

Town Hall – March 25, 2026

Introductory Remarks

Tavey Capps – Office of Climate and Sustainability:

Welcome, everyone. I'm Tavey Capps. I'm the Executive Director in our Office of Climate and Sustainability, and I'm so excited to see you here today and welcome you to our Sustainable Operations Roadmap Town Hall.

Before we jump into today's agenda, I just wanted to acknowledge something that may be on some folks' minds. Yesterday, there was a Chronicle op-ed from some members of the carbon reduction resource allocation ad hoc advisory (CRRAAC) committee that raised some important questions about transparency, process, and how advisory units come together, share their information, bring that back to the institution, and how it's acted on. This really focused on Duke's carbon reduction plans and where we were going forward.

We want to say clearly that we hear the concerns that were raised and we take it seriously. We welcome input from our campus community, including critique, because we know that our plans are only made that much more solid through diverse perspectives, from our faculty, staff and students. And the shared goal that we all have is Duke's climate and sustainability leadership and our decarbonization of the campus and our operational sustainability efforts.

Today's town hall is a real example of that engagement. We'll be having more conversations about how we build out our broader sustainability operations strategic plan. This is a comprehensive plan that we work closely with Facilities Management and other entities across Duke to really think about the carbon aspects of our operations and our emissions plans, and then the non-carbon pieces of our sustainable operations that include food, water, waste, procurement, transportation, natural resources, and buildings. Duke has not really had a comprehensive plan like this before, where we want to go, where we want to be across all these topics. We're excited to partner with our colleagues across campus to set this up.

Today's town hall is really focused on that non-carbon piece of the sustainable operations work. It's fully connected to carbon reduction. We can't divorce these pieces, but the roadmap is distinct, and it will cover topics that have wide-ranging impacts beyond just emissions. These are strategies that impact how Duke operates every day. Our work and what we want to do in the future is going to be made stronger by hearing your feedback, hearing your questions, and engaging faculty, staff and students in this work. At the same time, we realize that the op-ed has raised some concerns and a clear desire for deeper discussion and engagement, governance, conversations, and how recommendations move

from our advisory groups to implementation. Those conversations deserve time, space, and attention, and should not be rushed or folded into another agenda.

So, our intention today is two-fold. We want to stay focused on our sustainable operations roadmap, so we don't lose the opportunity that we have to get meaningful input into these topics that I know everyone here today cares deeply about and has lots of input that they can provide. Secondly, the conversation doesn't end today. The CRRAAAC committee's final report has been posted on the OCS website, and we're committed to convening a follow-up meeting to dig much deeper into the conversations and the concerns that were raised there, and really think about that process, transparency, governance, and how we can improve engagement across the campus, in our net-zero plan and in our sustainability planning more broadly.

These plans are made better with engagement with our campus community. And this work is complex. It's not a single office, it's not a single plan, or a committee that gets it perfect. Thoughtful input, including disagreement, is what is going to make our work better. So, we invite you today to fully engage with our sustainable operations roadmap, ask questions, challenge assumptions, help us shape the path forward, and also commit to continuing this broader dialogue. We'll work with the leadership of the CRRAAAC committee to develop the details of that and share that broadly. Thank you for being here. Thank you for caring deeply about Duke's Climate Commitment, and staying engaged with this work.

I'm going to introduce Lindsay Batchelor, our sustainability director, to expand further on the focus for today. Thank you.

Lindsay Batchelor – Office of Climate and Sustainability:

Thanks, Tavey. Thanks, everyone, for being here on a beautiful spring afternoon, when you could be outside. Really appreciate you joining us. We're excited for an engaging session today to focus on our sustainable operations roadmap.

First, I will let you know this is our agenda for today. Tavey talked about, and I'll detail just a little bit more, our 2 strategic planning efforts. And today we're going to be focused on sustainable operations. This is not the whole of climate and sustainability, so if questions arise today, if topics don't get raised today, we welcome you to send those to us via the QR code on the screen. We'll have these at your tables. We will have them at the end of the presentation. We know we're not going to be covering it all today. We really welcome you all to send us those questions and those comments and those ideas.

