

ACE PROJECT NATIONAL FORUM: “DESIGNING CLIMATE-READY EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS” hosted by the Waterloo Climate Institute, February 2-5, 2025

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Held online on Thursday, February 5th from 1:30 to 3pm EST

SESSION DESCRIPTION:

The closing plenary session of the forum, “*Collaborating across Institutions and Disciplines*” focused on structures and strategies that support cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration to advance climate-ready education across Canada. Facilitated by Serge Dupuis (University of Moncton; Co-Chair, Canada’s Adaptation Skills Working Group), the panel featured Sonia Pacin from Universities Canada, Dr. Teri Balsler from University of Calgary/Sustainability in Higher Education Across Canada (SHEAC), and Dr. Ceibert Adamson from Mohawk College / Canadian Colleges for a Resilient Recovery. The panel representing these three umbrella organizations shared how they are coordinating efforts to advance climate-resilient education among their members. The discussion emphasized opportunities for institutions to collaborate more effectively in preparing graduates who are climate-literate, engaged, and equipped with the skills needed to support climate action across Canada. The discussion explored how collaboration happens, what drives momentum, and what barriers exist to scaling climate education efforts.

[The recording of this session can be found here.](#)

ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS:

- Canadian Colleges for a Resilient Recovery (C2R2) is a national coalition of 15 colleges, CEGEPs, and polytechnics formed during the pandemic to address workforce needs in the low-carbon economy. Coordinated by Mohawk College, the coalition applies a collective impact model grounded in inclusivity, equity, skills development, and curriculum innovation. Over the past five years, C2R2 has secured more than \$80 million in federal funding, developed over 150 tuition-free micro-credentials delivered through Quick Train Canada, and supported more than 25,000 learners, while partnering with Indigenous communities, equity-serving organizations, and national industry groups to advance skills for climate resilience and sustainable development.
- Sustainability in Higher Education Across Canada (SHEAC) is a grassroots national network connecting approximately 40 postsecondary institutions and 130 members, with around 30 active participants from sustainability offices, teaching and learning centres, and faculty. The network meets monthly, including a teaching and learning special interest group, to share updates, resources, and collaboration opportunities across Canada. SHEAC is currently focused on building community, developing shared resources, and pursuing grant proposals, and showcases an AI-based tool created by a member to help identify sustainability connections within courses.
- Universities Canada is a membership organization representing 97 universities across Canada, providing unified voice for higher education. The Universities Canada Climate Initiative is a three-year program (launched in 2023) that supports climate action across member universities. It focuses on six areas: emissions measurement and reporting, climate investment,

collaboration, awareness-building, resource sharing, and addressing climate impacts. Key activities include monthly webinars for climate leads, a regular environmental newsletter, a climate resource hub, and collecting greenhouse gas inventory data from member institutions. The organization has also produced reports on university climate initiatives and created a sustainable development guide. Its role is mainly to facilitate collaboration and support climate education, research, and operational practices across campuses.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Successful collaboration activities include resource sharing and co-development of curricula across jurisdictions, communities of practice for quality assurance frameworks, joint applied research with industry and municipalities, and regional networks (Atlantic, Quebec, BC)
- Key drivers of momentum include passionate individuals from sustainability offices and faculty, climate leadership integrated into institutional strategic plans, national policy frameworks with targeted funding streams (National Adaptation Strategy, NRCan Climate Change Adaptation Program), strong institutional commitment, industry demand for green skills, and student advocacy
- Major barriers include limited capacity and resources with much work done "off the side of desks," staff turnover affecting network sustainability, provincial and jurisdictional differences in structures and funding models, challenges with credit recognition across quality assurance frameworks, geographic distance particularly affecting rural and remote Indigenous communities, equity concerns about virtual training access, and flatter academic governance versus top-down administrative governance creating different approval speeds
- Competition between institutions for rankings can be a barrier to regional collaboration, as can competing priorities with senior leadership currently focused on funding and enrollment challenges
- Industry partners are identifying needs and requesting graduates with green skills, with consumer demand driving industry changes in trade relationships, operations, and product development

RESOURCES:

- [Introduction to Climate Change and Sustainability \(micro-credential\)](#)
- [Quick Train Canada \(micro-credential platform\)](#)
- [Resilient Colleges Canada](#)
- [Universities Canada](#)
- [Universities Canada — Fighting climate change \(resources\)](#)
- [Playlab ai – Sustainability Connections Assistant](#)
- [ACE Project website](#)

**For more information, please contact the Waterloo Climate Institute:
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