



The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York (CICU) is a membership association representing more than 100 private, not-for-profit colleges and universities in New York State that educate more than 450,000 students annually. Private colleges and universities confer 59 percent of all bachelor's and graduate degrees in the state, contribute more than \$97.6 billion in economic impact, and employ more than 432,000 people. Our member campuses are also major drivers of the research and innovation that will enable New York to meet its climate goals. Our Sector is fully committed to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in an aggressive and timely manner.

As the scoping plan states, "New York will continue to seek collaborators such as educational institutions, community-based organizations, labor, industry, and not-for-profit organizations, as well as engage in public/private partnerships." CICU and our member campuses stand ready to deepen our existing engagement with the State to help meet the ambitious goals of the CLCPA. Our sector already works closely with NYSERDA both at a sector-wide level with CICU's Energy Committee and at a campus level through REV Campus Challenge and other initiatives.

Most of the GHG emissions created by college campuses are in the buildings space, although some campuses do operate vehicle fleets. The private, not-for-profit sector has already begun transitioning towards decarbonization on a campus-by-campus basis but will need state support to help complete this process. Additional state support for capital expenditures, student financial aid, and workforce training will all be necessary to ensure that the drive for decarbonization does not close the door to higher education for any New Yorkers. Colleges and universities are largely tuition dependent, so without state support the cost to make this transition will be borne by students, which could lead to access issues for disadvantaged communities. Partnership between higher education and the state will yield environmental and educational benefits for students.

CICU believes that the Draft Scoping Plan is an important first step towards decarbonization and feels that by addressing various issues detailed below, the plan can maximize the impact of the State's higher education resources. CICU's response to the Draft Scoping plan is divided into Implementation Concerns, Methodology Concerns, Educational and Research Opportunities, and Recommendations. CICU and the Independent Sector welcome the opportunity for involvement and comment and are eager to continue to participate in this important process.

Implementation Concerns

CICU supports the pursuit Scenario 4 for a greater than 85% reduction in GHG emissions but calls for greater attention to be paid to the numerous areas where improved and increased cooperation with the state may be necessary.

CICU also notes that higher education will be an impacted industry and as such is likely to face significant costs affecting national and international competitiveness and our ability to serve students. Currently CICU campuses statewide provide almost \$7 billion in financial aid to our students each year. This number accounts for nearly 90% of the total aid students receive, dwarfing the aid provided to students by the state and federal government, and is one of the largest expenditures each campus takes on annually. This aid allows hundreds of thousands of college students to complete their education and enter the workforce. However, this magnitude of student aid spending is not sustainable if there are significant new cost pressures on campuses, including compliance costs associated with the CLCPA. These compliance costs are likely to create significant opportunity costs that will impact campus budgets and decrease the availability of financial aid for students. This is likely to further decrease access to higher education from the same disadvantaged communities that the CLCPA aims to serve. That is why CICU again calls for increased state aid, both technical and financial, to help campuses meet their obligations under this law. Partnership between the State and institutions of higher education can help alleviate costs that would otherwise be borne by students.

The State currently does not offer a comprehensive guide to available resources that can help meet CLCPA requirements, nor does the Draft Scoping plan envision one. While New York is planning to spend billions over the next decades (and will likely need to spend billions more), a comprehensive guide will enable impacted actors to access state funds and highlight where potential gaps exist in the support that New Yorkers will need to comply with the CLCPA. Any scoping plan will be incomplete without a comprehensive view of the support that New York is prepared to offer.

The timeline for the 85% reduction in GHG emissions is laudable but concerning in the lack of support envisioned to achieve it. 2030 and 2050 are both relatively short spans in relation to climate change and the availability of technology to make a difference at a cost the market can bear. CICU campuses along with other non-profits and “affected industries” will need significant state financial and capital support to achieve these goals. CICU also notes that some of the Advisory Panel’s recommendations don’t meet CLCPA limits without reliance on underdeveloped technologies.¹ These underdeveloped technologies reinforce CICU’s view that Scenario 4 is the only feasible way forward

¹ Draft Scoping Plan, Page 69

because New York should not rely on nebulous and unproved “negative emissions technologies” to meet goals.

