

Mason's Climate Commitment Campaign:
Key Objectives

In Spring 2008, graduate students and faculty in COMM 590: Climate Change Communication Campaigns undertook audience research activities (including personal interviews, a campus-wide survey, and message pre-testing) for the purpose of designing a strategic communication plan and messages to support Mason's Climate Commitment. The campaign was launched during Earth Week with President Merten in attendance to open the proceedings.

The recommended communication objectives for the first year of the campaign are:

1. Nearly Everyone Should be Aware of the Commitment – At least 90% of the university community (i.e., students, staff & faculty) will become aware that Mason has committed to becoming “climate neutral.”
2. Most Members of our Community Should Know (in broad terms) Mason's Actions and Plans – At least 70% of the university community will have at least basic knowledge of the major actions (current and planned) that Mason will take (e.g., all new buildings will be green).
3. Most Members of our Community Should Feel a Sense of Pride and Collective Responsibility (and Eventually a Sense of Collective Accomplishment) – At least 70% of the university community will feel a sense of pride in -- and collective responsibility for - - the goal, and eventually will feel a sense of collective accomplishment as progress is made toward the goal.
 - It is important that we invoke the many important reasons that Mason has undertaken this commitment (e.g., conserve energy, save money, fight global warming).
 - It is important that we dispel myths and address people's concerns about the initiative.
 - It will eventually be important that we showcase progress toward the goal
4. Most Members of our Community Should Know at Least Three Important Actions They can Take to Help – At least 70% of the university community will be able to name at least three important ways they are, or could be, contributing to the goal.
 - Showcasing members of the Mason community who are performing these actions will be a useful way to convey the knowledge.

Core Messages

The tested messages below are designed to serve as the core of outreach communication related to Mason's climate commitment.

Main Message:

We're committed.

Mason has committed to becoming "climate neutral." That means we are actively taking steps to eliminate or offset all CO₂ emissions associated with the university's electricity use, heating, commuting, and air travel.

Key Supporting Messages:

We're in great company.

Mason has made this commitment along with several hundred colleges and universities nationwide. Universities can and should lead the nation in efforts to reduce the greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

We've already made great strides.

Mason has already taken actions that are saving the university \$1 million in energy costs every year. Starting in 2009, all new buildings will be built to meet the new green standard and all new equipment purchased will be Energy Star rated. Going forward, we are going to make reducing our emissions a priority in everything we do.

We're in this together; it's up to all of us.

We can harness Mason's spirit of innovation to achieve this goal, and we'll be proud of ourselves when we do. Achieving this important goal will take the collective efforts of everyone in the campus community.

Our everyday actions matter.

Reducing Mason's emissions is up to all of us. Simple steps like turning out lights when leaving a room, powering down computers when not in use, and recycling cans, bottles, and paper make a real difference.

Strategies and tactics that might be used to convey the Climate Campaign messages

Activate Mason's "Climate Champions"

- In response to a web-based survey, nearly 600 members of the Mason community agreed to help engage others at Mason in the climate commitment. About 50 of the people attended a face-to-face training during Earth Week and received the communication materials they need to help convey the key messages through word-of-mouth in our community.

Pitch stories based on our commitment, our approach, and our results to internal and external print media

Place relevant content on Mason and external online channels

- Mason's sustainability website
- Mason's homepage
- Facebook
- E-newsletter

Engage campus organizations as partners in the commitment

- University Life
 - University Life oversees many offices that should be involved in the climate commitment campaign including: Career Services, Greek Life, Johnson Center & University Life Programs, Orientation & Family Programs, Peer Empowerment Program, Program Board, Student Government, Student Media, and Student Activities.
 - University Life is thus an obvious partner for the effort.
 - A strategic programming and information dissemination effort to support the climate commitment campaign and campus sustainability efforts should be designed with the cooperation University Life.
- Residence Halls
 - Incoming student moving into the residence halls should be oriented with suggestions for decreasing energy and water use. This could involve both promotional materials and meetings.
 - Energy saving competitions could be promoted.
- Student Organizations
 - Campus student organizations, such as the Environmental Awareness Group, Greek organizations, College Democrats or Republicans on campus should be encouraged to disseminate messages about Mason's Climate Commitment.
 - These organizations could be asked to coordinate campus tours to visit sites where green improvements have been made – buildings, gardens, retention ponds, etc.

