

**SOLVE CLIMATE BY 2030
WELCOME REMARKS
PRESIDENT JOE BERTOLINO
APRIL 7, 2021**

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you, Suzie, for your introduction.

And thank you to President Katsouleas, our distinguished panelists, our moderators, and those of you who are joining us from around the world.

I am delighted today to offer shared welcome remarks with President Katsouleas, and I congratulate UConn on their fine achievements with climate action and the recognition they have earned in leading sustainability in higher education.

I want to thank you all for participating in *Solve Climate by 2030*, where we'll be engaging in critical conversations about one of the biggest global crises we face today: climate change.

At Southern Connecticut State University, we strive to conduct ourselves according to five pillars: dignity, respect, kindness, compassion, and civility.

In working to advance the institution towards becoming a social justice university, we are committed to identifying and addressing systemic barriers to equity, access, and success for all members of our community.

To this end, we also aspire to embody an ethic of care, which is an active and fundamental appreciation of our connections with each other and with the world around us.

In fact, we cannot have an ethic of care for each other, unless we take care of the world around us.

The two are inextricably linked.

An important job that any president of an organization has, no matter what the size of that organization may be, is to help set a vision, and then to voice and amplify that vision over time.

It is a responsibility that I care about very deeply, and I have worked since I joined Southern's community to carry it out to the best of my ability.

But each president is only one person, just like each of you.

A president's ability to create change is as a part of a community.

We need to approach climate action together, or we're doing it wrong.

I can amplify Southern's message in a unique and important way, but our community makes it happen,

and I am tremendously grateful for your efforts, your energy, and your creativity in the progress we have made to date and look to accomplish in the future.

If we are to solve climate for 2030, we need to do more, and we need to do it together.

The challenges before us are complex and formidable.

We do not have all of the answers, but we can achieve what we need to.

Two years ago, I signed Southern's Climate Emergency Declaration on behalf of the entire campus community.

I did so because more than 200 Southern students joined together and advocated for me to make this declaration.

I was glad when they asked, and I did not hesitate.

The Provost and I contacted CSCU System President Mark Ojakian, and he conferred with his cabinet before offering an endorsement.

My leadership team conferred with the Faculty Senate, and they, too, endorsed the declaration within a matter of days.

It is now posted publicly on our website for our entire university community to join in signing.

I encourage all Southern students, faculty, and staff to do so and I invite all attendees today to read the declaration on our sustainability web page, and adapt it for a version of your own.

Of course, this declaration is not enough to solve the climate crisis.

We need – together -- to declare climate action a priority; an emergency; over and over again, and to act.

For many years, Southern has prioritized carbon reduction in operations of our facilities and our fleet.

We have completed countless energy efficiency improvements, ranging from LED lightbulbs to automated sensors, to variable speed fans in giant heating and air conditioning systems.

We have upgraded our building controls to harness computer analytics, to tell us how to optimize energy use.

We reinvest energy incentives from utilities into additional efficiency projects.

We have LEED Gold certified buildings, and will break ground on a net-zero energy school of business next year.

We have saved more than \$350,000 dollars in 18 months with our 2 giant solar arrays.

We purchase green power.

We compost our food scraps in our dining halls.

We donate excess food in the community, and we recycle, recycle, recycle.

It's not enough.

Even if we were to achieve carbon neutral operations in all of Southern's facilities tomorrow, it is not enough.

Climate science tells us clearly, loudly, and often, that we need to do more.

So what is more?

What IS a sustainable university?

We need to map this, and we need to share it.

Like I said earlier, we need to do this together.

No university can define what a sustainable university will need to be in 2030, but we are developing that vision right now.

The question at the heart of Southern's Climate Emergency Declaration is: How can we catalyze necessary climate solutions at the scale and pace that science tells us is required?

The answer for all of us is to work, through our institutions' core missions, to develop and scale solutions.

We recognize that we have a long way to go and that all answers are not clear.

But here is what we as universities do:

We educate.

We train young adults, and older ones too, for the workforce, and for making responsible decisions as community members in their daily lives.

We train teachers, and nurses, entrepreneurs, journalists, artists, accountants, and scientists.

And our students are doing cutting-edge and forward-thinking research and climate action –

For example, two graduate students in physics, Katharine Perez and Monica Keihnle Benitez, are conducting research in Southern's Industry Academic Fellowship on direct air carbon capture to see whether it is feasible to capture carbon dioxide from smokestack emissions through a chemical process. Katharine is a physics teacher at Wilbur Cross High School here in New Haven.

Madison Lazaro, a recent graduate of Southern's Computer Science B.S. degree program, wrote her thesis on blockchain technology's potential for secure and accurate climate accounting. In layperson's terms, Blockchain is the digital platform behind bitcoin and other cryptocurrency.

Graduate students in Southern's Blue Economy program, Louie Krak and Michaela Garland -- one of the student moderators for today's event -- are establishing the Long Island Sound Ocean Cluster to catalyze collaboration, partnerships, and entrepreneurial ventures focusing on promoting sustainability in marine systems.

The Blue Economy program, currently in its second year, includes annual workshops and events, and a pitch competition themed on coastal and marine economies, and it draws on local and international partnerships to promote sustainability solutions.

Colleges and universities are critically important for adding knowledge and deepening our understanding about the world around us.

Higher education is a research engine that can drive sustainability and climate action.

We also engage in outreach.

Climate change is too complex to address without partnerships.

Universities are a foundation for interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, community outreach, and partnerships among business, industry, and government.

We are also mindful of the impact that our facilities have on climate.

Colleges and universities, including Southern and UConn, are essentially small towns and cities all over the world.

We are a significant sector of buildings, acreage, jobs, transportation fleets, and productivity.

Higher education institutions are testing grounds and learning labs for how sustainable communities can be built.

And as we listen and think today about solutions to the climate crisis, let's keep in mind the ethic of care.

As Dr. King reminded us, peace is more than absence of violence, and justice is far more than an absence of injustice.

And as Joycelyn Elders, former Surgeon General of the United States, said, health and well-being are far more than absence of disease.

Peace, justice, and health all involve active engagements with dignity, respect, kindness, compassion, and civility.

This is how we live an ethic of care.

And this is how we will move forward on climate solutions – together.

Now, I am sure we're all eager to hear from Commissioner Dykes, Mr. Garcia, and Deputy Commissioner Hanks.

Thank you all again for your participation in today's conversation, and for the work you are doing to help Solve Climate by 2030.