



BREATHE  
PROJECT  
The Air We Share

The Climate  
Reality Project®  
PITTSBURGH & SWPA CHAPTER



East End Neighbors: fight  
pollution



March 12, 2024

Contact:

Jim Blakley, 350 Pittsburgh  
350pittsburgh@gmail.com, (412) 301-5839  
Debra Smit, Breathe Project  
[dsmit@breatheproject.org](mailto:dsmit@breatheproject.org), (412) 760-7677

### **350 Pittsburgh Unveils Scorecards that Call on Local Universities to Meet Carbon Emission Goals**

Pittsburgh, Pa., -- [350 Pittsburgh](https://www.350.org), a local chapter of the global [350.org](https://www.350.org), will release the results of a pilot program that scores our local institutions of higher learning on their climate change initiatives and programs. 350 Pittsburgh encourages the schools to collaborate in taking a more aggressive approach to reducing their carbon footprints.

Called the Three Rivers Assessment of Carbon Emissions ([TRACE](https://www.350.org)), the scorecards track each school's efforts toward carbon neutrality and climate education. The participating schools are those in the Pittsburgh Higher Education Climate Consortium ([HECC](https://www.350.org)) that have accepted responsibility for leading the way in reducing greenhouse gas emissions: Carnegie Mellon University, Robert Morris University and the University of Pittsburgh. The overall goal of TRACE is a more carbon-neutral Pittsburgh and collaboration among schools to improve scores.

Middlebury College in Vermont is included as a benchmark school for its commendable commitment to scorecard goals. Carlow University, Chatham University, Community College of Allegheny County, Duquesne University, LaRoche University, Penn State Center Pittsburgh and Point Park, all members of HECC, have been invited to join the program but have yet to respond to TRACE.

**The 350 TRACE Scorecards will be unveiled at a media press conference at the Energy Innovation Center's first floor atrium on March 12, at 11 a.m. Please RSVP to Jim Blakely at [350pittsburgh@gmail.com](mailto:350pittsburgh@gmail.com).**

"Southwestern Pennsylvania's large institutions have a clear responsibility to lead the region's progress to a carbon-free future," said Jim Blakley, 350 Pittsburgh Steering Committee Member. "Our region's higher education institutions are a cornerstone of regional economic transformation and are molding the next generation of citizens. We created TRACE to connect those schools' efforts towards carbon neutrality with the larger community."

For the past three years, 350 Pittsburgh has been working with university students enlisted from each participating school. The students assessed each school's goals, plans and actions toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on funding from fossil fuel industry sources

"What we found was a mixed bag," said Blakley. "Each school is responding to the challenge in different ways."

For example, the University of Pittsburgh published a comprehensive [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2022. Carnegie Mellon University completed a voluntary university review in 2022 that led to the establishment of its own [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

"Our student group, [CMU Sustainable Earth](#), learned a lot about CMU when we scored them," said Ella Vander Velde, a sophomore majoring in environmental engineering. "We want our school to care as much about the climate as we do."

During the press conference, 350 Pittsburgh will present the scorecard ratings of the four participating schools and a leaderboard with an overview of the program. While clearly some of the HECC schools are leading the way, other schools will be called upon to address specific areas. Those who have yet to join will be invited to engage with TRACE. Any progress toward or away from the stated goals will be updated quarterly on 350 Pittsburgh's website and Facebook and Instagram pages.

TRACE assesses each school's results in five categories. These five categories are weighted based on their impact on operational, financial and educational results. The goal is not to replace the approaches the schools are using but to "see the forest from the trees," thereby making these goals clearer and more transparent to the public. The TRACE White Paper and Summary give more information on the scoring procedures.

Middlebury College, while not in our region, is a leader in climate change action and the academic homebase for 350.org founder Bill McKibben, one of the foremost global climate change voices. Middlebury was included in the pilot as a benchmark of what is possible.

### **Highlights of the Findings:**

- No school is doing well in reporting on their financing and funding. The scorecard assesses the schools' goals and progress toward eliminating fossil fuel-related funding in their endowments, donations, research and other funding. They simply do not make this information available.
- All the pilot schools need to improve in regional leadership. Because of their high visibility in the region, their actions to publicize their results and to engage with other institutions and community organizations have a significant impact on the regional momentum towards carbon neutrality.
- The larger and most advanced schools, CMU and Pitt, are far along in their journey to carbon reduction in university operations but have a long way to go to achieve neutrality. As they get closer to their goals, improvements will get harder.

- Robert Morris University is just beginning to address its carbon footprint and must set up basic structures, plans and resources to achieve results. We ask that RMU's new president make this a major priority for RMU.
- The remaining HECC schools will be encouraged to participate in TRACE. The first steps are to identify a student or student group at the school to conduct the scoring and identify a university staff member to support the students during the scoring.

The [350 Pittsburgh website](https://world.350.org/pittsburgh/TRACE/), <https://world.350.org/pittsburgh/TRACE/>, provides full information on TRACE including a whitepaper, the individual pilot school reports, a FAQ, and other news and information.

You can also follow TRACE on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#); see the website for details.

### **About [350 Pittsburgh](#)**

*350 Pittsburgh is a Pittsburgh-based chapter of 350.org addressing climate change. It envisions 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. <https://world.350.org/pittsburgh/TRACE/>*

*Scorecard presenter Jim Blakley is a Pittsburgh-based environmental activist focused on using data and education to impact the climate crisis. He is a member of the 350 Pittsburgh Steering Committee and the lead designer of the 350 Pittsburgh TRACE Scorecard. His other environmental activities include data engineering for an energy pricing analysis project at the CMU Tepper School of Business and creating a corporate training program to teach working engineers to apply environmental justice principles in their work. He is a certified ISI Envision Sustainability Professional and a Climate Reality Leader.*

*Ella Vander Velde, the student liaison from CMU Sustainable Earth, will also speak at the press conference.*