



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

OUR COMMON HOME

LAUDATO SI':
A Fordham
Action Plan
Proposal



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"We do not have time to wait. This is the moment to act. We are at the edge."

—Pope Francis, April 2021

Authored by the Laudato Si' Action Planning Committee

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A Call To Action

On Earth Day 2021, Pope Francis issued a bold new call to action. Six years before, the pope published an encyclical titled *Laudato Si'*, a letter addressed not only to Catholics but to all people of goodwill, calling on the world community to "care for our common home." This sweeping letter calls on all of us to become an integrated universal family, united in stopping the pernicious effects of human-caused climate change, addressing the disproportionate impact that environmental degradation has on the most vulnerable of our neighbors, and advancing innovative and community-led solutions to improve biodiversity, deepen academic research, enhance urban planning and economic development practices, and, with stubborn optimism, promote a powerful new set of goals that reorient the way we think, work, build, and grow.

Now, through the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#), Pope Francis calls on us to live out his words. It is not enough to read, to reflect, to hope. We must act. We must take concrete actions in the care of our common home, and embark on a seven-year transformation that reorients our institutions and ourselves in the service of urgent and necessary action.

Our Mission

At Fordham, the care for our common home is enshrined in our mission statement. As we work toward the discovery of wisdom and the transmission of learning, as we foster global citizens who bring themselves to the good work academically, professionally, and spiritually, we recognize that this work cannot be done in isolation from our city, our nation, and our world. For this reason, the Fordham mission commits each of us "to assist in the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of justice, the protection of human rights and respect for the environment."

We cannot advance human rights without caring for our common home. We cannot leverage the powerful intellectual force of our University for public good without working on climate justice and environmental justice across disciplines and schools. We cannot consider ourselves a world-class institution unless we demonstrate a commitment to sustainability in our day-to-day practices, our infrastructure, and our physical plant. We cannot work toward global futures without responding to the pressing concerns of the global present.

The imperative is to do, and do now. Fordham University has answered the call.



Our Plan

In what follows, the Fordham University Laudato Si' Planning Committee outlines an action plan to guide the seven-year transformation process at Fordham University. Our goal is to continue to work across the University to unite sometimes-siloed or disparate work in teaching, learning, research, student affairs, finance and strategic sourcing, human resources, and infrastructure and facilities under one prevailing vision of environmental and climate justice. Our report is guided by the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, and carefully calibrated to augment and advance Fordham's strategic plan, Educating for Justice. Our process included an in-depth baseline evaluation of Fordham's green work to date and a response to our most recent Climate Action Report. Our goals are broad and lofty but attainable.

We anticipate that this seven-year action plan will serve as a guiding light for Fordham's transformation. Each year, a working group will develop and disseminate an action plan for the academic year, one that outlines granular deliverables. We will update the University community in real time on progress made and goals fulfilled. View the 2022-2023 action plan and progress now.



Our Hope

As the Steering Committee met, one value emerged again and again as the pervading quality necessary for all who undertake the work of sustainability at Fordham: hope. We have therefore employed the 10 action steps outlined by Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac in *The Future We Choose: The Stubborn Optimist's Guide to the Climate Crisis* (Knopf, 2020) as a way to structure our seven-year goals and our action plan for academic year 2022-2023. As Figueres and Rivett-Carnac put it, "Let us tell the story of how we made the choice to pull away from the brink of peril, of how we took our responsibility seriously and did everything that was necessary to emerge from the crisis while rekindling our relationships with each other and with all the natural systems that enable human life on Earth. Let it be a story of great adventure, against overwhelming odds. A story of survival. And of a thriving existence."

As we undertake this transformative work, we know that our best and most powerful resource is you. This is not a call to an institution, it is a call to you. How can you lead? What will you contribute? Where can you step up to join the Fordham community as we make this historic change? Do you have an idea for a new program or initiative? A course or research project? A club or campus event? [Join us](#).





