The Universities Network for Climate & Capacity (UNCC)

www.unccclimate.com

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP) in Marrakech, representatives from more than twenty-five universities met to discuss what universities and colleges could contribute to climate policy generally and implementing the Paris Agreement specifically. Participants noted the language of Article 11 in the Paris Agreement: Capacity building “should enhance the capacity and ability of developing country Parties, in particular countries with the least capacity, such as the least developed countries, and those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as small island developing States, to take effective climate change action…to implement adaptation and mitigation actions, and should facilitate technology development, dissemination and deployment, access to climate finance, relevant aspects of education, training and public awareness, and the transparent, timely and accurate communication of information.” Recognizing that capacity building is a cross-cutting issue, the Marrakech discussions led to the development of a new global organization of higher education institutions: The Universities Network for Climate and Capacity (UNCC). The UNCC is in development – with preliminary information provided here.

What is the Universities Network for Climate Capacity?

The UNCC is a global organization of higher education faculty and institutions committed to working on capacity building and climate change policy. Universities play important roles in conducting climate change research and proposing policies, but have been less involved in mitigation and adaptation work on the ground. The UNCC’s mission is to employ university resources to build capacities to deal with climate-related challenges, particularly in developing countries. Its core principles include diversity, inclusion, engagement, sharing, and problem-solving.

As Hoffmeister, Averill, and Huq write in a 2016 ICCCAD Policy Brief:

Universities are centers of learning and innovation that can play a critical role in building lasting climate-related capacities around the world…Identifying and publicizing effective university programs, networking across institutions, countries and disciplines, designing new research programs, and expanding access to educational resources and opportunities will aid the cause of mitigating climate change and will allow creation of more resilient societies and ecosystems.

(www.icccad.net/publications/policy-briefs/)

UNCC membership - Who can join?

Any person or program affiliated with a higher education institution can become a member of the UNCC. Members should be concerned with capacity building related to climate change factors and interested in interacting with colleagues from diverse disciplines and institutions.

Who leads the UNCC?

A Steering Committee with members from four continents guides the UNCC. A shared Secretariat leads the Steering Committee with offices at Independent University Bangladesh and Oregon State University (USA). The UNCC website (in development) will contain more information about membership and leadership. www.unccclimate.com
What are the UNCC’s objectives? What does it hope to do?

The UNCC has established a set of tentative objectives:

1. To stimulate cooperation between universities who are engaged in capacity building about climate change issues (such as adaptation, mitigation, technology, finance, governance) and foster a south-north collaborative organization for enhancing research and teaching capacity and proficiency in climate change.

2. To enable universities that need further capacity on a climate change topic to obtain assistance from other network member universities; to support in-country and in-region universities so that they can provide leadership for building in-country climate capacity.

3. To engage with and support UNFCCC committees and bodies, such as the Paris Committee for Capacity Building (PCCB), the Adaptation Committee (AC), and the Technical Executive Committee (TEC) Four. To develop university capacity to design and implement teaching and training programs on climate change topics with a significant focus on culturally appropriate climate change adaptation and community-based adaptation.

Five. To work on climate response actions with and for the most vulnerable at every scale, including community-based adaptation methods and frameworks. This effort will be collaborative and culturally responsive -- UNCC members will offer support to countries, communities, NGOs, and other organizations as well as seeking help from these parties to build their own climate change capacity.

Six. To better integrate the work of in-country universities into climate change policy development and implementation.

What activities will the UNCC pursue?

The UNCC has formed a Steering Committee and will soon begin to develop a work plan. Possible areas of work include:

- Improve and update regularly the UNCC website.
- Engage with UNFCCC Committees, such as the PCCB, AC, and TEC.
- Construct an inventory of university-based research, academic, and service programs and create a researcher registry.
- Develop an accessible data base of ongoing capacity building activities at universities.
- Seek to match country and community needs with university resources.
- Develop a strategic plan for leadership, governance, funding… and seek funding.
- Collect climate-related resources, such as syllabi, bibliographies, undergraduate and graduate programs, fellowships.
- Hold webinars on capacity-building topics.
- Host a blog/discussion platform and consider a working paper series.
- Sponsor or organize conferences on climate change and capacity building.
- Identify and improve capacity building initiatives beyond consultation.

What are next steps?

The UNCC has been introduced at various events, including the 2018 UNFCCC Bonn intersession meetings and adaptation conferences (e.g., in Malawi and South Africa). The UNCC is new and welcomes interested parties and their ideas.

Who can be contacted for more information and to share ideas?

Any Steering Committee member (consult the website) or one of the Secretariat Offices: Saleem Huq of Independent University Bangladesh (saleemhul.huq@iied.org) or Gregg Walker of Oregon State University (gwalker@oregonstate.edu).