

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Establishment of a UC-CSU Center for PK-12 Climate Change Literacy and Environmental Justice: Achieving Climate Stability and Sustainability | November 2021



Expanding California's leadership in the fight against climate change, the Environmental and Climate Change Literacy Projects (ECCLPs), a partnership between the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU) and key stakeholders, is championing the creation of a first-of-its-kind center to meet the urgent need to advance PK-12 instruction focused on climate change literacy, environmental justice and action throughout California. With over 6.2 million students enrolled in California's public school system, the center will lead efforts to ensure that our educators affect positive action by preparing the next generation to achieve a more just and sustainable planet.

The center is a key recommendation of the inaugural Environmental and Climate Change Literacy Project and Summit, a December 2019 event that drew a coalition of educators, scientists, environmentalists, non-profit agencies, universities, teacher educators, teachers and students from across California intent on growing a new generation of climate champions.

MISSION

The UC-CSU Center for PK-12 Climate Change Literacy and Environmental Justice aims to greatly enhance support for statewide teacher preparation programs, PK-12 school administrators and teachers to ensure that students and their school communities become more prepared to address the environmental challenges and inequities associated with worsening climate change.

Achieving what no single entity can accomplish alone, we seek to leverage the resources of our institutions and our partners to advance accessible, inclusive, equity-centered and culturally relevant climate change literacy and environmental justice education for all.

STRATEGIES

To support the consequential, transformational effort to curb climate change and mitigate its devastating community impacts, the center will focus on three key elements:

1. The production of focused scientific and social science research to develop evidence-based approaches to advance climate change literacy and environmental justice.

The center will conduct and disseminate results of surveys and studies on the impact of climate change and environmental literacy on the ability of marginalized and other communities to apply effective, evidence-based, culturally relevant approaches to sustainability. As a highly visible service and research delivery hub for statewide educators, the center can effectively respond to critical issues, bridge gaps in information and connect to the work of key education and advocacy organizations throughout the state to advance the goals of PK-12 climate change literacy and environmental justice education.



Only 43% of adult Americans believe climate change will personally harm them. 71% believe it will definitely harm future generations.

—
YALE'S CLIMATE
OPINION MAPS, 2020

“We can’t wait to tackle the climate crisis. The signs are unmistakable. The science is undeniable. And the cost of inaction keeps mounting.”

—
PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN, 2021

Environmental advocacy among our nation’s youth will continue to grow as they demand more action on environmental injustice and inequity exacerbated by climate change.

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100KIN10

2. The enhancement of teacher preparation and continuing professional learning programming to ensure PK-12 climate change literacy and environmental justice learning is integrated across all relevant instructional disciplines.

Many studies reveal that teachers require more explicit educational preparation that is grounded in research-based approaches if they are to obtain skills, knowledge, and the resources needed to educate students effectively on this complex and multifaceted issue. To meet this demand, the center will provide state-of-the-art, practical and scalable climate change literacy and environmental justice education plans aligned with existing state standards and frameworks. The center will also provide webinars, seminars, short courses and podcasts as well as consultation and support for educators across disciplines.

3. The advancement of PK-12 school/civic partnerships with community-based organizations and youth groups that are already mobilizing to confront environmental challenges.

Currently, teachers in California do not have easy access to a single online resource that both informs and connects them with capable local, community-based, government and non-government groups or agencies that seek to move statewide environmental literacy knowledge forward. The center will assure that the work of these organizations is more firmly connected to PK-12 schools as well as teacher preparation and professional learning communities, making it possible for teachers to interact with and learn from fellow educators, scientists, researchers, sociologists and other experts.

Grounding all of its work, the center will employ a commitment to diversity, equity, justice, inclusion and cultural relevance, ensuring educators are prepared to promote climate change literacy and environmental justice in all its facets for PK-12 students.

LOCATION

The new center will be university-based, assuming an ideal position to create, stimulate and draw upon faculty research in the areas of environmental and climate science, social science, STEM, pedagogy, trauma-informed practices and other fields, such as law and public policy. The center will be co-located as hubs at both a UC and CSU university campus, with distributed activities occurring at partnering campuses across both systems.

The center’s position at the heart of California’s academic and research communities leverages its extraordinary capacity to secure the support of a wide array of stakeholders—including local and regional offices of education, nonprofits, educational organizations, professional learning providers, foundations, businesses and industries.

PARTNERS

- ▶ University of California, Office of the President and 10 UC campuses
- ▶ California State University, Chancellor’s Office and 23 CSU campuses
- ▶ Ten Strands/California Environmental Literacy Initiative