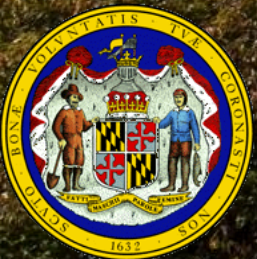


Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Maryland Higher Education Commission

November 1, 2024





Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Maryland Higher Education Commission Climate Implementation Plan
required by Executive Order, “Leadership by State Government:
Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan”

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2024.19, MHEC affirms its commitment to:

- Work to address climate change and ensure a just transition to a clean economy;
- Advance environmental justice by working to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change for underserved and overburdened communities, including the application of Justice40 goals, initiatives, and funding;
- Equitably implement all existing laws, regulations, and policies related to climate change, incorporating robust community and stakeholder engagement; and
- Continue to maximize federal funding opportunities on climate.

MHEC hereby submits its Climate Implementation Plan (CIP) to demonstrate its commitment to a whole-of-government approach to address climate change and fully implement Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan.

Policies to Increase Statewide Academic Programs to Address Climate Change

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is the State’s postsecondary education coordinating and regulatory agency. The Commission is a twelve-member board appointed by the Governor. The Secretary of Higher Education is appointed by the Governor. The Commission staff supports the Commission and Secretary in areas including academic affairs, student financial assistance, legislative affairs, budget and finance, research and policy analysis, grants and outreach, communications, and information technology. The Secretary and Commission staff carry out the Governor’s higher education initiatives and the Commission’s statutory obligations.

The Commission's main responsibilities include setting the policy priorities for higher education in the State. This includes the state public and private degree granting institutions and our Career and Workforce Education private institutions. This Commission is also responsible for publishing the State Plan for Postsecondary Education¹ every four years, setting completion and postsecondary attainment goals for the State, approving academic programs that are in need in Maryland, administering the State student financial assistance programs for higher education, and providing State funds to the community colleges and private, nonprofit colleges and universities. In this work, MHEC performs these responsibilities in a coordinative and collaborative manner, working with the State postsecondary institutions and with other State agencies to advance the State's identified goals and needs for postsecondary education.

The 2022 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education recognizes in order to remain one of the leading states in higher education, Maryland institutions will need to be innovative and agile to serve the changing student and changing workforce.²

- Identify innovative and emerging fields of study.
- Consider specializing as opposed to expanding academic programs.
- Increase paid real-world experiences (such as internships, externships, work-study opportunities) as a part of new curricula.
- Consider alternatives to the traditional academic credentials, such as stackable credentials.
- Incorporate civic learning and civic engagement into all academic programs.
- Expand lifelong learning opportunities to the general public, including reskilling and up-skilling educational programs.
- Revise general education requirements to include civic learning and civic engagement, and information technology and computer literacy skills.

Executive Summary

One of MHEC's main responsibilities is to provide academic oversight and coordination of all postsecondary schools in Maryland. These institutions include In-state degree-granting schools (public & private/independent), private career schools, out-of-state schools operating in Maryland and Out-of-state schools providing distance education to Maryland residents. After an institution and its governing board decides to implement a new program, the program proposal is submitted to MHEC's Division of Academic Affairs. MHEC will review the proposed

¹ Maryland State Plan for Higher Education - Maryland Education Article §11–105

² Maryland State Plan for Higher Education (MSAR #7594) – June 22, 2022

program (a) for unreasonable duplication and unnecessary duplication. (b) to ensure the quality of the program aligns with the regulatory requirements for educational soundness, and (c) to evaluate that there are sufficient operational resources to implement the program while meeting the needs of Maryland's workforce.

Although MHEC does not have direct responsibility for policies or initiatives under climate implementation, MHEC is involved in the review of capital projects for public colleges and universities.

Following the climate implementation plan's recommendation, MHEC should collaborate with the segments of higher education in moving forward with climate implementation strategies.

Part 1: Agency Actions Under the Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

MHEC will coordinate with the segments of higher education to provide support for climate change research, policies and academic programs across our colleges and universities. This collaboration will address the complex issues surrounding environmental factors spanning from climate & energy, coastal & estuarine science to ocean science and other water resources with a direct impact on climate change.

MHEC will support the segments of higher education in the state, including the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, St. Mary's College of Maryland, Maryland's 16 independent community colleges and the private nonprofit institution of higher education to prioritize climate implementation into the education of their students, the development of climate implementation policies and research climate issues to develop programs and courses for those students to learn how to work in an environment to support climate related workforce training.

Maryland's 16 Community Colleges provide statewide resources to ensure our students have access to "diverse community by offering high quality, affordable, accessible and innovative lifelong learning opportunities." Many of Maryland's four-year institutions have aligned their mission to protect our natural resources and prepare students to become a new generation of scientists to address current and future global challenges.

St. Mary's College of Maryland is Maryland's honors college, a selective, public liberal arts college—a vibrant community of scholars and learners. We foster a rigorous and innovative curriculum; experiential learning; scholarship and creativity; close mentoring relationships; and a community dedicated to honesty, civility, and integrity. We are committed to diversity, access, and affordability. Our students, faculty

and staff serve local, national, and global communities and cultivate and promote social responsibility.

