

# IN THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS STUDENT SENATE

Resolution 2025-303

## A Resolution for a Green New Deal for the University of Kansas

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**Summary:** Based on the impact of the climate crisis on Kansas communities, and the University's responsibility to the Lawrence community, propose a series of environmental- and sustainability-focused policies to the University and its affiliates, including energy and resources, food, employment, campus grounds, transit, education and outreach, administration, and funding.

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**WHEREAS,** The climate crisis is a defining challenge of the 21st century. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a report in 2018 urging the necessity of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 from 2010 levels to prevent the worst consequences of climate change. These consequences include more dangerous natural disasters, worse agricultural conditions, and decreasing water availability, among many others. It is undeniable that the emission of greenhouse gases created by human activity are to blame for this crisis.

**WHEREAS,** According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the State of Kansas is uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Kansas will experience stronger droughts, floods, and worse crop yields as the climate crisis worsens. The climate crisis will only intensify over time, meaning younger generations will be hit the hardest.

**WHEREAS,** Climate justice and its ensuing actions encompass equity, wellness, good jobs, and a livable future. Action must be taken across all sectors and communities to effectively scale and adapt to future conditions. A vibrant and resilient future addresses a complex array of industrial, social, and natural solutions.

**WHEREAS,** Other universities, such as the University of California and American University, have adopted their own Green New Deals. The city of Lawrence adopted their own guiding principles for sustainability in 2020.

**WHEREAS,** As a leading public university and Research 1 university, the University of Kansas has a responsibility to its faculty, staff, students, and the public to support its constituents and the City of Lawrence, promote environmental sustainability, and minimize its negative contributions to our ongoing climate crisis.

**AND WHEREAS,** To mitigate and adapt to the myriad disasters Kansas is already seeing—which will only increase in severity as time goes on—the University must prioritize climate action at every level. It is especially important to focus on this as an institution because the University has functionally dissolved its Center for Sustainability, which led sustainability initiatives in the past.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** That the Student Senate—

1) *Energy and resources*

- a) Strongly advises that the funding for KU Recycling reflects the sustainable waste disposal needs of the Lawrence Campus.
- b) Requests the establishment of an intuitive, accessible, and accurate system for recycling signage across campus in conjunction with KU Recycling and the City of Lawrence, reflective of the functions a given waste receptacle serves.
- c) Requests that KU Dining and KU Housing increase compost initiatives in conjunction with the Douglas County Food Policy Council.
- d) Urges the University to construct all new facilities to a minimum of LEED certified standards.
- e) Emphasizes the need to modernize existing buildings to lower energy usage, such as by improving insulation, fixing old wiring, installing low flow faucets, and addressing other such high output fixtures.
- f) Recommends that the University begin the process to upgrade from steam heating to hot water heating to improve energy efficiency.
- g) Reaffirms the importance of the existing contract with Evergy guaranteeing nearly all of the Lawrence Campus's electricity comes from wind energy.
- h) Requests that the University provides a publicly accessible and comprehensive audit of the University's total carbon emissions per year with a greater scope than the pre-existing energy use dashboard.
- i) Invites the University to investigate the long-term cost benefit of switching from fossil fuel-based heating and cooling towards electrical heating and cooling.

2) *Food*

- a) Urges KU Dining to increase the availability, types, and quality of vegan and vegetarian options at its locations to make dining accessible to all students.
- b) Requests that KU Dining publish data on amounts of food waste, proportion of food offered which is locally-sourced, and percentage of food offered that is entirely plant-based.
- c) Recommends that KU Dining works with local producers to provide healthy, local options for students to support the Lawrence economy and reduce transportation emissions.
- d) Recommends that the University reduce cost-prohibitive barriers to food access on-campus for those who are food insecure.
- e) Recognizes the lack of nutritious food availability on campus.

3) *Employment*

- a) Recognizes that wages for student positions must be more competitive to allow for a greater number and diversity of students to fill campus positions.
- b) Recommends that The University work with the Kansas Board of Regents to instate a policy to pay student workers wage that covers a minimum of 50 percent of in-state

tuition costs based on a 20-hour workweek during the academic year (approximately \$15.42).<sup>1</sup>

- c) Recommends that the current cap for student hourly compensation rate of \$20 per hour only with exceptions by request be lifted.
- d) Recommends that this be integrated into University Human Resources Management policy.
- e) Expresses solidarity with the United Academics of KU and the KU Graduate Teaching Assistants Coalition in their missions of amplifying the voices of faculty and teachers and improving working conditions at the University.

