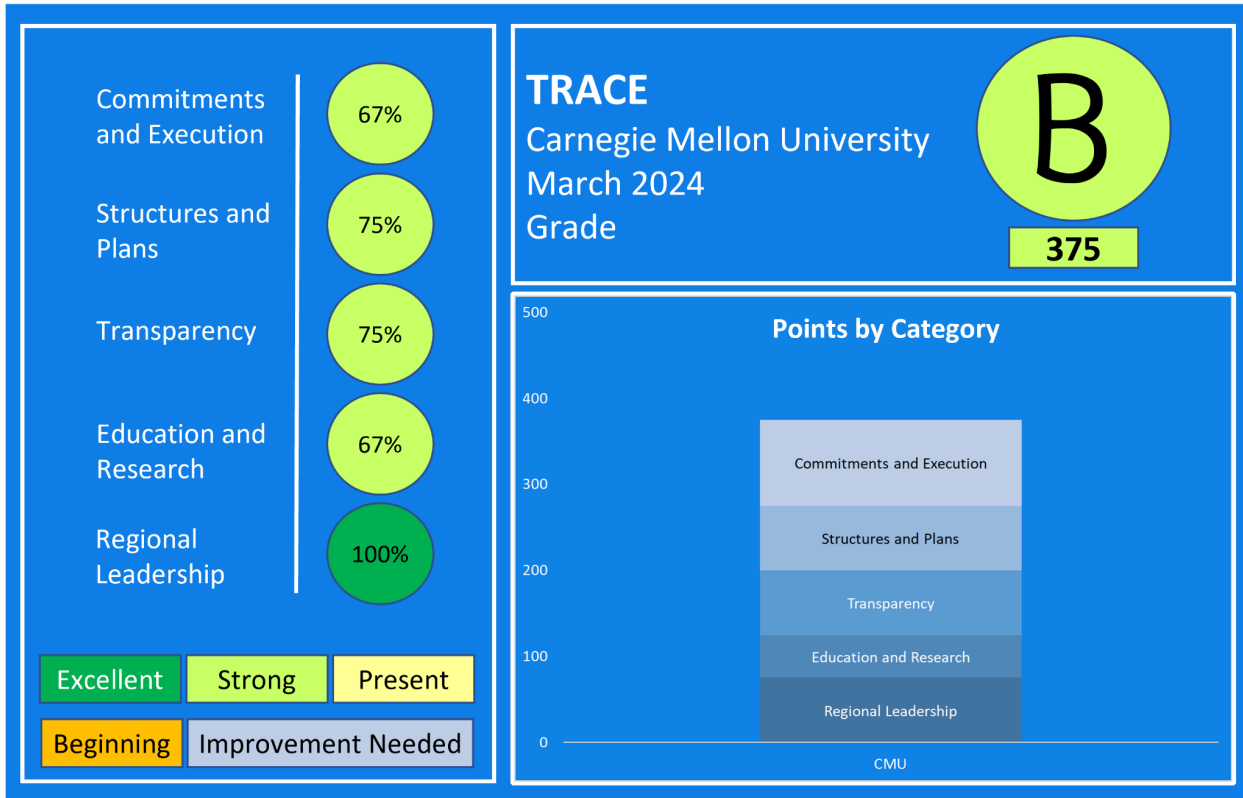




Carnegie Mellon University
TRACE REPORT
 March 2024



Executive Summary

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) is a private, internationally ranked research university with programs in areas ranging from science, technology and business, to public policy, the humanities and the arts. Given its international recognition, research strength, and importance to the region, CMU bears a particular responsibility in the carbon-free transition for the region and the world. Our 2023 scoring shows good progress in operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction, active student engagement, and a strong intent to fulfill its responsibility. However, there are some gaps in planning and transparency.



Highs

- Over the last 15 years, CMU has made significant progress in reducing its GHG emissions in two major operational categories: **electricity generation and building heating**. The use of a direct renewable energy power purchase agreement (PPA) has enabled them to reach neutrality in electricity consumption. PPAs are a preferred method for reduction of GHGs. CMU's leadership in converting the Bellefield Steam Plant to natural gas has substantially reduced their GHG generation from building heating.
- In September 2023, CMU made a date-certain commitment to **carbon neutrality in its operations** by 2030 by joining Second Nature's Climate Leadership Network and signing their Climate Commitment. During the scoring process, we encouraged CMU to take this step and applaud their action.
- CMU's commitment to the **Green Building Alliance** and **LEED Certification** for new buildings and major renovations and its **AASHE** Stars Gold Rating for sustainability show a commitment to continuing reduction of GHGs going forward.
- CMU Sustainable Earth is one of the most active **sustainability student groups** in the region and the university gives this group good access to university leadership.
- CMU's **leadership** role in the regional Higher Education Climate Consortium (HECC) and the Center for Shared Prosperity show CMU's commitment to leading the region toward a just, carbon-free economy.
- CMU has developed a strong and broad **educational curriculum** toward a sustainable future—in our view, one of the most critical components of any higher education institution's mission. Relevant coursework can be found in most academic programs. Two degree programs, a major in Environmental Engineering and a minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, allow students to focus their studies in this important area.
- Additionally, CMU has strong **environmental and energy research programs** across the university with particular focuses in the Steinbrenner Institute, the Scott Institute, and

About TRACE
Given the importance of higher educational institutions to the southwestern Pennsylvania region, we have created the *350 Pittsburgh Three Rivers Assessment of Carbon Emissions (TRACE)*. This scorecard is intended to be a simple and understandable assessment of each institution's progress toward carbon neutrality. The scorecard assesses the school's results in five categories. These five categories are weighted based on the degree of impact they have on operational, financial, and educational results. For more information on the scorecard, see <https://world.350.org/pittsburgh/TRACE/>



the department of Engineering and Public Policy. These programs indicate leadership in renewable energy and sustainability.