The final scoping plan must consider the full spectrum of technology including but not limited to advanced gas heating pumps, significant use of Renewable Natural Gas (RNG), small scale nuclear reactors, advanced mobility for air transportation, and decentralized renewable energy. The report also does not devote enough detail to technology that is still not at market stage but may become available through investments in research and development. While none of these developing technologies should be counted on to meet the State’s decarbonization needs until proven, it is still important for New York to prioritize research and investment in the future. Our state has been at the forefront of scientific discoveries that have led to new industries; modern genetics including the discovery of DNA, air conditioning, even Jell-O all started in New York. Future solutions to climate change and decarbonization will undoubtedly be found in New York, if the State retains its commitment to discovery.

The scoping plan has very modest objectives for distributed or customer (“behind-the-meter”) solar of 2% by 2040.² California is predicting approximately 30% by 2030. This is not an apples-to-apples comparison (the New York expectation is winter peak, for example, when there is a lot less sun than California) but it is still stark. Given the broad diversity of urban, rural, and suburban communities, there appears to be great opportunity for regional and diversified expansion to grow renewable solar power generation beyond what the scoping plan and the Climate Act envision.

Transportation and buildings emissions have roughly similar impacts, around 30% of total state emissions.³ There is significant state financial support for buildings and yet the same resources do not exist to electrify campus fleets, which is a significant disconnect. Even urban campuses with significant financial resources find it difficult to electrify their fleets and have noted a lack of state support. This should be covered by T2 Strategy,⁴ but campus fleets are not mentioned. We suggest NYSERDA consider partnering with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as well as the MTA, CDTA, and other regional transportation authorities to address the issue regionally so the charging infrastructure needs can be coordinated.

Waste accounts for 12% of statewide emissions. Colleges and universities across the state are already subject to requirements regarding food waste, and even before the law’s enactment were national leaders in responsibly reducing the environmental impact of waste and refuse. Composting is very difficult for New York City-based institutions and other urban campuses because of the lack of nearby permitted facilities. Expansion of available facilities, creation of new facilities, or assistance in connecting with existing

² Draft Scoping Plan, Figure 1, Page 10

³ *ibid.* Figure 2, Page 24

⁴ *Ibid.* Page 104

waste digesters would be particularly helpful for campuses with food-service facilities that can economically compost because of centralized, high-volume collection. In addition, product stewardship programs where manufacturers are responsible for their waste should be expanded and strengthened.⁵ E-waste is a good place to start but cannot be the extent of New York's drive to rein in the impact of consumer waste.

The current scoping plan does not adequately value RNG as a bridge fuel to help with the transition to full decarbonization. It is a net negative GHG fuel, not a low carbon fuel. But it is also expensive. Financially supporting farms and other sources for RNG generation and helping campuses to purchase the more expensive RNG rather than fossil fuel natural gas (FF NG) would help with this transition. Enhanced support for RNG as a bridge fuel will also help reduce methane emissions and enhance the use of anaerobic digestion that is essential for meeting GHG reduction goals. Although much of the Independent Sector's use of RNG will be for heating, not electricity generation, we believe that it should be evaluated as a renewable option for a broad range of niche applications in industrial, scientific, or commercial use.

Methodology Concerns

The Draft Scoping Plan's methodology of analyzing the cost-benefit tradeoffs of the specific projects and making comprehensive evaluations is unclear. A full cradle-to-grave life cycle cost analysis should be used, considering the manufacturing, operation, and retirement phases. The positive net benefits also must be understood in context. These positive benefits will be unevenly applied and will not be realized by the same actors that make the investments. While CICU is eager that all New Yorkers share the benefits of a decarbonized state, we also caution that the state must be prepared to help institutions, particularly those within or serving disadvantage communities, meet the ambitious goals of the CLCPA. CICU feels it is in the best interest of all parties for the Climate Action Council to have multiple outside economists review the full costs associated with decarbonization in the timeline the State has laid out, so that the State and individual actors have a complete picture, including how state support may help defray costs and increase the viability of the various scenarios.