Host events and incorporate campaign messages in Mason events

- Existing Events can be used to transmit information to a captive audience, solicit feedback, as well as build commitment through experiential learning.
 - Mason Day
 - √ Climate Commitment informational booth and interactive activities
 - Athletic Events
 - √ Green cheers, trivia games
 - Vision Series
 - √ Speaker about climate change research or climate change issues
- New Events scheduled can arouse curiosity and create innovative messages that are simple, unexpected, and concrete.
 - Educational Seminars and Forums
 - √ Mason Actions and Plans Update with Q&A
 - “Green” job Fair
 - Campus EcoTour (See Campus Organizations)
 - Music and Arts
 - √ Green Open Mic Night
 - √ Student Environmental Art Exhibit
 - Climate Issues Happy Hour

Incorporate climate commitment messages into the admissions & orientation process

- Promotional material
 - Mason should feature its efforts to green the campus as a selling point to prospective students.
 - Green curriculum as well as green buildings, residence halls, and alternative transportation options should be featured.
- Admissions essay
 - Prospective students could be asked to address the issue of climate change in the essay portion of their application to admissions.
- Orientation
 - Information on how incoming students can help Mason meet its climate commitment could be provided in orientation packets.
- Campus tours
 - The tour leaders could discuss Mason’s Climate Commitment including steps to reduce emissions as well as future plans around campus.

Incorporate climate commitment messages into alumni relations efforts

- Newsletters, magazines and other regular communications with alumni
 - Updates on Mason’s efforts to improve sustainability and decrease carbon emissions.
 - Feature stories highlighting Mason graduates doing “green” jobs.
- Alumni as speakers
 - Alumni working on environmental issues could be invited to speak at green events on campus
- Fundraising
 - Consider specific fundraising campaigns for sustainability/climate commitment
 - Allow alumni to earmark donations for sustainability/climate commitment
- Homecoming events
 - Campus tours could introduce alumni to Mason’s efforts to improve sustainability and decrease carbon emissions – e.g. green buildings.
 - Events could include speakers (alumni or mason faculty) working on climate change and sustainability related issues.

Aggressively use prompts and cues around campus to remind people to take simple actions

- Help people remember to act sustainable by the use of prompts and cues in strategic locations. For example:
 - Campus showers – Reminding us to take shorter showers
 - Light switches – Reminding us to turn off the lights
 - Parking lots – Reminding us to use Mason’s mass transit options
 - Campus trashcans – Reminding us to dispose properly and recycle
 - Food courts – Reminding us to eat more organic and locally grown foods
 - Bathroom faucets – Reminding us to turn off faucets
 - Patriot Circle & Sandy Creek Parking Garages– Reminding us to turn off our engines while waiting for someone
- Place Mason Sustainability Efforts reminders at waiting areas.
 - CUE Bus Stop, Shuttle Bus Stop, Elevators, JC Information Desk, SUB I

Incorporate climate commitment messages into community relations activities

- Mason's good relationship with local business groups and government lends an opportunity for further collaboration for this commitment.
 - Climate Change Solutions Community Fair
 - √ Informational booths
 - √ Networking opportunity for students
 - √ Forum for discussion about collaborative opportunities
 - Climate Change Awards Program acknowledging leaders, such as:
 - √ Small, Medium, and Large Business Leaders
 - √ K-12 Student, Undergraduate Student, and Graduate Student
 - √ Alumni
 - √ Local, State, and National Leaders
 - Green Citizen Panel
 - √ Host local citizens on ways to incorporate sustainable living
 - Green Volunteer Opportunities
 - √ Families and school groups volunteer for green projects
 - *Mason Connection* Special Issue: Climate Commitment

Develop a line of appropriate (i.e., carbon neutral or low carbon) promotional products

- Climate Commitment logo
 - Develop a logo to signify Mason's Climate Commitment. This logo and related messages can be used on various promotional products.
- Products
 - If Mason offers new food products to help reduce campus emissions, these products could be provided to the Mason community for tasting and awareness that they are available.
 - T-shirts that have the key actions could be provided. This will serve as a reminder to those wearing it and as a walking advertisement.
 - Toolkits or packets with key messages, information about the commitment, Mason's progress, etc. could be provided to each member of the Mason community.
 - Messages can also be placed on magnets, awareness bracelets, drink ware, writing materials, etc.
 - Signs that are placed on campus light switches, thermostats, showers, sinks, and other locations where desired behavior change takes place could be provided to members of the Mason community.
 - Products offered by Mason, such as duffle bags, totes, notebooks, journals and clothing, should be eco-friendly.
 - √ A section in campus bookstores should be devoted to these products to highlight them.
 - √ Eco-friendly products created by Mason should have the Climate Commitment logo and have a small sentence on the bottom stating how they support the commitment.