I'm imagining that most of the folks in the room are familiar with Duke's Climate Commitment. This is our institutional commitment to embed climate and sustainability into everything we do and who we are as an institution. That includes sustainable

operations, which is the pillar that we're here to discuss today. It also includes education. It also includes research. It also includes external engagement, and it also includes community partnerships. Those of us that work in sustainability, we know that these things are not distinct, right? They work together, they overlap. Those topics and those conversations will very likely come up today, and we welcome that.

But if we're zooming in a little, we're zooming into the operations pillar. Our operations pillar is how we walk the talk, right? It's how we operate our campus and all the things that we do, the living, the working, the playing, the learning, the everything that happens at Duke happens through pieces of operations. This is us understanding how we can really forward climate and sustainability as a part of that everyday operation. And when you think about the strategic planning that it takes to do this work well, this is the part where we have 2 concurrent efforts happening. We have our net-zero planning, which is focused on greenhouse gas emissions and energy, and that is our net-zero plan.

Today, we're going to focus on our sustainable operations roadmap. Today the focus areas that you see around the room and that we're going to be discussing are going to be the food, water, waste, transportation, natural resources, buildings and procurement. So that's really what we're here to talk about today. So again, it won't be everything that is climate and sustainability. We won't get to all the topics. But these are going to be our focus for today.

We're really excited to get your feedback, because this is a lot also, just these topics are quite a lot. So now we're really going to dig into our sustainable operations roadmap, and I am pleased to introduce our partners at Buro Happold, who are here to facilitate today's session. Kirsten Melling and Ally Hopkins can take it away.

Kirsten Melling – Buro Happold:

Hi, everyone. Can you hear me? Thanks so much for having us today. It's been a real joy supporting the Duke OCS team in their journey and developing the sustainable operations roadmap. I'm Kirsten Melling Wild, Ally Hopkins will also be presenting, and we're also joined by Rachel in the back to facilitate today's session. Before we begin, a little bit more context on the roadmap.

So why a sustainable operations roadmap and why now? The 1st thing that we want to do at the start of the session is really recognized the incredibly challenging time that higher ed has had in the last year. We know that this is a time where --financially, culturally, there's lots of different upheaval happening across higher education. And so, the question becomes, why would we focus on sustainable operations at this point? And really, what we found was there is an opportunity right now to make sure you're headed in the right direction, and to continue to build on the leadership and the commitment has already set

forth. The intent with the roadmap is that it's focused, and that it's aligning operational practices. We want to make sure that it is both identifying immediate opportunities because there certainly are plenty across this institution. But also thinking about longer term planning, and what you'll be doing in the future.

Additionally, we want to think about different co-benefits that the roadmap will deliver. Obviously, we always talk about environmental topics, but social, economic opportunities are robust in some of the priorities and objectives that you'll be reviewing today. We think it's really beneficial to pursue things that deliver multiple benefits. And then the other thing that we want to make sure that we do is enable collective action. I'll talk about this, like, what does this mean? But, you know, many of you in the room are probably directly involved or leading these initiatives, but also thinking about what we can do as individuals. In terms of the why now, we really feel like this is a time to gain focus, to prioritize. Where are you going to allocate the resources that are available today? And then also think through the future. As resources or capacity change, what might we want to focus on? That's really the why now for this.

The next thing we just want you to think about is those spheres of influence. A lot of the things that you're going to see today are really at the group or institutional level. What is Duke driving across a variety of departments? Not just in facilities or the operation side, but with a lot of different stakeholders. But there's also the individual level, and some of the questions that we'll ask you about today are what can we all do as individuals to further this agenda? Because it's all about collective action, frankly, to make sustainability and climate work happen.

Just a little bit about our stakeholder engagement process. We've been working with Duke since, I want to say it was June, when we kicked off last year, working on both the net-zero plan as well as the operations roadmap. And we've had a variety of sessions focused on that operations roadmap. There were discovery sessions that were conducted with working groups, team members that are involved in directly implementing different initiatives or have responsibility across these topical areas to gain an understanding of the current state, where they see future state opportunities. We then moved into a visioning workshop, which was more about where do we want to go in the future? How do we define that vision in terms of where sustainable operations can go next, building on all the incredible work done to date. And then that led us to developing our draft priorities and objectives, which we will be going over with you all today.

