

Dear Laurent Fabius, President of COP21,

In the coming weeks' negotiations to achieve universal agreement on climate, we urge you to acknowledge and support the research and education role that universities and colleges play in addressing climate change. We represent a global alliance of Higher and Further Education Sustainability networks with a combined membership of more than 10,000 universities, colleges and student organisations worldwide.

In this Open Letter to you, we affirm our commitment to the critical role that universities, colleges and students play in finding and implementing solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation. We see this taking place in the context of also addressing wider issues of sustainability, including social and economic policies and practices. **The commitments and actions outlined below require the urgent support of COP21 Ministers and Governments.**

We commit to supporting our members in creating more innovative academic pathways for our students - the leaders and policy makers of the future - and to supporting our staff to envision and spur creative strategies, practices and attitudes for climate change solutions. **We call on national Governments to support us to embed climate and sustainable development education into teaching, operations, and quality standards.**

We celebrate the unique role of our university and college members in leading the research and understanding of the origins and trajectory of climate change, in gauging its consequences, and designing reduction mitigation and adaptation solutions. **We invite COP21 to acknowledge and strengthen the key research and development role that our university and college members contribute towards climate change solutions.**

We believe that our university and college members are pioneers and demonstrators in modelling and piloting effective climate and sustainable development practices. **We call on COP21 Ministers to strengthen, showcase and embed our responsibility to assess and report on our climate and wider sustainability organisational and teaching performance.**

More specifically we urge COP21 Ministers and Governments to consider taking the following measures:

- Invite, challenge, support and showcase universities and colleges as living laboratories and agents of change for climate change adaptation and

mitigation, so that they, in turn, may inspire and stimulate actions in their local communities and societies. Showcase education initiatives that take an integrated and collaborative approach to the design and delivery of programmes and which place the Global Goals for Sustainable Development at the centre of teaching, learning and research.

- In acknowledging the connection between climate change impacts and systemically embedded social and economic structures that disadvantage, harm, and kill people all over the world, we request more support for transdisciplinary learning, teaching and research approaches that link climate solutions with the need to transform economic, political and social structures.
- Respect, acknowledge and support the academic freedom of universities and colleges in leading the research and understanding of the origins and trajectory of climate change, in gauging its consequences and designing reduction mitigation and adaptation solutions. National and public research funding support criteria needs to acknowledge and prioritize trans-disciplinary research activities that address climate change and the Global Goals for Sustainable Development.
- Invest significant financial support to promote national and regional energy transition using university and college campuses and operations as a leverage agent to accelerate the transition.
- Develop and implement policy frameworks that embed accountability and responsibility for climate change mitigation and adaptation and the Global Goals for Sustainable Development into research, teaching, operations, and quality standards of institutions of higher education. Establish or strengthen existing reporting, benchmarking and accreditation frameworks for universities and colleges to account for and further improve sustainability performance.

On behalf of all of our members and the communities which they serve and develop across the globe, we urge you to consider the measures proposed in partnership with universities and colleges. We are hopeful and confident that you will reach a strong and binding climate agreement during COP21 and believe that increased support and commitment towards the enabling role of universities, colleges and students are key to solving the climate crisis.

Yours,

A global alliance of networks and associations. 1st December 2015