Morgan State University's unique mission and identity as an Historically Black University, Maryland's Preeminent Public Urban Research University, and a Baltimore City anchor institution, the Climate Science Division places a special emphasis on environmental justice and the impact of climate change on minority and underserved communities. Through partnerships with industry and government agencies, the Climate Science Division will develop climate strategies serving the city, State and region that may be translated and modeled in urban and coastal communities across the world.

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science has a unique statutory mandate to conduct a comprehensive scientific program and apply predictive ecology for the improvement and preservation of Maryland's physical environment. This mission is accomplished through research, education, and public service.

MHEC can coordinate between the Maryland Department of the Environment and segmental leaders at institutions to advance postsecondary educational opportunities to meet the goal to “reduce greenhouse emissions 60 percent by 2031 and stay on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.” MHEC can also coordinate among institution research entities that can contribute to meeting this goal as a way to effectively influence climate policy.

Part 2: Recommending Actions to Address Climate Change

MHEC will work with the segments of higher education to support their actions to address climate changes. These include developing curricula to educate students to work on climate change issues as well as performing research to develop ways to reduce the components that are leading to climate change, such as greenhouse gases.

MHEC will work on climate related taskforces and workgroups to research, develop, and implement climate change concepts into higher education. Within its review of capital project proposals for the State, MHEC's focus is the review and analysis of the academic need for capital projects. Under this review, MHEC looks at all aspects of capital project proposals.

One component of the capital project review is to include analysis of whether the projects being proposed meet State sustainability requirements and that buildings will comply with the requirements that achieve at least LEED Silver or the equivalent. As indicated in the MHEC Facilities Manual and guidelines for the Community College Construction

Grant Program, facility program documents (Part I and Part II) that are submitted for requested projects must articulate how green building requirements will be achieved with each project. The facility program documents are reviewed jointly by MHEC, the Department of General Services (DGS), and the Department of Budget and Management's (DBM) Office of Capital Budgeting. MHEC's review focuses mainly on academic aspects of the projects. DGS's review focuses on technical aspects, and therefore DGS is the agency most involved in reviewing the green building elements of each project.

Another area, which is much less frequent, is MHEC's role in evaluating the location of new projects and campuses. Once again, within the site selection process for capital projects, MHEC's role is identified in COMAR 13B.07.04.04, which states, "in COMAR 13B.07.04.04 which stipulates, "the general location for each proposed college or addition to a college shall be selected by the board of trustees for the college concerned, and submitted for the approval of the Commission and the Board of Public Works through the Department of General Services, which shall seek comments and recommendations from the Maryland Department of Planning." Through this process, the Commission must ensure that any campus site chosen for development is consistent with the State's sustainability goals and plans. It has been close to ten years since a college has requested approval of a new campus, although a couple of community colleges are currently exploring plans to create new campuses in the next several years.

MHEC will continue looking for sustainability efforts in its review of capital projects.

Part 3: Considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Impacts on Disproportionately Affected Communities

Maryland's 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA) Plan calls for reducing emissions from buildings through energy efficiency and by converting fossil fuel heating systems to electric heat pumps.³

MHEC will collaborate with institutions of higher education and other state agencies to engage in efforts to help impact greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on disproportionately affected communities. While it has no direct involvement in this area, its work with the segments of higher education can allow it to work with colleges and universities that are located in or working with these communities and assist them in their efforts.

³ [Building Energy Transition Plan](#) – A Roadmap for Decarbonizing the Residential and Commercial Building Sectors in Maryland. 2021 Annual Report Appendices November 2021

MHEC will also partner with the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Maryland Department of Planning as well as other state agencies to understand and identify what communities are disproportionately affected and the work with institutions of higher education to help address the needs in those communities. Institutions that have a direct influence in those communities can work to create awareness and protect the natural resources of the state.

Part 4: Resources for Implementation

Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

MHEC is proposing to adjust its focus in the work that it already performs. Particularly in the area of academic program review and approval, MHEC can have an impact on assisting the state with educating its citizens in the areas of climate change. In addition, MHEC can also assist in ensuring that all students in Maryland postsecondary education are being educated and made aware of what they can do individually to reduce the effects of adverse environmental problems that lead to or exacerbate climate change.

Part 5: Outcomes from Implementation

MHEC will be able to work on measures to measure the level of impact that it has on the ability to work with the segments of higher education to support climate education.

Possible outcome measures would include:

- Identification of climate-related academic programs (in collaboration with the Maryland Department of the Environment)
- Number of students graduating in climate-related programs
- Financial aid opportunities and usage for students pursuing climate-related academic programs
- Expanding experiences to solve the complexities of environmental impact on climate change
- Campus-based initiatives related to climate issues

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) addresses the need to increase equity and inclusion and create diverse initiatives to address climate change by supporting multiple land and sea research projects. Increasing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion means that a breadth of experiences and ideas are sought, and the robustness of those ideas tested, to solve the increasingly complex problems facing our

world.⁴ MHEC is open and willing to continue to consider climate implementation issues and outcomes and will work to develop more outcome measures in the future.

⁴ University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - <https://www.umces.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion>