



GPSG Graduate and Professional
Student Government

Duke UNIVERSITY

A Statement from GPSG's Director of Environment and Sustainability Regarding Duke's Climate Commitment:

On September 29th, Duke University announced their Climate Commitment, in which President Price pledged the entire university would devote all efforts and resources to combating climate change. Duke joins [hundreds of universities](#) in recognizing their environmental and social impacts upon the unceded Indigenous land of which they occupy, upon the students they serve, upon the communities with which they engage, and upon the nation as a whole. Devoting all Duke's resources towards the climate crisis is a symbolic and bold challenge, one that I believe Duke can be well suited to if done correctly.

However, I was left wondering about a large missing piece of the Climate Commitment: the application. Integrating considerations of climate change into every level of a university is a task that requires significant time, personnel, and, most importantly, community buy-in. As a student and environmental advocate both on campus and in my community, I am naturally skeptical of large claims for bettering the planet without comprehensive evidence of dedicated resources to back these proposals.

To truly commit to climate, Duke must commit to centering communities of color, low-income communities, and developing nations in our efforts. Environmental justice cannot be merely a pillar on which our institutional success is propped. Many of the people disproportionately impacted by climate change will never have access to the resources and opportunities an elite institution such as Duke provides, and these communities must come first in every aspect of our work.

Duke's commitment strongly represents their intent to adapt and address the myriad of problems facing our world, but concrete actions are the true solutions to the climate crisis. Full divestment from fossil fuels, reinvestment in clean energy technologies, and aggressive changes in Duke's endowment must be a central component to the University's climate action. We cannot profit from fossil fuels any longer.

Finally, climate change has been fueled throughout Western history by unparalleled consumption of goods and corporate greed. Technological innovations provide us some paths to success, but both supply- and demand-side reductions of economic exploitation of resources is critical to reducing our emissions, saving all species, and respecting our planet and its people. Reducing waste, sustainably sourcing, and conserving rather than consuming are all crucial in our response to Duke's call for change.

I call for the administrators at Duke University to actively release their plans and updates for the implementation of climate and environmental concepts into our curriculum, research, healthcare, external engagement, and university operations. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators cannot commit to an idea of change without guidelines and processes for execution. While I am optimistic about the future of Duke to adhere to its commitments, we must always be doing more, for the planet and for ourselves.

Sincerely,

Michelle (Meech) Carter, GPSG Director of Environment and Sustainability