



Climate Action Newsletter

Fall 2026

College of the Redwoods

Note from Chief Climate Officer Carla Grandy



As we head into a new academic year, I am energized by the momentum building across the California Community Colleges system. This summer has been a time of deepening partnerships, expanding opportunities for students and colleges, and laying the groundwork for the next phase of our statewide climate action work. I am excited to share a few highlights—and invite you to be part of what comes next.

In Northern California, we visited College of the Redwoods and Humboldt Bay Harbor District to learn about regional industries, partners, and the emerging blue economy. The visit advanced plans for the North Coast Blue Economy Consortium, which will connect community colleges, employers, and community partners around growing opportunities in the sector.

We also met with the California Renewable Energy Lab (CREL) at Kern Community College District and representatives from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, National Laboratory of the Rockies, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to explore partnerships that expand student internships, research experiences, career pathways, and hands-on learning. These conversations also focused on sustainability initiatives such as microgrids, agrivoltaics, and high-performance buildings, creating new opportunities to connect students and faculty with leading climate and clean-energy research.

West Los Angeles College Center for Climate Change Education hosted us for a retreat focused on climatizing curriculum, and we shared lessons learned from our climate fellows and LACCD's Sustainable Environment Institute. The Climate Center at West will serve as the home for statewide faculty professional development efforts to integrate climate action across the curriculum.

I also participated in a panel at the National Sustainability Society annual meeting in Denver with leaders from Harvard, CU Boulder, and Northeastern Universities on courage and collective climate action in higher education. During the trip, we toured the National Laboratory of the Rockies and discussed community college partnerships, reinforcing the important role colleges can play in applied research, workforce development, and climate solutions across California.

This fall, we are updating the Fusion Sustainability Module to track progress on the Board of Governors Climate Action and Sustainability Goals. In addition, our Climate Corps Fellows will partner with a cohort of colleges to benchmark progress and complete AASHE STARS reporting, helping establish baselines and identify opportunities for improvement.

Climate will also be featured throughout the Collective Equity Impact Institute, highlighting the connections among climate action, equity, student success, workforce development, and community engagement – I look forward to seeing many of you there!

Finally, Climate Ambassadors will launch again this fall, providing an opportunity to connect with colleagues across California, share ideas and practices, and join a growing statewide community focused on sustainability and resilience. To join or be added to the mailing list, email climateaction@cccco.edu.

I look forward to continuing this important work with you this fall.

Carla Grandy
Chief Climate Officer
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office



In the News

Welcome, Cohort 3 Climate Fellows!



Mona Alsoraimi-Espiritu
San Diego City College



Eera Babitwale
Kern Community College District



Alexander Berry
San Diego Mesa College



Amber Cavanaugh
College of the Redwoods

Selected this summer, these dedicated faculty, staff, and workforce leaders will serve a two-year fellowship advancing statewide climate action and sustainability efforts in partnership with the Chancellor's Office.

Visit the [Climate Fellows webpage](#) to learn more about our new Fellows' backgrounds and efforts supporting four strategic pillars: curriculum integration; sustainable facilities and operations; workforce development for climate-ready careers; and community and student engagement in alignment with [Vision 2030](#).



Tamara Cheshire
Folsom Lake College



Scott Hoshida
Berkeley City College



Jasmine Iniguez
College of the Redwoods



Mona Patel
San Diego Miramar College

New This Year at Collective Equity Impact (CEI) Institute: Climate Action & Climate Justice



CEI Event Flyer

The [CEI Institute](#) will take place on September 22-25, 2026 in Anaheim, CA and will bring together leaders, practitioners, educators, and advocates from across the California Community College system to explore student success, equity, and institutional transformation. Grounded in Vision 2030, this year's Institute will focus on Climate Action and Climate Justice, Workforce Development, Transfer Alignment, Generative Artificial Intelligence, and Institutional Equity, with climate intentionally included as a core strand in recognition of its connection to student success and equity.

The Climate Action strand will demonstrate how colleges are advancing climate resilience, sustainability, and environmental justice while preparing students for a changing world through climate-focused curriculum, sustainable operations, green and blue economy workforce pathways, and community partnerships. [Register for CEI](#) today to learn, share ideas, and connect with colleagues across the system, and help spread the word using the [CEI event flyer](#).

