

The background image is a photograph of a garden. In the foreground, there are several purple coneflowers with bright orange-brown centers. The garden is lush with green foliage. In the background, a brick building with several windows is visible, slightly out of focus. The sky is a clear, light blue.

OUR JOURNEY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Overview of the Concordia College
Climate Action Plan

March 2023

OUR COMMITMENT

In 2017, Concordia signed the national Integrated Climate Commitment, run by Second Nature, a non-profit working to accelerate climate action in institutions of higher education. By signing the commitment, Concordia pledged to respond to climate change by:

1



Reducing carbon emissions in order to become 100% carbon neutral by 2050.

2



Working with partners to improve community resilience in the face of climate change impacts.

3



Ensuring that all students acquire knowledge and skills needed to act on climate issues.

After a lengthy process of research and consultation (and COVID-related delays), Concordia's first-ever Climate Action Plan was finalized in January 2023.

This document provides a brief overview of the Climate Action Plan. You can read the full version at **ConcordiaCollege.edu/ClimateActionPlan**

If you have any questions about Concordia's Climate Action Plan, send an email to **sustainability@cord.edu**.

WHY WE ARE COMPELLED TO ACT

To enhance the educational experience of our students

Tackling a complex, interdisciplinary problem such as climate change opens new opportunities for experiential and integrative learning.

To prepare our students for engaged citizenship

Professionals in all fields can benefit from familiarity with climate change. Providing students with tools to act on climate issues helps them to be thoughtful, informed, and effective community members.

To care for our home, the Earth

The well-being of people now and in the future depends on the health of the Earth and its ecosystems. We are committed to taking care of our home and maintaining a stable climate.

To play our part as a responsible institution

We join with other institutions and organizations to work for the good of our communities and for the broader society.

To work for equity and justice

The impacts of climate change fall most heavily on poor and marginalized groups of people. Climate action and advancing justice go hand-in-hand.

To enact the ELCA's call to care for creation

As a college of the church, Concordia seeks to act as a responsible steward of the Earth, God's creation. We have a sacred duty to protect the Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty.

OUR APPROACH

Features of our Climate Action Plan:



A Living Document

Every three years, a thorough re-evaluation of the plan will take place, resulting in the addition of details to the next stage and any necessary revisions to any aspect of the plan.



Four Focus Areas

The plan has four focus areas:

- Carbon Emissions Reduction
- Resilience, Equity, and Ecological Health
- Sustainability and Climate Education
- Finance



In Concert with Community

The strategies laid out in the plan will require collaboration from many areas of campus, as well as the broader community.



Stages of the Journey

The plan is currently divided into three stages. Each successive stage has varying levels of detail about what we will do, and more details will be added as we evaluate our progress every three years.



Prioritize Education

In everything we do, we will seek to create opportunities to enhance student learning. All of the work will be oriented towards supporting the educational mission of the college.



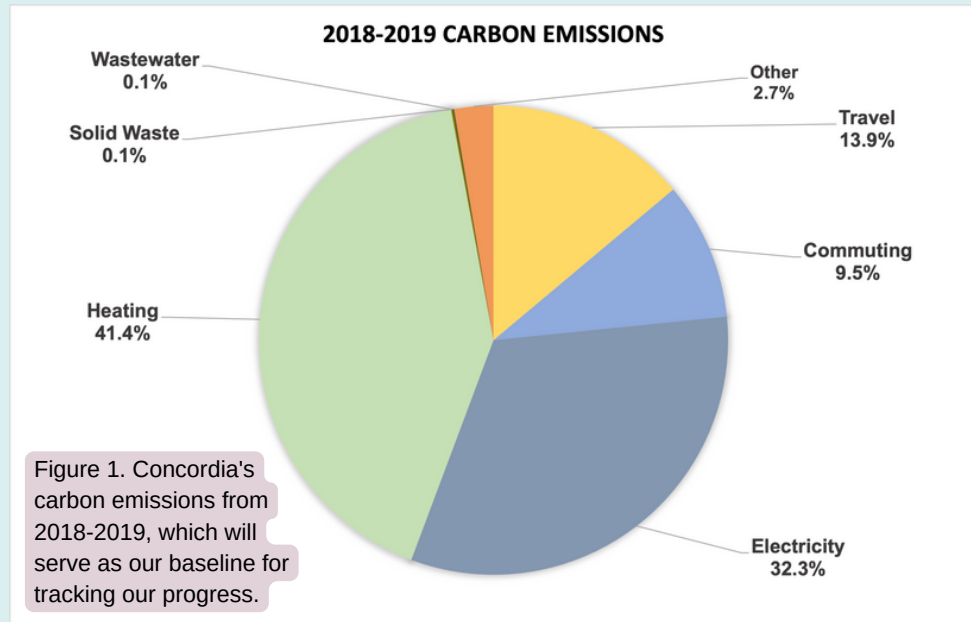
Aligned with College Goals

Our Climate Action Plan is aligned with long-term college goals such as those in the Strategic Plan and the Campus Master Plan.

CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The long term goal: carbon neutrality by 2050

Concordia's long-term goal is to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. While emissions reduction will proceed slowly during the first few years, there is still opportunity to make a significant impact.



In 2019, the college contracted with KFI Engineering to conduct an emissions reduction assessment. KFI concluded that shifting the college to a geothermal system for heating and cooling would be the most effective strategy for reaching our emissions target. However, a geothermal system is estimated to cost approximately \$40 million, in addition to taking about 25 years to fully install. In the meantime, the implementation plan will focus on strategies that are lower in cost and quicker to implement.