4) *Grounds*

- a) Ensures that future campus land developments prioritize incorporating and nurturing native plants and ecosystems.
- b) Recommends that the University sufficiently funds the KU Grounds Crew to convert all low-use green space on campus to native landscape.
- c) Establishes a body to ensure that student-led grounds-related projects are maintained beyond the time of any given student at the University.
- d) Additionally recommends a that the University Senate adds the charge of climate justice and sustainability to its Planning and Resources Committee to center sustainable action across broader university policy

5) *Transit*

- a) Affirms its dedication to funding public transportation through the Required Student Fees to meet the transportation needs of campus, such as bus services
- b) Recommends the University assess and implement improvements to existing biking infrastructure
- c) Demands an equal dedication to funding public transportation from other University resources, as transportation affects all individuals who work, live, and study on campus.
- d) Recommends the University provide a bike loan service, wherein students would be able to rent a bike from the University for a given period of time with little or no deposit or charge
- e) Affirms that the walking paths of campus need to be made accessible to meet the needs of people of all abilities in accordance with the 2024 Master Plan.
- f) Recognizes that ongoing problems with personal motor vehicle congestion on campus should be responded to with more and better choices for alternative modes of transportation.

6) *Education and outreach*

- a) Emphasizes the importance of sustainability-related education initiatives across all disciplines.
- b) Encourages cross-discipline sustainable collaboration like that which The Commons facilitates through Red Hot Research nights.
- c) Recognizes the need for environmental research to be conducted in a manner that is free from the influence of fossil fuel interests.
- d) Reaffirms support for sustainability efforts in local communities.

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1. Equation for hourly rate is (cost of 27 in-state credit hours)/((# of weeks in school year)\*(20 hours per week)). For the 2024–25 academic year, that is  $(365.6*27)/(16*20) = 9868.5/640 = \$15.42/\text{hour}$ .

7) *Administration*

- a) Requests that the University administration create a position dedicated to coordinating sustainability efforts on campus in lieu of its former Center for Sustainability.
- b) Further requests that the University create paid intern and assistant opportunities for students to assist with campus sustainability efforts.

8) *Funding*

- a) Calls upon the University to financially divest from the fossil fuel industry.
- b) Further calls upon the University to provide a publicly accessible audit of investments in fossil fuels and related industries held by the University and KU Endowment.
- c) Supports the creation of a dedicated fund, allocations from which shall support sustainability-focused projects at the University, with sufficient investment from the University to support these projects.

**AND BE IT ORDERED,** That the Speaker of the Students' Assembly will transmit copies of this resolution to the following persons and groups:

- *University Leadership*
  - Douglas Girod, Chancellor, University of Kansas.
  - Barbara Bichelmeyer, Provost, University of Kansas.
  - Julie Murray, Vice Chancellor of Strategic Initiatives, University of Kansas.
  - Karla Leeper, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, University of Kansas.
  - Belinda Sturm, Interim Vice Chancellor for Research, University of Kansas.
  - Candan Tamerler, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of Kansas.
  - Tammara Durham, Vice Provost for Student Affairs, University of Kansas.
  - Jason Hornberger, Vice Provost for Finance, University of Kansas.
  - Callie Long, Interim Vice Provost for Operations, University of Kansas.
  - Angie Loving, Interim Vice Provost for Human Resources, University of Kansas.
  - Amy Mendenhall, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, University of Kansas.
  - Josh Arpin, President for University Senate, University of Kansas.
  - Bozena Pasik-Duncan, President-Elect for University Senate, University of Kansas.
- *Finance and budget*
  - Jeff DeWitt, Chief Financial Officer, University of Kansas.
  - Mary Ann Richey, Director of Budget Management & Fiscal Services, University of Kansas.
- *Sustainability and operations*
  - Cassidy Kuhn, Energy Program Manager, Sustainability at KU, University of Kansas.
  - Cameron Lauer, Director of Custodial Services, University of Kansas.
  - Mark Reiske, Director of Facilities Planning and Development, University of Kansas.
  - Joe Fearn, Landscape Manager, University of Kansas.
- *Transportation Services*
  - Margretta de Vries, Transit Program Coordinator, Transportation Services, University of Kansas.
- *KU Endowment*
  - Daniel Martin, President, University of Kansas Endowment.

- James Clark, Senior Vice President of Investments, University of Kansas Endowment.
- *KU Dining*
  - Jack Kredo, Interim Director, University of Kansas Dining.
  - Bailee Myers, Associate Director of Marketing & Programs, University of Kansas Dining.
- University Daily Kansan.

*Passed by the Community Affairs Council and the Student Rights & Affairs Council on October 16, 2024.*

*Passed by the Students' Assembly on October 23, 2024.*



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DaNae Estabine  
*Student Body President*



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Christopher Raithel  
*Speaker of the Students' Assembly*