Board of Governors Energy and Sustainability Awards: Highlighting Climate Leadership



2025 BOG Energy & Sustainability Award Winner for Best Overall District - Medium: Emeritus Decarbonization Project, Sonoma County Junior College District

The Board of Governors Energy and Sustainability Awards provide an opportunity to recognize individuals, initiatives, and projects advancing environmental stewardship, innovation, and climate solutions across the California Community Colleges system in support of the Board of Governors Climate Action and Sustainability Framework and Vision 2030 priorities.

Colleges and districts are encouraged to consider nominations in four categories: Climate Action Leadership; Sustainability Champion; Innovative Project; and Faculty/Student Initiative. The awards celebrate exemplary work in workforce development, curriculum innovation, community engagement, campus operations, and other efforts that demonstrate measurable impact and best practices.

Visit the [Board of Governors Awards](#) webpage to learn more about the program. Details regarding the nomination process will be shared this fall.



Featured Spotlights

Student Climate Fellows

The Chancellor’s Office Student Climate Fellowship empowers students to lead campus climate projects ranging from outreach and engagement to facilities improvements, student organizations, and other sustainability initiatives. Fellows gain hands-on experience designing and implementing projects that support their campuses while developing valuable professional and leadership skills. Visit the [Student Climate Fellowship](#) website to explore the fellowship, meet the students, learn about their projects, and participate in events as part of a growing network of emerging climate leaders.

At a time when environmental challenges are becoming increasingly urgent, students are playing a critical role in advancing sustainable solutions. From initiatives like the Clean California Community Designation to innovative campus-based efforts, fellows are making a measurable impact in their communities while helping shape a more resilient future. Their work demonstrates the power of student-driven innovation to inspire action, strengthen campus sustainability efforts, and create lasting environmental benefits.

We asked our transferring Student Climate Fellows to reflect on how the fellowship shaped their climate work, academic goals, and future careers. *Responses have been edited for length and clarity.*

Alyna “AJ” Esteem | Riverside City College, Political Science



Alyna “AJ” Esteem



Alyna “AJ” Esteem moderating a student panel at the inaugural Student Climate Convergence

The most valuable lesson I’ve learned from my time with the Student Climate Fellowship is that I can be an active participant in the issues I care about. As a college student, it’s common to feel powerless in the face of the issues around you, with no tangible way to create impact. But the fellowship taught me that all I needed was my voice. I didn’t need power or money to enact change. I needed to stand in front of people and speak about these issues, drawing connections to how they shape daily life.

At the Student Climate Convergence, students learned about the impacts of AI and how to use it more sustainably, straight from a fellow student. More than 230 people attended, and if even one person walked away and reconsidered how they interact with AI, I’ll call my message a success.

Before the fellowship, I understood that climate change was a major stressor underlying issues around the world including the ones I studied as a political science student.

When I researched disarmament and demilitarization in the Arctic circle, climate change was there. When I researched the repatriation of refugees, climate change was there. The fellowship gave me the tools to tackle these issues and communicate them proficiently. It also reshaped how I think about climate and sustainability not as environmental issues, but as a humanity issue. I believe it’s the collective responsibility of everyone to become an active participant in this work.

I’m transferring to UC Santa Barbara as a political science student, but I’ve seriously considered double majoring in environmental science, believing that pairing the two would equip me to understand climate action and sustainability at a much deeper level. The Student Climate Fellowship experience has left me with sharpened skills in research, writing, and public speaking, and I’m excited to bring these skills with me to apply them both to my studies and to future leadership roles.



Andrew McKinnell | MiraCosta College, Economics



Andrew McKinnell



Andrew McKinnell (MCCC) and Trinie Ngo (RCC) representing the Chancellor's Office at Stanford University's Global Sustainability Challenge

The most valuable lesson that I learned as a Student Climate Fellow was to advocate for myself and step outside of my comfort zone to pursue new and enriching opportunities.

