



MIT Campus Climate Action Forum Community Ideas Overview

February 12, 2021

Overview

At the Campus Climate Action Forum, co-hosted by the Office of Sustainability and the Office of the Vice President for Research, the MIT community gathered to hear an update on Pillar E progress as outlined in [A Plan for Action on Climate Change](#) and to share ideas for the next five years of campus-level climate action. The Forum encouraged attendance from all members of the MIT community—students, staff, faculty, and alumni—and drew 291 registrants, with 195 unique viewers of the live webcast, and more than 60 community members taking part in the live breakout sessions.

The event sourced ideas from the MIT community through a plenary session and 12 facilitated breakout rooms, as well as ideas shared live in the event chat and beforehand through a Google Form open to the community regardless of event attendance. Through these channels of engagement, several themes emerged from calls for carbon neutrality, to a desire for more student engagement and more visible markers of climate plan progress, to an increased focus on climate justice and equity, Scope 3 emissions, and greater policy advocacy.

The **eight** most common themes sourced from the event are highlighted below with all themes and ideas shared in the [Ideas Appendix](#).

Emissions and Carbon Neutrality

Community members lauded MIT's accomplishments in advancing toward reduction goals, and many took this as evidence that MIT can and should go beyond these initial short term goals in the next climate action plan. **If we made significant progress, then why aren't goals more aggressive?** one attendee asked. **We want MIT carbon neutral by 2030** another offered. The tone of the comments and ideas with regards to emissions encouraged MIT to make bigger commitments with the largest push for carbon neutrality by 2030. Other commenters wondered what more could be done with regards to campus emissions mitigation. **Framing our reductions in terms of offsets doesn't make space for opportunities for concrete GHG emissions through our regular activities** offered another community member. It was agreed by attendees that MIT must scale-up its current efforts to reduce emissions from campus operations through deep energy efficiency, on-site renewable energy generation, renewable energy purchase, and vehicle fleet transformation.

Student Engagement

Students in attendance and those who completed the form in advance appreciated the opportunity to be engaged in this manner, and wanted to see their involvement go much farther. Many community members



called for students to be deeply involved in creation of the next climate action plan. **Engage students in this type of planning—the earlier the better** said one. The **engagement can help them begin adapting behaviors earlier** noted another attendee, offering that this engagement could result in lasting impacts on individual behavior. Attendees noted student engagement would serve to leverage the skills and research capabilities of students while providing ownership in the future of campus. One attendee encouraged leadership to consider students getting involved with **a focus on student buildings** while another suggested that we **engage students in ideation around longer-term emissions reductions**.

Awareness Campaign and Visible Markers

Many attendees sought more available information on both progress of the climate action plan as well as overall commitments and research from MIT, citing that existing outreach methods may not be reaching everyone interested in this information. One attendee advocate for **greater access to climate action research and science** while another sought **more transparency on how MIT aligns with the Paris Agreement goals** as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Attendees wanted physical and visual representations of MIT progress and commitments. **Create an on-campus display of CAP progress** suggested a community member, while another stated that **we need...a physical manifestation of our culture. MIT.nano shows us we do high tech nano research. Need that physical place for climate**. Additional awareness ideas trended toward installations like a “climate clock” or to create visuals to communicate energy use and impact, for example displaying real time energy use in a particular building.

Environmental Justice and Equity

Environmental justice and equity were mentioned as an important part of the next iteration of the overall climate action plan. Specifically, attendees wondered **what are the environmental justice implications of the PPA and similar projects**. Several attendees also noted the importance of consideration for social justice in procurement and full product lifecycles. Based on experience, one attendee suggested the drafting of the new climate action plan could follow the development of the diversity and inclusion strategic plan where **UA students and faculty meet every week with John Dozier and draft docs shared widely** a creation process they found **energizing and open**.

Incentivization

Staff as well as alumni in attendance landed on the idea of incentivization for needed changes to reduce Scope 3 emissions. One specific example is the fleet of vehicles DAPER manages, from Zambonis to crew boats. Without budget funding to transition to electric, which can be costly, the staff member encouraged MIT to **create a place we can apply for overall MIT budget to provide the difference in funds as department don't have the extra funds to spend** on such projects.

Investment/Divestment/Retirement

The topic of fossil-fuel industry divestment was raised across breakout rooms and the idea submission form. Along with the calls for overall divestment, attendees offered some nuanced ideas encouraging MIT to deploy its significant investment power to work for climate positive solutions and **to work with Fidelity to decarbonize the retirement funds offered to MIT faculty and staff**. Another attendee asked that MIT **distance from organizations that are causing great harm** while another encouraged MIT to use its leverage as a large investor



to push for change, **consider MIT's role as an investor in fossil fuel companies that makes space for pushing them toward sustainability** they said, **make sure we are at the table.**

Scope 3 Greenhouse Gas Emission Sources

Many comments and ideas also focused on Scope 3 and indirect emissions. The specific drivers of Scope 3 that were mentioned varied greatly from travel, to food, to procurement and goods used on campus, as well as lab waste. Overall, the main theme of these ideas was the general need to include major Scope 3 emissions in MIT's climate action plan goals, mitigation, and reporting activities.

In addition to Scope 3 emission sources, there were several comments and suggestions about the need to expand the scope of the climate action plan to recognize the importance of and inclusion of campus water use and waste management, which are inextricably linked to GHG emissions and energy use.

Advocacy and Policy

One question prompt for the event invited attendees to reflect on MIT's strengths to which multiple attendees responded that the ability to advocate and lobby for policy changes as a community and Institution is an essential strength. One commenter advocated for **a stronger policy voice that might be facilitated through class projects with a public sector focus and/or through the creation of programs at various MIT centers** while another asked us to better leverage MIT's **leadership and influence for federal policy.**