement, which began in Fall 2024.³

San Francisco's Committee on Sustainability

Established in 2012, the UCSF Academic Senate Committee on Sustainability has been actively engaged in a variety of initiatives and projects aimed at promoting sustainability and addressing climate change. The UCSF Sustainability Committee is charged with recommending principles and strategies to guide UCSF's sustainability efforts and initiatives, including academic programming. It consults with systemwide sustainability groups, other UCSF committees, Chancellor-appointed committees, and Faculty Councils on sustainability matters. The Committee also reports to the UCSF Senate's Executive Council and to the Division on UCSF's sustainability efforts and addresses sustainability issues upon the request of university leadership or other committees.

The Committee has made a number of contributions to sustainable practices since its inception as a Senate standing committee. In 2015-16, through its Global Food Initiative and Carbon Neutrality Initiative, the Committee awarded grants for research on food insecurity and infectious diseases, supported the goal for UC to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025, and encouraged faculty involvement through the Faculty Climate Action Champion Program. Over the years, the Committee's efforts expanded significantly, encompassing numerous initiatives each year. The UCSF Green Challenge was also introduced in 2015-16 to foster innovation in sustainability, providing funding for impactful projects across the campus. By 2017-18, the Committee facilitated fellowship projects, including an elective course on "Women, the Environment, and Physicians' Activism." In 2018-19, together with the San Diego Senate Division, the Sustainability Committee at UCSF drafted a UC systemwide memorial urging fossil fuel divestment and organized the Climate Health Symposium. In 2019-20, they promoted the inclusion of sustainability into UCSF's strategic goals and supported expanded bicycle infrastructure. The following years saw continued efforts in planning the NorCal Symposium on Climate and Pandemic Resilience (2020-25), organizing two Senate theme years focused on decarbonization (2022-24), partnering with the UC Office of Communications on a bicycling awareness campaign (2023-24), and providing feedback on the UC Sustainable Practices

³ UC San Diego Today: UC San Diego Launches New Graduation Requirement, Bolstering Climate Change Education, September 26, 2024: <https://today.ucsd.edu/story/uc-san-diego-launches-new-graduation-requirement-bolstering-climate-change-education>

Policy (2022-24). The committee has developed a robust subcommittee structure, with groups focused on rethinking the culture of academic travel, encouraging sustainable commuting, reducing medical waste, developing a training module on sustainability in the lab, and organizing a monthly speaker series in conjunction with the UC Center for Climate, Health, and Equity. The 2022-24 Chair, Marya Zlatnik, received a UCSF Sustainability Award in 2024 for her contributions toward UCSF's sustainability goals as leader of the committee.

The Committee's involvement in key UCSF task forces and committees has led to substantial contributions to shared governance at UCSF, which include participation on the UC Climate Crisis Committee and the UCSF Advisory Committee on Sustainability. Committee members have influenced fossil fuel divestment policies, sustainable practices, and decarbonization plans at UCSF. Their advocacy has extended to reducing the carbon footprint of academic travel and promoting sustainable practices in healthcare. Through educational outreach and strategic advocacy, the Committee has significantly impacted UCSF's sustainability policies, ensuring that environmental responsibility remains a central focus in decision-making processes.

Rationale for a Systemwide Committee

As evidenced by the 2022 UC Academic Senate Memorial on Reducing Fossil Fuel Combustion, a coordinated Senate response on climate change can inspire action. The UC Administration responded to the Memorial with the Pathways to a Fossil-Free UC Task Force and funds for campus decarbonization studies for all ten campuses. As noted on the Pathways to Fossil Free UC Task Force's webpage, "accelerating efforts to decarbonize campus energy infrastructure is the largest remaining challenge to achieving the University's climate action goals and maintaining UC's status as a leader in climate action."⁴ While decarbonization plans are campus-specific, all are capital-intensive projects. In our current environment of budget reductions and potential federal impacts to research funding, it is important to collectively back this initiative and avoid the loss of all momentum. Having a systemwide committee committed to this task would alleviate some of the pressures on Academic Council, particularly at this moment when shared governance is needed on so many fronts.

