

Climate Justice in Higher Education: a proposed paradigm shift towards a transformative role for colleges and universities

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Introduction & Research Question

What role can colleges and universities play in addressing the climate crisis?

Current approaches: Primarily teaching and research. Technocratic, climate isolationist

Opportunities: to harness their unique power as anchor institutions; incorporate real climate justice approaches

“When the climate crisis is framed as a scientific problem in need of a technological fix, public discourse and imagination on changing the underlying societal and economic structures is constrained” (pg. 5).

Two CJ frameworks

Green New Deal-type policies: large public investments in clean energy linked with large investments in labor, health, education, and other social justice work to increase resilience

Energy democracy: transformation to renewable-based future can also redistribute social and economic power

- ★ Resist
- ★ Reclaim
- ★ Restructure

Not either/or!



The Role of Universities

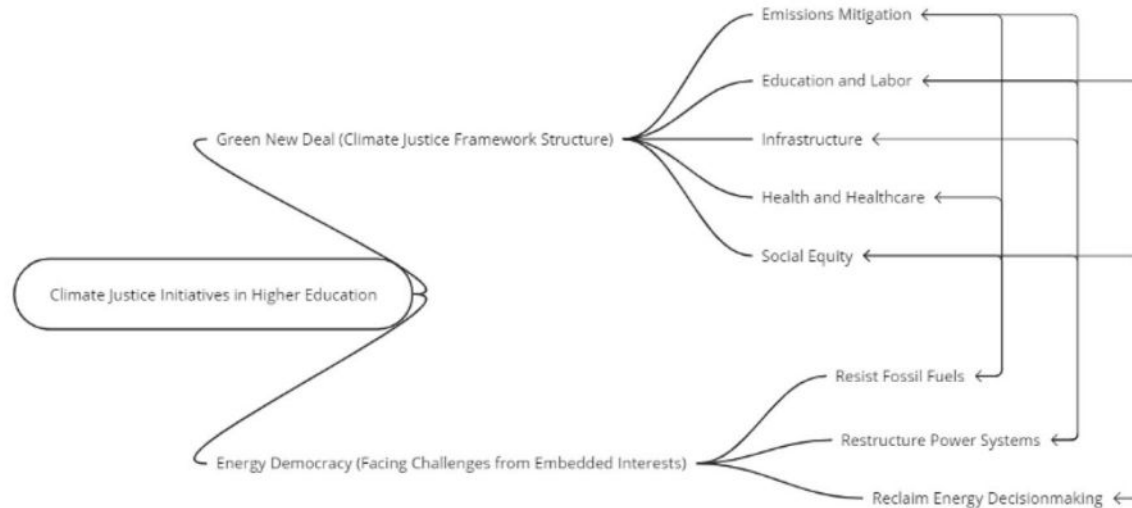


Fig. 2 Conceptualizing climate justice frameworks for higher education. Applying two climate justice policy frameworks for higher education: (1) GND-based structure composed of five key interlinking topical areas, and (2) an Energy Democracy approach focuses on realigning power imbalances

Call to Action

“Prioritizing climate justice is an opportunity for colleges and universities to commit to leading the way in ending fossil fuel reliance including shifting how they invest endowments and eliminating unethical petrochemical funding sources. To realize this potential, higher education institutions need to resist corporate influence and recommit to advancing the cutting edge of research and practice for the public good” (pg. 21).



Fig. 3 Higher education roles in climate justice. Internally, colleges and universities are composed of four primary constituents: Administration, Staff, Faculty, and Students/Alumni. These groups collectively engage in and are responsible for initiatives and programs in which climate justice (see Tables 3 and 4) can be embedded



Thank you for your time!

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Full publication including a comprehensive list of references
can be found in the official open access Climatic Change
publication [here](#) and under doi: 10.1007/s10584-023-03486-4.