One of the most impactful, yet nerve-wracking experiences of my fellowship was attending Stanford University's Global Sustainability Challenge, where the room teemed with students from the nation's most elite universities. Naturally, being in such a room as a community college student, imposter syndrome began to fester. However, as the conference proceeded and I befriended the other students, I realized that I wasn't inherently less qualified for starting my higher education journey at a community college.

During the rest of my fellowship, I sought out opportunities to hone my public speaking skills and grow my confidence, despite my initial discomfort. It was an honor to be asked to join a national panel with eight other community college students to talk about my work and, more broadly, about students' role as climate ambassadors. These experiences helped me find a sense of belonging on stage when I hosted climate career panels with distinguished professionals on campus.

Climate change will impact my generation profoundly, so remembering that youth deserve a seat at the table is critical to creating a more sustainable future for all.

Before I was a Student Climate Fellow, careers in sustainability were nebulous. The only sustainability careers that I had heard of were in conservation, and as an Economics major, I wasn't sure how my major aligned with the climate sector. As I hosted climate career panels, I spoke with sustainability professionals from start-ups, municipal government, academia, and facility operations. I realized that not only was economics needed, but all academic disciplines can contribute their skills to fight the climate crisis.

I've already felt the impact that this fellowship has had on my professional trajectory. For example, I talked about the experiences and skills that I gained during this fellowship when I was interviewing for an internship with California State Senator Catherine Blakespear, chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. Now, as a Legislative Intern, I monitor and analyze environmental policy, and I use the skills I gained while managing our fellowship's LinkedIn page to help draft talking points for the Senator's social media content about sustainability issues. I feel confident that when I arrive as a junior transfer student at UCLA to pursue a degree in Economics and a minor in Environmental Systems and Society, the professional experience I've gained during this fellowship will continue to open many more doors.

Trinie Ngo | Riverside City College, Electrical Engineering



Trinie Ngo

The most valuable lesson I learned from my Student Climate Fellow experience was the impact we leave on this world and to be more mindful about my actions. Before the fellowship, I didn't realize how many projects and opportunities there are to make a difference in climate change and sustainability. Yet, as I met more individuals in this field and became more educated, I became more conscientious.

The Student Climate Fellows experience taught me to be more mindful about my actions and how my impacts affect the environment. I'm an engineering major; thus, as I continue my studies and career, I plan to keep in mind how I can create a more environmentally sustainable world and how my actions can impact it.

As I continue my educational and professional journey, I'm most excited about the connections I've made and how my fellow peers continue to use what we've learned about climate and sustainability throughout our lives. Also, I'm excited to apply my knowledge to real-world situations.



Amy Llamas | Riverside City College, Political Science



Amy Llamas

The fellowship reinforced the importance of climate education. There is still so much to learn and grow as an individual, and paving the future towards climate sustainability requires constant learning and growth. Field events and speaking with professionals introduced the possibilities of green careers, and the power of research and policy when creating equitable solutions.

Additionally, opportunities I participated in during the fellowship guided my interest in water treatment systems, oceans, and marine life, and the reality of preservation. After our field trip visiting Scripps Institution of Oceanography to meet with Dr. Lisa Levin, she shared insights from her groundbreaking research on deep-sea ecosystems, international climate policy, and the far-reaching impacts of climate change. The harsh reality of our window of climate change was beckoning. My approach to climate work feels more necessary, and the connection between education and motivation to

influence the public is clear. Climate work isn't just advocacy; it has to be a movement – and a fast paced one now. I hope to continue raising awareness with my peers and to encourage more sustainable choices.

Funny enough, I've completely rethought my professional goals. I'm now trying to find ways to integrate climate education and sustainability into my profession in a meaningful way. I'm excited to see where the future takes me, and I hope to see more action related to climate policy and infrastructure.

Innovative Campus Climate Highlight

Glendale College Student Filmmakers Bring Climate Stories to Life



Glendale College Documentary Field Studies

At **Glendale Community College**, media arts faculty Geri Ulrey leads Planet Story Lab, a documentary field studies initiative that helps students become climate storytellers by exploring stories at the intersection of people, place, and the environment. Through a combination of academic learning, community engagement, professional mentorship, and hands-on media production, students lead the documentary process from research and relationship-building to interviews, field production, and observational filmmaking.

