

September 23, 2009

Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the thousands of higher education leaders from across the nation who are committed to helping the U.S. find a pathway to a more sustainable future, we write to urge you to make every effort to ensure the President's FY2011 Budget requests at least \$50 million for the newly authorized University Sustainability Program (USP).

President Obama has declared the transition to a clean, green economy to be his top priority, which requires making the vital connections between climate change, economic stimulus, energy security and job training. The missing link in this interconnected system is the critical role that education must play in helping to make the green economy a reality through the effective leadership of the Department of Education.

In authorizing the University Sustainability Program last year, Congress acknowledged the need for colleges and universities to develop, implement and evaluate sustainability education programs and practices. We expect the Congress to express its further support through the FY2010 appropriations process by making USP an "invitational priority" for funding through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The Administration needs to respond to and reinforce the initiative Congress has demonstrated.

The President's FY2011 Budget represents the first opportunity for the Department – and the Administration – to signal its commitment to sustainability and make clear the high expectations it holds for colleges and universities to make sustainability the foundation of all learning and practice. A request of \$50 million for USP in the President's FY2011 Budget will serve as a clarion call to higher education, encouraging institutions that are already working to instill sustainability in their curriculum and operations to accelerate their efforts, while challenging other colleges and universities to do the same. Just as importantly, having funds explicitly designated for sustainability in the Department's budget will strengthen your leverage in working with other federal agencies to build the clean, green economy.

Successfully navigating the transition to a green economy will require a broad base of environmentally literate citizens to make well-informed decisions as consumers, workers, business owners, investors and voters. Each year, 3 million graduates enter the workforce armed with the attitudes, skills and knowledge either to advance a green economy or to continue "business as usual." And the impact, good or bad, of each of these 3 million individuals lasts a lifetime.

Many higher education leaders recognize the need for transformation so that graduates in all fields – architects, engineers, planners, scientists, business managers, financial experts, lawyers, entrepreneurs,

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resource managers and many others – are prepared to participate fully in the green economy. The American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment now includes 650 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, which represent one-third of all U.S. college students. These colleges and universities are developing action plans to make their campuses climate neutral and transform the way they educate students.

While higher education leads all other sectors in tackling the practical challenges of climate change, progress to infuse sustainability in the general curriculum is lagging at colleges and universities across the nation. Through the University Sustainability Program, the Department of Education can provide the catalyst for higher education to develop, implement and expand programs and practices that advance President Obama's priorities to transition to a clean, green economy. More than 260 colleges and universities, higher education associations, NGOs, and corporations have joined together in supporting the University Sustainability Program (Attachment A).

We realize you face myriad challenges in strengthening education at all levels to move our economy and society towards sustainability. We want to impress on you the importance we place on the University Sustainability Program as a lever for transformational change. Thank you for making at least \$50 million for the University Sustainability Program one of the Department's top priorities in the President's FY 2011 Budget Request.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year to strengthen the Department of Education's leadership in sustainability.

Sincerely,



Michael M. Crow  
President, Arizona State University  
Co-Chair, ACUPCC Steering Committee



David E. Shi  
President, Furman University  
Co-Chair, ACUPCC Steering Committee



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President, College of the Atlantic  
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Mary Spangler  
Chancellor, Houston Community College District  
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#### **For further information, contact:**

**James L. Elder, Director**  
Campaign for Environmental Literacy  
14 Jersey Lane  
Manchester, MA 01944  
[Elder@FundEE.org](mailto:Elder@FundEE.org) 978-526-7768