Action 2: Face Your Grief but Hold a Vision for the Future

“We have to feel the full force of this new reality in our bones. There is a power to consciously bearing witness to all that is unfolding without turning away, and counter-intuitively, you may actually feel better about the situation when you deeply accept the reality of it.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. Appoint a **Sustainability Coordinator** who is responsible for implementing, sustaining, and evaluating the original Laudato Si' Action Plan, and for updating the plan as necessary.
2. Convene an **annual Laudato Si' Sustainability Council** to lead action planning and implementation of the University's sustainability plan and provide interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and interschool perspectives, and to ensure work progresses appropriately.
3. Conduct **annual assessments of campus progress** toward established goals.

Action 1: Let Go of the Old World

“The process of letting go is essential, without recrimination. The more work we do to let go of the old world and walk with confidence into the future, the stronger we'll be for what lies ahead.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. Create a **compelling communications campaign** to alert the Fordham community, friends of Fordham, and neighboring community members to the necessity of partnership toward sustainability—with evidence of progress made and a vision of the progress we will make together. Develop a new institutional vocabulary and shared goals to drive progress, telling and retelling stories that support this new plan and vision.
 - a. **Create and disseminate infographics** to share current efforts toward sustainable solutions and explain future goals.
 - b. **Share quarterly updates** with the campus community via Fordham Messaging Platform.
 - c. **Survey campus community** to discover understanding of climate crisis and interest in active participation in goals.
 - d. **Create and disseminate syllabus language** for incorporation across Fordham that acquaints students with sustainability goals.



Action 3: Defend the Truth

“When we work to defend and advance a fact-based reality, the view of the regenerative future we want, and the path we will travel to get there, will come more sharply into focus.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

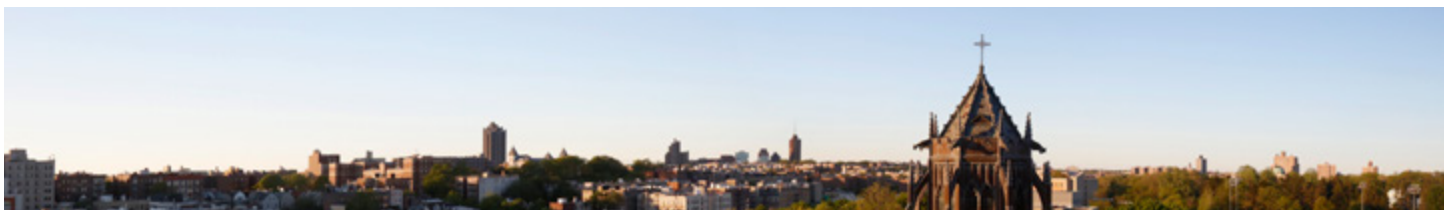
1. Host a **biannual international sustainability conference** to acquaint the University community with best practices and cutting-edge research toward solution-building. This conference will bring together representatives from the 68 colleges and universities that began action planning with Fordham.
2. Create a set of **environmental sustainability course modules**, with resources, lesson plans, guest speakers, and activities that can be modified to fit into any undergraduate course, and connect that course and its areas of inquiry with the pressing imperatives of environmental justice and ecology.
3. Partner with other colleges and universities, as well as with community and industry partners, to undertake **broad STEM research projects** including but not limited to fieldwork, soil and air quality analyses, data analysis, policy recommendations, and assessments of climate change.
4. Create and host a set of sustainability **immersion or study-away experiences** in partnership with the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities network as well as our international college and university partners to offer one-to-two-week or semester-long sustainability experiences in NYC and at partner sites using the University’s Global Outreach program infrastructure and network.
5. In partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society, build a **student ambassador program** centered on sustainability and advocacy.
6. Create and mobilize **undergraduate interdisciplinary tracks and micro-credentialing opportunities** that offer the communications, STEM, and related skills necessary to advance in vocational and green job sectors.

