



**SUMMARY OF PRESIDENTS' RESPONSES  
TO SECOND NATURE'S SURVEY ON  
NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES**

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## **Acknowledgements**

Second Nature expresses appreciation to the 167 college and university presidents who participated in the online survey exploring priorities for policy change related to climate and sustainability. This summary of the results of the survey was prepared by the following members of Second Nature's staff, whose work is appreciated.

Don Ryan, *Vice President for Policy*

Rima Mulla, *Communications Associate*

Alyssa Pandolfi, *Intern*

Daniel Abrams, *Intern*

## SUMMARY OF PRESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO SECOND NATURE'S SURVEY ON NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES

### Background and Overview

To help set priorities for its national policy efforts in 2010, Second Nature surveyed the 660 college and university presidents who are signatories of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) in November, 2009. This report summarizes the responses.

Second Nature's email invitation to presidents and two follow-up reminders prompted 167 presidents (25%) to complete a 5-minute online questionnaire using Survey Monkey.<sup>1</sup> With assurance that responses would be held in confidence, Second Nature asked presidents to identify themselves, but allowed anonymous responses. Of the 167 total responders, 90 (53.9%) provided their name and contact information at the end of the survey.<sup>2</sup> Those presidents who identified themselves represent a broad range of higher education institutions, as follows:

Type of School	Number of Participants
Community College	30
4-Year Public	24
4-Year Private	22
Large Research University	12
Minority Serving Institution	1

The 25% response rate is relatively high for an online survey. It deserves note that the results may not be representative of all ACUPCC signatories, as presidents who are more interested in national policy may have been more likely to participate.

Overall, presidents placed high priority on energy efficiency, renewable energy, faculty training and curriculum development, and increasing funding and financing mechanisms. A pointed question about serving on a planned task force on national transportation policy drew strong interest. Although no single issues emerged from presidents' responses to open-ended questions about special policy interests and

<sup>1</sup> On November 9, 2009, Second Nature sent a personalized email to the 660 presidents, with a copy to their assistants. On November 20, after 90 responses had been received, Judith Ramaley, President of Winona State University and Chair of the ACUPCC Policy Subcommittee, sent a personal email reminder to presidents. On November 23, after an additional 43 responses were received, Don Ryan, Second Nature's Vice President for Policy, sent a follow-up reminder to presidents' assistants. The survey was closed on November 29, 2009 with a total of 167 responses, which amounted to a response rate of 25%.

<sup>2</sup> Even though the survey was designed for college and university presidents, 22 staff members completed the survey on behalf of their president.

state policy changes, their responses will help Second Nature identify and connect presidents who share common interests. Most presidents expressed interest in helping to advance policy change on sustainability in multiple ways.

The responses to each of the survey questions are summarized below. Presidents' verbatim responses to open-ended questions are provided in Appendices A, B and C.

## Survey Questions and Responses

**1. Federal Funding Priorities: From your institution's standpoint, what priority do you place on increasing federal funding for the following? Please rate each from 1 (least important) to 4 (most important):**

Topic	Avg. Rating	Number of Presidents Who Rated the Topic a "4"
Green Campuses, Buildings, and Operations	3.36	85
Faculty Training and Curriculum Development in Sustainability	3.06	50
Research in Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	3.00	69
Green Jobs Training Programs	2.63	46

**2. Priorities for Federal Legislation: From your institution's standpoint, what priority do you place on federal legislation to advance the following goals? Please rate each from 1 (least important) to 4 (most important):**

Topic	Avg. Rating	Number of Presidents Who Rated the Topic a "4"
Improving Energy Efficiency	3.6	104
Expanding Renewable Energy	3.51	97
Expanding Financing Mechanisms to Support the Shift to Sustainability	3.35	80
Increasing Climate and Environmental Literacy of the American Public	3.16	65
Capping and Reducing US Greenhouse Gas Emissions	2.88	47

**3. Special Policy Interests: Are you personally interested in a particular policy issue related to climate change and sustainability? If so, what issue or issues interest you most?**

Of the 167 total responders, 78 answered this question. The responses cover a wide variety of topics, the most prevalent of which addressed: renewable energy (25), curriculum development (9), capping carbon emissions (5 for, 1 against), green building (5), energy efficiency and conservation (6), community development (4), education and training (3), transportation (2), and strengthening sustainability programs (2).

**4. State Law or Policy: Is there a change in state law or policy that would be particularly helpful in advancing progress on sustainability in your state or by your institution? If so, what change would be most helpful?**

Of 167 total responders, 74 answered this question, covering a broad spectrum of topics, including: financial support and incentives (32), renewable energy (9), education and training (4), green buildings (4), strengthening sustainability programs (4), transportation (3), capping carbon emissions (3), and energy efficiency and conservation (2).

**5. Strategies to Advance Policy Change: Please indicate your interest in helping to advance policy changes on climate and sustainability in the following ways, either on your own or together with Second Nature or fellow presidents. Please rate each from 1 (least important) to 4 (most important):**

Topic	Avg. Rating	Number of Presidents Who Rated the Topic a "4"
Encouraging Higher Education Associations to Give Priority to Sustainability	3.16	48
Outreach to Trustees, Alumni, Faculty, and Staff	3.15	50
Joining Fellow Presidents in a Group Letter to Policymakers	3.08	50
Individually Urging Policymakers to Support Needed Policy Changes	2.95	38
Submitting Opinion Editorials to Newspapers	2.53	18
Speeches and Published Articles	2.35	19

**6. National Transportation Policy: Second Nature is considering forming a task force of 10-12 college and university presidents to help smart growth proponents ensure that national transportation policy reflects climate and sustainability goals and performance measures. Are you willing to serve on a task force with other presidents to help ensure that national transportation policy reflects higher education's needs and priorities?**

The 139 responses to this question reflected significant interest among presidents in working with other presidents on national transportation policy.

Response	Response Count	Response Percent
Yes	28	20.1%
Would Like to Learn More	59	42.4%
No	56	40.3%

**7. Additional Comments: Do you have other comments or advice about how Second Nature's policy work can better support the ACUPCC and college and university presidents?**

Of the total 167 responders, 37 responded to this question with a variety of suggestions.

**8. Contact Information: Please provide your name, title and institution (optional). Second Nature will hold all responses in confidence.**

As mentioned above, of the 167 survey responders, 90 provided their names, organizations, and contact information. Also, 55 responders identified a contact at their institution to receive copies of policy communications from Second Nature.