The course's current project focuses on the Los Angeles fires and their aftermath, showing how students move from a broad climate theme toward

a focused human story. Through their fieldwork, they found that story in three cadets at the Verdugo Fire Academy and their journeys toward becoming firefighters.

Along the way, students develop skills in cinematography, sound, producing, interviewing, collaboration, and ethical documentary practice while gaining meaningful exposure to professional pathways. Professional filmmakers join students in the field at key stages, offering real-time feedback and guidance while ensuring students remain at the center of the work.

As the need for effective climate communication grows, the course demonstrates how community colleges can prepare not only those responding to climate change, but also the storytellers who help communities understand why it matters.

To learn more about Planet Story Lab's model and meet the students behind the work, join us at **Collective Equity Institute**, where faculty and students will reflect on their experience and present short clips from the film-in-progress.



Foundation for California Community Colleges Update



CEO Ben Stapleton announcing the partnership with FoundationCCC at USGBC-CA's annual California Green Building Conference (Berkeley, CA)

The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC) has formally entered into a new partnership with US Green Building Council California (USGBC-CA) to support green workforce development across the state. Additional benefits will include access to training programs, professional development opportunities, networking events across the state, and access to pathways to sustainable careers.

The partnership establishes comprehensive workforce development frameworks tailored to expand access to sustainability resources for all community college stakeholders:

- **Complimentary Memberships & Professional Networks:** USGBC-CA is providing hundreds of student and professional memberships (for faculty and staff) per campus. Members gain access to USGBC-CA's statewide Community Hub, technical expert networks, mentor/mentee programs, and the opportunity to engage as either participants or leaders in regional and topic-based committees, including Building Decarbonization, Construction, Circularity, Environmental Justice, Women in Green, and Emerging Professionals.
- **Dedicated Landing Page:** A custom web portal will enable seamless access to educational resources, webinars, certificate programs, events, networking and membership benefits.
- **Industry-Recognized Green Workforce Training:** Students and staff gain access to USGBC-CA's Learning Management System (LMS) and training portfolio, with most offerings at no cost to offer the greatest access. Certificates cover critical climate topics such as Embodied Carbon, Electrification, Zero Waste, Occupant Health, Building Performance Standards, Extreme Heat, and Wildfire Defense. Many training courses are eligible for AIA and GBCI continuing education credits.
- **Green Building Corps Internships:** Priority application consideration for community college students to participate in USGBC-CA's structured Green Building Corps internship program. Interns work directly with USGBC-CA staff across its key programs, including Green Homes California, statewide building performance standards, green schools, advocacy & policy, and building innovation through the Net Zero Accelerator.
- **USGBC-CA invites community colleges to participate in targeted career events that connect students directly to hiring managers, industry mentors, and green job openings.**
- **Policy Advocacy & Innovation:** California community colleges will have the opportunity to send three representatives to USGBC-CA's annual Advocacy Day in Sacramento, directly engaging state policymakers.

In partnering with USGBC-CA, FoundationCCC continues to support and expand opportunities for climate action within the community college system, aligning with the systemwide **Climate Action and Sustainability Framework**. For more information about this partnership, and to access the benefits available, please visit the dedicated landing page at <https://usgbc-ca.org/fccc-portal/>.

Upcoming Events

Green CA Summit | September 15-16, 2026

Climate and Environmental Equity Across Disciplines Webinar Series | September 17, 2026

Collective Equity Impact (CEI) Institute | September 22-25, 2026

Climate and AI: Limiting Environmental Impact through Lightweight, Open Source AI Models Webinar | September 28, 2026

AASHE 2026 Conference & Expo | October 4-6, 2026

Fall CCCAOE | October 13-16, 2026

Resilient CA Summit | October 20-22, 2026

ASCCC Academic Academy | Just Transition: Academic Academy for Climate Justice and Action | October 23-24, 2026

Community College Facility Coalition | November 2-4, 2026

ASCCC Fall Plenary | November 5-7, 2026