Action 4: See Yourself as a Citizen, Not as a Consumer

“If we can learn to recognize what is enough, we might also move beyond the mindset of consumption and ownership, consciously avoiding the forces that feed that mindset.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. Partner with campus vendors to develop a plan to **assess the feasibility of reducing and working toward elimination of single-use plastic** and privilege recyclable or biodegradable items, with an emphasis on plates, glassware, silverware, napkins, etc.
2. Hire a consultant to undertake a **comprehensive study of waste management** at Fordham, including but not limited to water, food, material goods, etc., and make a set of recommendations for revision. Undertake revision measures.
3. **Undertake an audit of items purchased by strategic sourcing**, especially those with the largest carbon footprint such as clothing and other materials/textiles; explore and commit to alternatives. Limit spending on swag and eliminate spending on unnecessary items.
4. Offer an **annual town hall meeting** for the campus community to offer guidelines and enter into discussions around sourcing and purchasing goods and services including but not limited to office supplies, swag, work travel, etc. Run a friendly competition and award a prize to the most sustainable department.
5. Create and promote **campuswide accelerator events**, such as no-spend days, clothing donation drives, recycling drives, and commitments to limit purchases of new goods.
6. Institutionalize **sustainable purchasing** in collaboration with the Catholic Ethical Purchasing Alliance and Ignatian Solidarity Network’s partnership with Fordham Global Outreach and the Industrial Commons in Morganton, North Carolina.





Action 5: Move Beyond Fossil Fuels and Invest in a Clean Economy

“In order to move beyond fossil fuels, we must let go of the conviction that they are necessary for humanity to thrive in the future.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

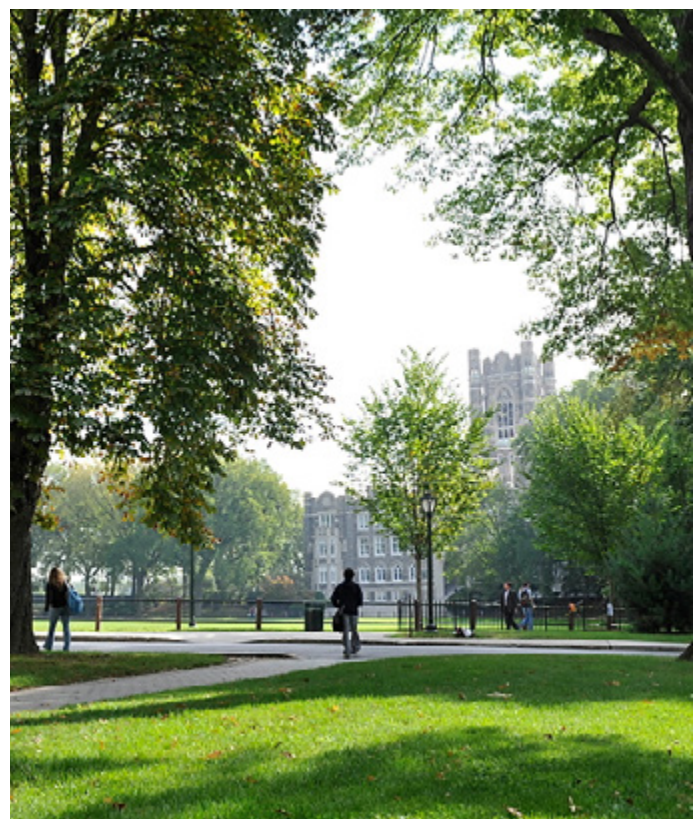
1. Undertake a study and outline steps and action items to **review fossil fuel investment exposure** and advance a divestment strategy as feasible.
2. **Reduce CO2 from campus facilities 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.**
3. **Reduce single-rider transportation** to and from campus through parking-fee reductions and other incentives for carpoolers and incentives for using public transportation.
4. **Analyze Ram Van and other campus transportation systems** for energy effectiveness and efficiency; commit to necessary changes.
5. Assess the feasibility to transform Ram Van fleet to **biodiesel or electric vehicles** by 2030.
6. **Invest institutional resources (time, research, money) into clean energy projects** and initiatives, especially as led by the Gabelli School of Business.
7. Partner with small businesses and grassroots organizations in New York City to **offset carbon and green energy taxes and fees**, which can be untenable and can then be passed down to the consumer or the civilian.