Examples of key strategies:

- C1.1** Support student organizing and action in support of carbon reduction.
- C1.4** Strengthen and broaden the reach of the Green Office Program, with a specific focus on carbon reduction.
- C1.6** Propose and enact policies that promote carbon reducing behavior.
- C2.1** Complete thermostat and lighting control upgrades.

RESILIENCE, EQUITY, AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH

Work with community partners to increase resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability of a system or community to survive disruption and to anticipate, adapt, and flourish in the face of change. In the context of climate change, becoming more resilient involves (1) increasing the ability of the community to adapt to the impacts of these negative trends and (2) enabling the community to play positive roles in promoting climate stability and ecological health.

Concordia has already worked to catalyze action around community resilience in Moorhead, and we will continue this work, rather than focusing narrowly and inwardly. Our work focuses on building collaborative partnerships, advancing equity, and promoting the health of the ecological systems of which Concordia is a part. Equity and ecological health are key indicators of resilience that contribute to human well-being.



Examples of key strategies:

- R2.1** Curate a series of workshops and other events open to the campus and greater Fargo-Moorhead community.
- R3.1** Increase accessibility to campus and community basic needs resources to promote community resilience and collegiate success among low-income and minoritized students.
- R3.3** Encourage all units of the college and individual faculty/staff members to use an equity lens to review and adjust policies and practices to reduce systemic barriers.
- R4.2** Increase the number and size of eco-friendly plantings on campus.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE EDUCATION

Integrate climate change topics into the curriculum

Concordia Leads: The Plan for 2030 puts forth this vision, to “educate resourceful 21st-century learners to become accomplished professionals, courageous citizens, and transformational leaders who build a world more joyful and more just.” By carrying out this vision, our students will gain the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in engaged citizenship focused on tackling complex challenges.



Climate change is a complex challenge that calls for action by people equipped with the skills and dispositions that Concordia nurtures in its students. By focusing on the challenge of climate change, in tandem with a focus on justice, the climate action plan provides new opportunities to practice the art of engaged citizenship. It is hoped that every graduate will contribute to systemic redesign that prioritizes carbon neutrality, resilience, sustainability, and intersectional environmental justice.

Examples of key strategies:

- E1.1** Promote the inclusion of sustainability coursework in the core curriculum.
- E1.2** Provide faculty development opportunities on climate change and sustainability.
- E1.4** Create and regularly administer a climate literacy survey to use as an assessment for climate and sustainability education across the curriculum.
- E2.2** Develop programming designed to enable students, faculty, and staff to move from anxiety about climate change to empowering actions to address climate change.

FINANCE

Fund carbon reduction projects at Concordia

All aspects of the Climate Action Plan will be pursued with attention to the financial health of the college. Throughout the first several years of the plan, we will be focusing on strategies that are lower in cost and quick to implement, such as behavior change efforts, environmental conservation measures (ECMs), and researching funding options for more costly projects.

One aspect of the plan that will require significant financial investment over many years is the geothermal system, as it will cost approximately \$40 million, in addition to taking about 25 years to fully install. Final decisions will be made about the feasibility of geothermal in the latter half of this decade.



Figure 24: Potential Location for Geothermal Wellfield

We recognize that our 2050 goal is far away, and so our implementation will ebb and flow as circumstances, technologies, and knowledge advances.

Examples of key strategies:

- F1.1** Research financing options, such as climate bonds, for larger projects that will reduce carbon.
- F2.1** Determine a method for including climate action plan goals in the Comprehensive Campaign Feasibility Study.
- F2.3** Develop and re-launch the Green Revolving Fund.
- F3.1** Seek to incorporate climate and environmental sustainability considerations into all financial decisions.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Stay updated about the work. Updates on sustainability and Climate Action Plan work will be shared in the monthly sustainability newsletters. Subscribe by scanning the QR code here, or by visiting this link: concordiacollege.edu/about/campus-sustainability/newsletter-sign-up/



Start making behavior changes in favor of carbon reduction. This is a key part of our strategy, as it is the main area where campus members have the opportunity to make a large impact at a low cost. Choosing to bike or ride the MATBus, eating more plant-based foods, starting a compost, or buying secondhand are just a few of the countless ways you can change your behavior.

Talk to your peers & colleagues. Encourage those around you to get involved in climate action plan work! Having conversations about climate change is one of the most important individual actions you can take.

Get involved. There are numerous ways to get involved, depending on whether you are a student, faculty, or staff member.

Students

Whether you apply for a sustainability internship, join Student Environmental Alliance (SEA), or apply for the SGA Sustainability Fund, there are numerous ways to get involved as a student.

Faculty

Integrate sustainability and climate change topics into your courses. Ensuring that all students are exposed to this information will require the collaboration of all departments across campus.

Staff

Join the Green Office Program. The program will soon be updated to align with the carbon reduction strategies set forth in the plan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Climate Action Plan Webpage

For more information about the Climate Action Plan and how to get involved, visit this website: **ConcordiaCollege.edu/ClimateActionPlan**

The Full Climate Action Plan

The full version of the Climate Action plan is a lengthy document that details all of the strategies we'll be tackling over the next several years, in addition to providing more background information about each of the goals.

If you feel inclined to read through the full document, you can do so at this link: **ConcordiaCollege.edu/ClimateActionPlan**

Sustainability Webpage

For more information about sustainability at Concordia, visit our webpage: **ConcordiaCollege.edu/about/campus-sustainability/**

Social Media

Follow Concordia Sustainability on Instagram to stay up to date:
[@cordsustainability](https://www.instagram.com/cordsustainability)

Contact Information

If you have questions related to the Climate Action Plan or sustainability at Concordia, please send an email to **sustainability@cord.edu**