

**A resolution of the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) calling on the Duke administration to hire at least one additional full time environmental justice faculty member, improve environmental justice curriculum offerings, and make tangible commitments to advancing community-based environmental justice efforts**

**Author:**

GPSG Climate Crisis Committee

**Co-Sponsors:**

GPSG DEI Committee, Duke Environmental Justice Network,  
Environmental Justice Campus Committee, Undergraduate Environmental Union

**Whereas**, President Price released a statement on June 21, 2020 committing Duke University to the advancement of racial and social justice and to the expansion of diversity of faculty, staff, and students.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Whereas**, these commitments included dedications to furthering the excellence of faculty, strengthening the student community, supporting staff, advancing training and education for all, promoting health equity, investing in leadership, fostering research, engaging our alumni, and revisiting Duke’s institutional history.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Whereas**, Duke University administrators are actively marketing Duke as a “climate university”, as referenced in the alumni event on January 19, 2022 with President Price and Dean Toddi Steelman.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Whereas**, Indigenous people, people of color, and low-income individuals and communities are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change including but not limited to poor air quality, ocean acidification, and natural disasters.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Whereas**, the environmental health of people of color and minority groups is often disproportionately affected by actions of institutions at every level of government and social structure.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Whereas**, North Carolina is both the birthplace of the environmental justice movement and the location of Duke University’s main campus.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Whereas**, Duke’s Nicholas School of the Environment has committed in its strategy plan to advance justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Whereas**, there is no environmental justice concentration or certificate at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment.

**Whereas**, the Nicholas School is in the process of hiring multiple faculty members.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Whereas**, there is no permanent environmental justice class or curriculum available University-wide for graduate and professional students.

**Whereas**, there is no permanent faculty member on a tenure track at any graduate or professional school with a primary research interest of environmental justice.

**Whereas**, the goals of the Climate Justice Initiative presented at the ACIR Open Forum on November 17, 2021 reveal no binding or enforceable commitments to environmental justice for Duke University.<sup>[9]</sup>

**Recognizing**, that in 2021, Duke University hired Ryan Emanuel as an associate professor of hydrology and environmental justice to improve environmental justice work at the Nicholas School.

**Recognizing**, the Nicholas School has recently added resources to its website for the promotion of environmental justice.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Recognizing**, that the Divinity School offers a certificate in Faith, Food, and Environmental Justice.<sup>[10]</sup>

**Now, therefore be it resolved by the GPSG that the graduate and professional student body of Duke University:**

**Calls**, for the Nicholas School of the Environment to hire at least one full-time faculty member on a tenured track with a primary research interest of environmental justice and equity.

**Calls**, for Duke University to prioritize environmental and climate justice research and focus when applicable during faculty hiring processes.

**Calls**, for an expansion of environmental justice curriculum with a goal of establishing an environmental justice certificate available University-wide and a long term goal of an environmental justice concentration for the Master of Environmental Management in the Nicholas School.

**Calls**, for Duke University to release a written statement acknowledging its contributions to environmental justice issues in both the Durham community and the state of North Carolina.

**Calls**, for the development and implementation of a voluntary training program for faculty, staff, and students with significant environmental justice components available University-wide to educate the Duke community on racial and climate issues in the United States.

**Calls**, for an increase in University-wide efforts to collaborate with environmental justice student organizations and the Environmental Justice Campus Committee to integrate environmental and social justice principles into both the curriculum and culture of Duke.

**Definitions:**

“Environmental justice” – “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.” <sup>[11]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup><https://anti-racism.duke.edu/>

<sup>[2]</sup><https://anti-racism.duke.edu/commitments/>

<sup>[3]</sup>Recording of “Towards Duke’s Second Century: A Climate Change Conversation with President Price and Dean Steelman”:  
<https://duke.zoom.us/rec/play/lJou3h3LBm78RTuSByHxZv7bd6FtUPM41WcemX9JuGLcsbdqIXAHBKxuCQOLwJXBucsBN0HDMJ01tP8H.pHMNIVVePe4cOXSD>

<sup>[4]</sup><https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/8/15/racial-disparities-and-climate-change>

<sup>[5]</sup><https://www.nccj.org/environmental-justice>

<sup>[6]</sup><https://www.energy.gov/lm/services/environmental-justice/environmental-justice-history>

<sup>[7]</sup><https://sites.nicholas.duke.edu/diversity/learn-about-our-work/initiatives/>

<sup>[8]</sup><https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/20696>

<sup>[9]</sup>Recording of “ACIR Open Forum 2021”:  
[https://duke.zoom.us/rec/play/ZVjLTrY\\_dvaBhnN28bNOJ\\_yMfgY--UGLdcKB1b1i3Eh061Z7kBnpupUfQEYAMheUQN3ORLc4y3x\\_O4eX.K6BE5Gz92nC8B0Zi?continueMode=true&\\_x\\_zm\\_rtaid=-Q6QB7RLTK6V9scZQWNsMw.1647460603383.06ca66c5c2c1429dcd23b4f1ff8c6b1&\\_x\\_zm\\_rhtaid=939](https://duke.zoom.us/rec/play/ZVjLTrY_dvaBhnN28bNOJ_yMfgY--UGLdcKB1b1i3Eh061Z7kBnpupUfQEYAMheUQN3ORLc4y3x_O4eX.K6BE5Gz92nC8B0Zi?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=-Q6QB7RLTK6V9scZQWNsMw.1647460603383.06ca66c5c2c1429dcd23b4f1ff8c6b1&_x_zm_rhtaid=939)

<sup>[10]</sup><https://divinity.duke.edu/academics/certificates/food-faith>

<sup>[11]</sup><https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>