Action 6: Reforest the Earth

“Achieving balance on a global scale is still possible. We can be the generation to achieve it.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. Partner with community organizations (Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, and Hester Street) to undertake a **Bronxwide biodiversity and reforestation initiative** in Bronx green spaces.
2. **Stop overwatering the campuses** and, where possible, work to promote indigenous and biodiverse planting on campus.
3. **Reduce meat and grain consumption** in the cafeteria and campus dining locations by labeling food options with “environmentally friendly” or “sustainable” stickers to promote strong food choices by individuals; assess results.
4. Host and promote **food awareness campaigns**, such as meatless Fridays and fasting days alongside events such as a community iftar, vegetarian challenges, etc.
5. **Partner with Hunts Point Produce Market on a food-distribution program** and dashboard to deliver excess produce to small grassroots organizations in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan.



Action 7: Use Technology Responsibly

“As we grow more comfortable with machines being part of our lives, we will need to use technology responsibly, mindful of its power and influence, and ensure that proper governance systems are in place.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. **Update technologies** in classrooms, offices, and other campus buildings to be energy efficient.
2. Work toward **LEED certification** for each building, tripling current certification by 2040.
3. **Incorporate a sustainability panel into the International Conference on Cyber Security**, held every 18 months at Fordham, to explore the connections between advances in cybersecurity and sustainability goals.
4. Create a concentration or pathway that **connects artificial intelligence and machine learning with sustainability and ecology goals**.



Action 8: Build Gender and Racial Equality

“Recasting our society is now a matter of survival.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. **Intentionally center women and BIPOC individuals as leaders** for sustainability initiatives.
2. Partner with the Center for Community Engaged Learning on a cluster of 10 community engaged learning (CEL) courses on environmental justice and environmental sustainability. Increase the number of courses by five each year for a total of **40 new sustainability-themed CEL courses by 2030**.
3. Establish a sustainability subcommittee of Fordham in Community to **locate and grow sustainability initiatives in the Bronx** that are asset-based and partner-led.
4. Partner with CSTEP and HEOP to **advance opportunities for women and BIPOC students in STEM** to collaborate on sustainability-centered research projects, undertake fieldwork, and gain valuable mentorship from upper-level undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty.
5. **Support faculty acquisition of STEM grants** that support historically underrepresented students and that support sustainability initiatives.



Action 9: Advance and Grow Civic Engagement

“Democracies are threatened by the climate crisis and must evolve to meet the challenge.”

—Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac

1. Align institutional external priorities and policy/ legislative agenda with environmental and climate justice.
2. **Form strategic alliances with elected officials** to partner on events, undertake research to drive policy, and communicate public health and environmental status and goals to the general public.
 - a. Provide community insight reports by conducting community roundtables and focus groups to ensure that Fordham University amplifies community voices.
 - b. Work with the natural science departments and CEL faculty to produce fact sheets to inform local, state, and federal policies.
 - c. Work in partnership with Jesuit Schools Network schools to widen the reach of the findings and fact sheets and to coordinate on promoting advocacy events.
 - d. Mobilize elected officials to support immigration relief efforts, providing opportunities to individuals displaced by climate change.
 - e. Support efforts and organizations providing direct assistance to individuals displaced by climate change.



Action 10: Ground-In Ecological Spiritual Practices

“Help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in Your eyes.”

—Pope Francis, from “A Prayer for Our Earth”

1. Partner with Campus Ministry to offer a series of **sustainability-focused retreat experiences** for students, faculty, administrators, and staff.
2. **Expand Loyola Hall’s Ecological Examen of Consciousness program** to all residence halls and to the Commuting Students Association at Lincoln Center and Rose Hill.
3. **Conduct annual reading groups** for faculty, students, administrators, and staff to engage with the text of *Laudato Si’* alongside other texts on climate change.