Additionally, a systemwide committee would allow the systemwide Senate to coordinate efforts on matters pertaining to campus decarbonization, climate change educational programming, climate change research, and climate change impacts and mitigation. A systemwide committee provides a forum to keep Divisional Senates informed about climate change initiatives at other campuses, exchange ideas, and discuss best practices.

San Diego and San Francisco acknowledge that a systemwide committee often has corresponding campus counterparts on all campuses; however, per [Senate Bylaw 325](#), this is not an explicit requirement for establishing a new systemwide Senate committee. There is no stated threshold for aligning divisional committees with a systemwide one. And while it is our hope that a Systemwide committee would provide momentum for Divisions to establish local counterparts, there is no requirement for any Division to do so. In addition, establishing a framework for a systemwide committee with a support network of faculty colleagues from UCs may facilitate the institutionalization of local climate change/sustainability standing committees in other divisions.

⁴ Pathways to Fossil Free UC Task Force: <https://www.ucop.edu/leading-on-climate/task-force/index.html>

We recognize that starting a new committee requires resourcing, most notably staffing, and that securing additional resources at the systemwide Senate and at local Divisions is an ongoing challenge, but we feel that the need to establish this committee is too great not to proceed. Additionally, efforts to address climate change and promote sustainability can save campuses money as well (note, decommissioning of UCSF Medical Center's nitrous oxide piping at the behest of former UCSF SUST Chair Seema Gandhi has saved UCSF \$1.2 million and efforts to decrease unnecessary air travel and install on-campus renewable energy can also save money).⁵ Hopefully we can collectively strategize on how to effectively support Senate climate committees and some of the resources currently being used to support ad hoc or special committees on climate could be applied to a standing committee.

We expect that as long as decarbonization remains a priority of systemwide leadership, the systemwide Senate will be asked to provide input on an ad hoc basis even in the absence of a standing committee, as it has recently been asked to provide feedback on the Pathways to a Fossil Free UC Task Force Draft Report. Indeed, the Fossil Free UC Task Force's Draft Report's recommendations include "Develop a communication strategy through Academic Senate and its systemwide committees to keep faculty leaders and their campus- based colleagues well informed about decarbonization actions" and "Create a standing committee or working group within each divisional senate to assure that the above actions happen on each campus and in an organized and sustained manner that systematically advances climate education and campus decarbonization." Creating a systemwide committee would clearly help to address these recommendations. Without a coordinated committee to ensure long-term coordination, accountability, and proactive strategies, our campus efforts will remain fragmented.

Proposed Bylaw (Charge)

XXX. Climate Change and Sustainability

- A. Membership shall be determined in accordance with Bylaw 128. One undergraduate and one graduate student shall sit with the Committee. [See Bylaw 128.E.] The Vice chair shall be chosen in accordance with Bylaw 128.D.
- B. Duties. Consistent with Bylaw 40, the Committee shall:
 - 1. Consult with and advise the President and appropriate agencies of the Senate on matters pertaining to campus decarbonization, climate change in educational programs, climate change research, climate change impacts and mitigation.
 - 2. Undertake studies of policies and practices affecting climate change and sustainability and make recommendations to appropriate University bodies.
 - 3. Maintain liaison to systemwide sustainability groups and consult with representatives of the relevant standing committees and the Chair of the Academic Council to identify issues related to climate change and sustainability that affect the academic mission of the University.

⁵ How 'Going Under' is Getting Greener: <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2023/06/425751/how-going-under-getting-greener>

Conclusion

Establishing a systemwide Climate Change and Sustainability Committee is a necessary step toward integrating climate action and sustainability into UC's core mission, ensuring coordinated action, and fostering long-term resilience. Despite the budget challenges and other external pressures, the urgency of climate change demands a dedicated structure to guide policy, strategy, and institutional commitments. We hope that Academic Council supports this initiative and approves our proposal to initiate the process for systemwide review. By doing so, the Senate can demonstrate leadership, accountability, and a proactive commitment to a sustainable future for UC.