The Draft Scoping Plan does not provide a complete implementation plan. Such a plan would include estimated compliance costs, category-specific incentives, and sources of funding. A comprehensive guide to available state support would help in this regard, but additional clarity is needed in the form of cost estimates that enable colleges and universities to anticipate and plan for costs. The CLCPA will change capital planning for every college campus in New York, but without clear and consistent expectations and a road map forward, compliance will be made more expensive and more challenging.

⁵ Ibid. Page 238

Educational and Research Opportunities

New York has a unique higher education ecosystem that, if properly utilized, will strengthen the drive towards decarbonization. New York has the largest Independent Sector of higher education in the country. Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities across the state educate 40 percent of students in the state and award 59 percent of all bachelors and graduate degrees. Private colleges are particularly dominant in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, awarding 61 percent of all bachelor and graduate degrees including 78 percent of all STEM master's degrees. A strong partnership between the State and its colleges and universities will help achieve New York's climate goals, educate the green workforce we need, and develop the technologies that will move us all into the future.

New York ranks second nationally for higher education R&D spending, the vast majority of which occurs on private college campuses. Our colleges and universities are hotbeds of emerging technologies, innovative start-ups, and world-class thinkers. This potent combination has the potential to supercharge New York's decarbonization efforts if carefully nurtured.

Regarding new and undeveloped technologies, NYSERDA only provides incentives for 'proven technologies that are market ready.' However, the strength of the NYSERDA/CICU partnership can be leveraged further given that our member colleges are willing and able to test and study new technologies that may be proven but not yet market ready or even develop new technologies. The State should make a significant commitment to fund research that will lead to the development of new technologies and pilot projects that will help implement the goals of the CLCPA. The current research funding cycle is flawed and leads to a handful of technologies receiving incentives that turn them into economically viable solutions while other technologies are not incentivized and therefore do not reach their full potential. Investing in research should eventually lead to advancing the best solution to the problem, or at least incrementally advance existing technologies to address flaws.

Workforce gaps are expected to be a risk or barrier to success in many of the mitigation strategies that CLCPA envisions. Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities are prepared to help educate and train workers and should be viewed as an asset to the State in this endeavor. Independent Sector campuses educate more than 450,000 students annually across New York and have experience working to develop education and training to help meet specific industry needs. As the State's workforce needs evolve through the CLCPA process the Independent Sector is ready to be a partner to train workers in Energy Intensive and Trade-Exposed Industries as well as the next generation of New Yorkers looking to enter the job market. Colleges are already doing much of this work on their own as they seek to better prepare students for the future. CICU recommends that the Climate Action Council works through the Just Transition

Working Group to continuously identify impacted workforce participants and connect them with higher education opportunities.

Recommendations

- CICU calls for the Climate Action Council to follow Scenario 4 as outlined in the Draft Scoping Plan.
- CICU calls for the Climate Action council to address the implementation concerns detailed below. Special attention should be invested in providing clarity and resolving concerns related to costs, existing and additional state support for decarbonization, use of additional technologies, and waste management.
- CICU calls for the Climate Action Council to address the methodology concerns included below. Concerns related to how costing and benefits are calculated must be resolved in order to create a clear and accurate path forward for decarbonization.
- CICU calls for the Climate Action Council to incorporate New York's unique higher education ecosystem to further the goals of the CLCPA.
- CICU calls for the Climate Action Council to allow for alternative compliance mechanisms, including offsets, to help manage costs and provide additional opportunities for meaningful climate action. This will enable New York to maintain the benefits of decarbonization while allowing for greater flexibility in implementation.

Conclusion

CICU supports the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and the Draft Scoping Plan. It is the hope of every private, not-for-profit college and university in the state that the decarbonization of New York's economy is completed on time and within the State's budget. While the Draft Scoping Plan is a good first step towards that, it remains incomplete. CICU believes that through collaboration with impacted industries like higher education, New York and the Climate Action Council can leverage the knowledge and resources of our State to create a better future.