Areas for Improvement

- CMU has not made a commitment to **fossil-free research and investment portfolios**. Additionally, its transparency in these two areas is significantly lacking. While CMU's renewable energy research focus is a strength, it is undercut by its continued research in fossil fuel technologies. Its lack of transparency about its financial support from the fossil fuel industry puts a question mark over its true commitment to carbon neutrality. In 2024, we request that CMU publicly agree to the principles in the [Fossil Free Research Letter](#) and establish date-certain commitments to divestment from fossil free interests in its research and investment portfolios.
- CMU has not published its own **Climate Action Plan (CAP)** for the university. While its comprehensive *Voluntary University Review* in 2019 was a good first step toward a CAP, it has not been followed through with a detailed and operationalized plan. We believe the implementation and tracking of a CAP is an important tool in achieving carbon neutrality for any large institution and would publicly affirm a commitment to the institution's climate goals. We request that CMU formally commit to developing a CAP comparable to that created by the University of Pittsburgh and establish a team and funding for the creation of that plan by 2025.
- **Transparency**—the ability of the public to easily find the status and progress of the university toward carbon neutrality—is the cornerstone of public leadership. In that regard, CMU has done well at providing substantial public information. Unfortunately, the information is difficult for the public to navigate and find the relevant, high level commitments, plans, and progress without substantial effort and analysis. We request that CMU better organize its reporting to make it clear and easily accessible. This restructure should make paramount the university's commitments and progress toward them.

Process

Because of the high priority that TRACE places on transparency, the scoring process starts with a survey of publicly available information provided by the University and other public data sources. This approach helps assure that the general public and other institutions can see the individual school's approach and progress. The public data search is supplemented with an opportunity for the school to respond to the initial scoring by providing additional information not found in the public data search. The final score is adjusted with the additional information and the school is encouraged to make this information available to the public.



For the 2023 CMU scoring, the process was led by the CMU Sustainable Earth student group with guidance from 350 Pittsburgh. Input from the school was provided by the CMU Sustainability and Green Practices Manager. Final scoring was jointly established by Sustainable Earth and 350 Pittsburgh.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Carnegie Mellon University for their support as the very first HECC school to receive a 350 Pittsburgh TRACE score. We would like to particularly recognize the CMU Sustainable Earth student group, especially Purva Bommireddy who led the scoring effort. We'd also like to thank Deborah Steinberg, CMU Sustainability and Green Practices Manager, and Steven Guenther, CMU Assistant Vice President for Facilities Management and Campus Services & University Engineer, for providing information to support the scoring.

Disclaimer

This report has been conducted by 350 Pittsburgh, the local affiliate of 350.org. 350 Pittsburgh is solely responsible for the result. CMU provided information, guidance, and feedback during the scoring process.



Score Breakdown

CMU received a final score of 375 for a “B” Grade. **Because the 350 Pittsburgh Quality Standards have not yet been finalized, full points were awarded for that attribute.**

Commitments, Goals and Objectives	Score	Category Score
Has a target date commitment and interim milestones to carbon neutrality for all 3 GHG Protocol scopes	100%	100
Has published target dates for divestment from fossil fuel interests	0%	
Is making visible documented progress toward stated goals	100%	
Institution Structures and Plan	Score	
Has a formal sustainability office/initiative/director	100%	75
Has a formal/public climate action plan with implementation underway	25%	
The plan meets 350 Pittsburgh Quality Standards	100%	
Transparency	Score	
The institution is reporting at least annually via public documentation and presentation	75%	75
Education and Research	Score	
Curriculum	100%	50
Students	50%	
Research (where applicable)	50%	
Regional Leadership	Score	
Publicly visible engagement and advocacy with regional higher education and non-education institutions	100%	75
Peer Institutions Leadership	100%	
Local Community	100%	



Public Source Material

Commitments, Goals and Objectives	Voluntary University Review of Sustainable Development Goals
Institution Structures and Plan	Alex Hiniker (director of sustainability initiative)
Transparency	cmu.edu/environment https://cmusustainability.shinyapps.io/sdg-mapping-f22/
Education and Research	Additional Major in Environmental and Sustainability Studies Primary Major in Environmental Engineering Seed Grants for Energy Research
Regional Leadership	AASHE HECC Community Engagement

About 350 Pittsburgh

350 Pittsburgh was founded in Spring 2015 by local environmental activists to build on the momentum of the 2014 People’s Climate March and form a Pittsburgh group dedicated to climate issues. We envision a future where policies and actions at the local, state, federal and international levels will have ensured a stable climate that provides an opportunity for all people to achieve health, prosperity and fulfillment.

Through public education and collaborative civic activism, 350 Pittsburgh:

- Promotes understanding of the devastating impact of climate change on the urban and rural communities in our region and elsewhere.
- Demands that the region’s decision makers take all possible steps to help diminish climate disruption by ending our reliance on fossil fuels and investing in good jobs in a renewable energy economy.
- Encourages people in our region to become actively involved in the urgent struggle to reverse catastrophic climate change.

TRACE information, including a white paper, can be found on the 350 Pittsburgh [website](#). To contact 350 Pittsburgh, email 350pittsburgh@gmail.com.