



**2023
STRATEGIC
PLAN**



**DIVERSIFY
TO UNIFY**





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note from the President p3

Recent Success Measures..... p4

Endorsements p5

Three Phases of Climate Leadership
in Higher Education p6

The Third Phase of Climate Leadership..... p7

Strategic Pathways

Diversify to Unify..... p8

Generate p9

Champion p10

Excel p11

Closing Summary p12



NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As Second Nature embarks on the implementation of its 2023 strategic plan, I wanted to share a little background on why we're taking this approach now. Over the past year we conducted many interviews, listening sessions, and working groups with higher education stakeholders. We analyzed our data. We reflected on our program successes and challenges. This comprehensive assessment led us to conclude that while parts of the higher education sector are making a significant impact, the entirety of the sector can be mobilized more effectively to address our shared climate crisis.

It's time for the next phase of climate leadership in higher education, what we're calling "**Diversify to Unify.**" This theme is the heart of our new strategic plan and I encourage you to review the details that follow to learn more about this inclusive vision. With the hundreds of member institutions in Second Nature's Climate Leadership Network, and thousands more that can be engaged, we invite you to join us in our journey to make this new vision a reality.

In solidarity,

Tim Carter
President

RECENT SUCCESS MEASURES

EXPONENTIALLY DRIVING CLIMATE PROGRESS

In our last strategic plan, Second Nature set out to accomplish **four strategic goals** as rapid drivers of climate action and to support colleges and universities in the Climate Leadership Network. The following are a selection of key success measures for each goal:



GOAL
1

Accelerate Campus Performance

40

Tools + Resources

Developed over 40 tools and resources including:

- Solutions Center
- Carbon Pricing Toolkit
- Climate Justice Toolkit

GOAL
3

Lead the Higher Education Sector

416

Colleges + Universities

Recruited 416 colleges and universities to join “America is All In” and represented higher education at United Nations Climate Change Conferences in Madrid, Glasgow, and Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

GOAL
2

Improve Campus Engagement

214

Campuses

Led the effort to have 214 campuses use SIMAP, the most robust greenhouse gas accounting platform in higher education

GOAL
4

Test Opportunities

27

Higher Education Institutions

Launched the Acceleration Fund to support 27 institutions by awarding \$250,000 for projects on decarbonization, climate resilience, and climate justice

ENDORSEMENTS

“I am so grateful to Second Nature for the invaluable work you do to not only inspire the big ideas but to enable the million and one small steps required to realize them.”

- Jane Stewart, Sustainability Coordinator, Washington and Lee University

“Second Nature provides higher educational institutions the proper resources that can be implemented to address both climate change, as well as climate justice.”

- 2023 Higher Education Summit Attendee

“Second Nature serves an important role in keeping a focus on climate change and catalyzing ongoing conversations and prodding accountability. The Second Nature Commitments are important standards and levers for engaging institutional leadership on climate.”

- 2023 Higher Education Summit Attendee

“The Climate Leadership Network isn't designed simply as a group of schools proclaiming that we care about climate change. It is about reorienting higher education's actions and priorities in service of society's urgent need for climate solutions.”

- Michael Crow, President, ASU





THREE PHASES OF CLIMATE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION



PHASE ONE FOCUS: OPERATIONAL CARBON NEUTRALITY

The first phase, roughly from 2007-2015, focused primarily on **operational carbon neutrality** and was driven by the **Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitments** and the **Climate Leadership Network**, both of which were established by Second Nature. The Commitments provided a uniform framework for all institutions to adopt, while still allowing flexibility in how each institution pursued its climate goals.

2007



PHASE TWO FOCUS: RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

The second phase, from 2015-2022, expanded the concept of climate action to include **resilience and adaptation**, and emphasized joint campus and community actions, with Second Nature introducing climate resilience and adaptation as a new leadership commitment and prioritizing more **technical support for existing members in our network**.

2015



PHASE THREE FOCUS: DIVERSIFY TO UNIFY

The third and current phase, **Diversify to Unify**, aims to mobilize the full range of strengths within the higher education sector to accelerate climate solutions, using network design to identify **complementary strengths** across institutions and personnel roles. Rather than solely focusing on operational decarbonization, this phase **embraces the diverse strengths of the higher education sector to accelerate climate solutions**.

2022



THE THIRD PHASE OF CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

Networks require design, management, and support to ensure success. Second Nature has played an essential role in building and sustaining the Climate Leadership Network since its inception.

Given our relationships, reputation, and experience leading climate efforts with the sector, there is no other organization better positioned to serve higher education's third phase of growth than Second Nature. By identifying complementary strengths across different types of institutions and personnel roles within the sector, we can unite our climate actions in service of the public good and help society meet global goals.

Our Diversify to Unify strategy follows four strategic pathways. Each strategic pathway is stated as a goal, operationalized through objectives, includes equity qualifiers, and is tracked with sample success measures.