Appendices

Recent Climate Actions at Mason

Energy Saving Contract with Siemens

Mason is saving about \$1 million every year in utility costs with the help of an energy-efficiency contract with Siemens Building Technologies initiated in 2004. Energy-efficient lighting and water-conserving devices and fixtures were installed at Mason's campuses in 2005-2006; boilers and chillers were upgraded; the energy management system was expanded so that inefficient buildings can be easily targeted for improvement; and new policies for energy and water efficiency were put in place.

The payoff is lower utility bills today and into the future, and fewer greenhouse gas emissions. For example in 2007 alone, Mason:

- avoided the use of 15,343,249 kWh of electricity, 697,943 Therms of natural gas, and 64,495,000 gallons of water.
- reduced our CO2 emissions by over 29 million pounds, and our emissions of SO2 and NOx by 133,333 and 76,716 pounds, respectively.

New Green Building Standards

Mason now has policies that all new buildings will be built to green standards. Two new buildings are currently being built to green standards: the Volgenau IT&E building at Fairfax and the new building at Arlington. Mason has also has six new projects in the pipeline registered to be "LEED certified." (LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, as defined by the U.S. Green Building Council.) Mason's goal is to build all new buildings to the "LEED Silver" standard.

LEED certified buildings are typically 50% more energy efficient than standard buildings. This reduces greenhouse gas emissions and saves Mason money.

New Pro-Active Transportation Department

In August of 2005 Mason established a new Parking and Transportation Department that is dedicated to pro-actively managing parking demand, overseeing campus shuttles, and encouraging public transportation, carpooling, and bicycling options.

- CUE bus trips taken by Mason students and employees have increased from 250,000 to 368,000 in the last three years. (Mason community members ride the CUE bus free)
- New shuttles take campus members to and from the Vienna Metro for free.
- Mason employees can receive \$115 a month for commuting by Metro or other public transit.
- Relocation of the freshman parking lot to the West Campus reduced the number of freshmen applying for parking in 2007-2008 by 25%.

Current and Future Climate Actions at Mason

Completion of Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Climate Action Plan

The Facilities Department has undertaken and plans to finish a Greenhouse Gas Inventory by September 2008. After this baseline has been completed, we will seek out help from the campus community to identify the most effective ways to reduce our emissions.

Expansion of Central Heating and Cooling Plant

Mason's Fairfax campus has a central heating and cooling plant that allows for much more efficient heating and cooling of buildings than would be possible with individual systems for each building. Currently the central plant is being expanded, and Mason will capture efficiency improvements possible with newer equipment. Since this equipment is "shared" in the central system, these improvements will pass through to all buildings on campus.

Efficiency Competitions

Mason's first Energy Challenge between residence halls was completed this Earth Day. We plan to extend such competitions to other buildings on campus, encouraging all of the campus community to become involved in finding creative ways to reduce energy and water use.

Switch to Recycled Paper

Mason is in the process of switching over to 30% post-consumer recycled paper. Testing of the paper has just begun, to ensure no adverse impact on existing equipment. Using recycled paper saves the following resources: 929 trees per year; 67MMBtus of energy; 338,633 gallons of water; 43,000 pounds of waste; and 81,500 pounds of CO₂.

Increased Use of Electric Vehicles

The Facilities Department already uses many electric vehicles on campus for maintenance activities, but more are on the way. Larger electric vehicles now available are expected to replace the short-trip high-emissions trucks used by the shops to make service calls.

Installation of Bike Lanes on Campus

All new roads constructed on campus will include dedicated bike lanes. Bike lanes are also planned for the interior of campus.

Vanpool, Carpool, and Shuttle Additions

The Parking and Transportation Office will be expanding the availability of vanpools to more of the Mason community. Faculty and staff who seem to be clustered in certain areas will be offered new vanpools. Formalized carpooling programs are being developed. Future shuttles may be added to provide service to local neighborhoods, nearby attractions, and VRE train station.

Key Actions People at Mason Can Take to Support Mason's Climate Commitment

1. For Resident Students

Turn it off!

Turn off lights, computers, and other appliances when not in use. Natural light from the sun is often adequate for ordinary needs. Set your computer to go to sleep automatically when left idle: sleep mode saves energy, but screen savers don't. Plug your electronics and other appliances into power strips that can be shut off at the end of the day. About 40 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off.

Shorten your shower.