And the town hall. So, this is an opportunity to enlist more voices, hear feedback, get your ideas. and be able to refine this list, to then go into our final set of engagements. The co-

creation sessions will be back engaging our working groups so that we can talk about all the feedback that we received and how do we align on a final roadmap going forward.

Timeline: We started this in June last year. That was really about understanding the current state. We are currently in plan development. So, the priorities and objectives are not the entirety of the roadmap, but they do form the really critical basis. So, this is the most key input for you all to provide at this stage. And then after that will come plan finalization. We'll be putting it into narrative content, socializing it, get further feedback, talking about implementation further down the line. And with that, I'll hand it over to Ally.

Ally Hopkins – Buro Happold:

Thank you. I'm just going to go over quickly what the roadmap is going to look like and what you're going to see around the room. For each of the operational sustainability categories that we've outlined thus far, we have these high-level priorities, and then supporting objectives for each one of them.

So, the high-level priorities represent the key areas of emphasis within each of those categories. So, an example we have for buildings is optimized use of existing space. We have maintain high performing buildings, so they're kind of like the pillar, the crux of each of those categories.

And then, in support of those, we have about seven or eight per category objectives that really outline the specific actions that we need to implement, advance, or explore, or create in support of each of those high-level priorities. So, an example of one of these would be in support of optimized use of existing space, assess utilization of existing spaces to develop an action plan to right-size repurpose or reduce spaces in alignment with campus needs. That's what you'll see when you go around the room, seven or eight on each of those posters, and you'll have a second to probably read and distill each of those when you visit them in the gallery walk.

And you'll also notice when you go through that each of the objectives is a little bit different in its structure. Some sort of explore or build alignment. Some of them are focused very heavily in metrics or quantitative targets. Some really sustain or reinvigorate areas where there's already a lot of momentum for Duke and for the university. Some are heavily focused in engagement or partnership opportunities, and some are more straightforward and outline the development of plans or tools or guidance documents to come in the future. The important thing to note here is that we want to have a lot of variety in the kind of objectives that we set, because we want the roadmap to be as holistic as possible, and be able to address a variety of scopes and its implementation to the university.

And really, the goal for today or what we want to accomplish with you is to look across these operational sustainability categories, build a shared picture of what it could look like for the university, what it could look and feel like, we want to shape and refine and adjust the priorities with your feedback. So great opportunity to do that today. Identify any areas of excitement or challenges for each of these categories, reflect on, like we've said in the past, what actions you could personally take to support implementation of the roadmap, and then also help prioritize those things that matter most to you or to your team, or to the university in general, and the exercises that we have ready today will set us up for success for that.

So, the 1st one that we have, I'm going to walk through what it's going to look like. It's going to be a gallery walk. This is why we have these 6 operational sustainability categories posted across the room. So how we're envisioning this is 25 minutes total. That's about 5 minutes per poster, a little bit less, which is a little bit of a crunch time, but basically what we're going to do with this time is head up to each of the posters, kind of read. They were also in the pre-read, so it hasn't changed since then. But read and distill and reflect on the objectives that we have underneath each of those high-level priorities, and then we'll have green dots and sticky notes.

We'd like you to take one green dot, and then just place it by the objective that you think has the most momentum that you're the most excited about, that you think the university should prioritize above the other objectives, and then we'll also have a space beneath where we'll have post it notes. This is a place for you to reflect any gaps or questions or things that you think need clarity or weren't well captured in the objectives that we have out. It's a place for you to give feedback there. We'll have things at each of these stations, I have been instructed to tell you not to write directly on the walls, if you could just write on a sticky note, and then just press it up, and we can be there to support and write things down if it's not fully captured. And then let us know if you have any questions. We here to support. There will be a facilitator at each poster.

(NOTE: A gallery walk and breakout sessions followed the introductory remarks, to provide input into the Sustainable Operations Roadmap. This information will be summarized soon.)