***DIVERSIFY
TO UNIFY***



GENERATE



CHAMPION



EXCEL





DIVERSIFY TO UNIFY PATHWAY



GOAL:

We leverage and align the complementary strengths of the higher education sector through our collaborative program design and sector-wide activities



OBJECTIVES:

- Identify and map distinctiveness between types of institutions, and mobilize collective action through the complementarity between these types
- Identify and map distinctive roles within institutions, and mobilize collective action through the complementarity between these roles
- Support robust and diverse topical and affinity-based advisory groups and partnership models as a key mechanism for new resource and knowledge creation supporting Second Nature programs
- Expand an ongoing and responsive Fellowship program aligned with advisory group themes



EQUITY QUALIFIERS:

- The diversification of our program design will create more pathways to engagement and leadership for institutions and individuals that have not previously had distinct accessibility



SAMPLE SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Distinctiveness and complementarity maps for institutions
- Five stakeholder groups (advisory councils and working groups) are established and staffed by Second Nature
- Two new programmatic initiatives led by roles other than presidents or sustainability coordinators



GENERATE PATHWAY



GOAL:

We use the higher education sector's climate data and our program evaluation to build sector-wide resources and advance institutional climate action



OBJECTIVES:

- Produce synthesis and aggregated sector-specific reports on climate action progress using collected and reported data
- Create new data-based tools and resources, including recognition programs, that are widely used and valued by the higher education sector
- Institutionalize program evaluation processes to improve organizational effectiveness



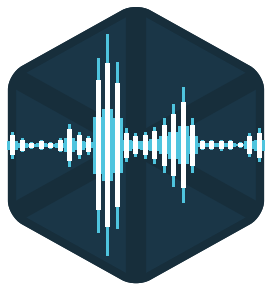
EQUITY QUALIFIERS:

- We will strive for our data to serve not just those with the most capacity and resources to participate in the submission process, but for us to share data insights and provide new capacity across members of the higher education community that have the fewest resources to do it on their own



SAMPLE SUCCESS MEASURES:

- 100% increase in campus response rate to annual needs assessment (25% v 12%)
- One new publication, resource, or tool that synthesizes Second Nature data



CHAMPION PATHWAY



GOAL:

We serve as the higher education sector's collective voice for climate action by building momentum, inspiring progress, and highlighting the critical role the sector plays in solving climate challenges



OBJECTIVES:

- Increase public visibility for Second Nature and the work of our member institutions in nationally recognized media outlets and events
- Become the go-to connection for stakeholders external to the sector that are interested in connecting with higher education's climate leaders
- Explore arts and cultural engagement opportunities to broaden the audience and reach of Second Nature's program activities



EQUITY QUALIFIERS:

- These communications, marketing, and recognition efforts will platform historically underrepresented and marginalized members of the higher education sector that are accelerating climate actions



SAMPLE SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Sector-wide recognition program, highlighting the diversity of climate leadership activities
- 2023-25 Marketing and Communications plan





EXCEL PATHWAY



GOAL:

We continually improve our internal operational and organizational practices



OBJECTIVES:

- Annually update, prioritize, and execute Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, Justice (DEIAJ) activities in internal operations, consistent with how justice and equity is centered in program activity
- Increase team cohesion and build relational capital through periodic in-person meetings
- Continue and expand team-wide activities that encourage professional and personal development
- Implement universal project management tool for tracking and transparency across program activities



EQUITY QUALIFIERS:

- We will continue to implement DEIAJ values into the organization's operational practices as well as foster and support employee professional development plans



SAMPLE SUCCESS MEASURES:

- Complete 100% of the activities identified in the 2023 DEIAJ priority action plan
- 50% of full-time staff independently complete professional development activity
- Fully incorporate DEIAJ values into employee handbook

CLOSING SUMMARY

At Second Nature, we've been implementing a robust network-based climate leadership strategy since our launch. We rigorously examine, evaluate, and refine our tactics based on feedback from our members and the broader higher education community around the world. We leverage the network's collective experience, expertise, and innovations to generate actions that would not be possible otherwise.

Our new strategy is designed to drive equitable and holistic climate solutions by embracing the higher education sector's diverse assets, including diverse leadership roles and types of institutions, to create scale and impact. This strategy represents a fundamental shift in how we approach the design of program and network activities: operational decarbonization is one important milestone in a suite of climate action goals, rather than the sole endpoint of what our sector can contribute. The way we can truly meet our mission is through a "whole-of-higher-education" effort that aligns the sector's climate efforts rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

We hope that you will join us to support and participate in the work that lies ahead. 



**Second Nature is committed to accelerating climate action in,
and through, higher education.**

We do this by mobilizing a diverse array of higher education institutions to act on bold climate commitments, to scale campus climate initiatives, and to create innovative climate solutions. We align, amplify, and bridge the sector's efforts with other global leaders to advance urgent climate priorities.

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