Did you know that just pumping the water for a ten-minute shower requires the same energy as leaving your desk lamp on all day and all night? To make it a hot shower, add 1 ½ more days of that desk lamp. Saving water saves energy. Take a shorter shower, fight global warming, and put a smile on your roommate's face.

Adjust your thermostat - Dress for the season.

Did you know the Commonwealth of VA recommends setting the thermostat at 68 in the winter and 78 in the summer? Heating and cooling are energy and carbon intensive and add significantly to the overall cost of campus housing. Keep your thermostat low in the winter and higher in the summer. When a pleasant breeze is blowing, open your window and turn off the AC.

Reduce-Reuse-Recycle.

Buy less stuff, avoid disposables, and recycle what you can. Bring your own coffee mug and water bottle to reuse. Americans spend more money on bottled water than on gas for their cars by five times as much. The total amount spent in 2006 was over \$11 billion in the U.S. alone. By refilling, you can reduce the amount of bottles that end up in the trash, which is estimated at 60 million per day.

Eat less meat.

Livestock production is responsible for 18% of all greenhouse-gas emissions. The meat industry contributes to global warming by emissions of methane gas and also land and water degradation. Instead of ordering a burger, have a peanut butter & jelly sandwich and save as much as 2.5 pounds of carbon dioxide. Reduce your meat consumption and help reduce harmful emissions.

Take a class.

Did you know that Mason offers more than 125 classes related to the environment and climate change? Sign up for one that's right for you. Consider a minor in Sustainability, Earth Systems Science or Science & Society. Meet others who care about the health of the planet.

Get active.

Organize a group in your residence hall to help reduce energy usage and promote green living. Join the student Environmental Awareness Group on campus. Write for the school newspaper. You can help make Mason a leader in reducing carbon emissions.

2. For Non-Resident Students

Turn it off!

When you leave the classroom, turn off the lights, unless another class is already coming in. Classroom lights are frequently left on when classes are not in session, using electricity unnecessarily. Nearly half of the electricity use in classroom buildings may go towards lighting the classrooms.

Avoid the drive.

Have parking problems got you down? Mason's Parking and Transportation office has ideas to get you on the road to alternative transportation. Explore transportation.gmu.edu to find options for public transportation, carpooling, and bicycling to Mason. Reduce your time circling the parking lot and get to class on time.

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Get active.

Join the student Environmental Awareness Group on campus. Write for the school newspaper. Check out sustainability.gmu.edu for volunteer opportunities. You can help make Mason a leader in reducing carbon emissions.

3. For Faculty and Staff

Turn it off!

Turn off lights when you go out of the room. Set computers to go to sleep automatically when left idle. Remember that sleep mode saves energy, but screen savers don't. Turn off your monitor if you expect to be away more than 20 minutes. Don't let water run unnecessarily – saving water saves energy too. At the end of the day, turn off computers, printers, copiers, fax machines, and power strips.

Avoid the drive.

Did you know Mason offers its employees \$115 per month in Commuter Choice benefits? Explore transportation.gmu.edu to find out about the benefits and options for public transportation, carpooling, and bicycling to Mason. Arrange meetings of colleagues at Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William campuses via videoconferencing.

Offset the flight.

Did you know a roundtrip flight from Dulles to London produces as many CO₂ emissions *per passenger* as 4400 miles in a Toyota Corolla? Many Mason faculty rack up several overseas trips every year adding substantially to Mason's carbon footprint. Take the train to that meeting in New York. Reconsider the conference travel, participate via the web-conferencing option, or buy carbon offsets to make up for the emissions from air-travel.

Dress for the season.

Did you know the Commonwealth of VA recommends setting the thermostat at 68 in the winter and 78 in the summer? Mason office thermostats, however, are set at more comfortable settings of 70 in winter and 76 in summer. Help out by dressing for the season, avoiding the use of space heaters, and exercising restraint with open windows. Heating and cooling are energy and carbon intensive and add substantially to University costs.

Reduce-Reuse-Recycle.

The average U.S. office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. Reduce the paper you use by printing on both sides or reading documents online. Reuse the backside of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts. Make it a habit to always recycle paper as well as other products, and complete the loop by buying products made with recycled content.

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Get active.

Take a class related to climate change or the environment, or teach one. Mason has more than 125 such classes – free for faculty and staff. Take the lead in turning your office into a more energy-efficient and materials-efficient workplace. Check out sustainability.gmu.edu for other ways to get involved. You can help make Mason a leader in reducing carbon emissions.