

Dear Colleagues,

We write to invite you to participate in co-creating USF's seven-year journey of discernment, action, and reflection in response to the ongoing environmental crisis and Pope Francis' call for us to examine — with honesty and humility — how our university is caring for our common home.

The Laudato Si Action Platform invites communities across the globe to discern concrete ways to respond to seven goals: response to the cry of the earth, response to the cry of the poor, ecological economics, adoption of sustainable lifestyles, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community engagement and participatory action.

The USF community is already deeply engaged in challenging climate change and educating our students about how they can work alongside communities to advance environmental justice. We **achieved carbon neutrality** and were recognized as a **"Bee Campus"** in 2019, our kitchens serve and educate about the benefits of food grown in ways that protect local ecosystems, students in our **Honors College** are exploring how they can be "Voices for Environmental Justice," and students and faculty continue to learn together about restoration, biodiversity, and environmental protection at **Star Route Farms**, through our **global immersions** and in our **academic programs**. Yet, our commitment to *Magis* as well as the devastating wildfires, hurricanes and destruction of natural habitats and displacement of the people who inhabit them remind us that there is far more to be done.

To spearhead USF's engagement with the platform, the Lane Center and Provost's Office are facilitating a community-driven Laudato Si journey. It is our hope that this journey will provide opportunities for participatory co-design and action as we discern how our research and creativity, academic and co-curricular programs, everyday practices, and campus life can best "respond to the cry of the earth" and advance environmental justice, locally and globally. USF's Laudato Si Action Plan Working Group will survey and report on current initiatives, convene listening sessions with USF and local communities, and draft an initial three-year plan. After three years of action and reflection, we intend to pause in order to examine our progress and refresh our commitment with a second three-year plan.

We invite you to participate in the Laudato Si initiative in one of the following ways:

- **Apply by Nov. 9 to become one of the faculty and staff co-chairs** of the Laudato Si Action Plan Working Group.
- **Nominate yourself or others** (with their permission) to the working group by Nov. 9.
- Participate in future listening sessions on the Laudato Si initiative.
- Share information about your teaching, research and creativity, community engagement, or other activities in support of environmental justice, sustainability, and restoration as part of an effort to document work already underway at USF.

The Laudato Si initiative has the potential to elevate public intellectual engagement at the university, deepen our relationships and collaborations with local and global communities at the frontlines of climate change and environmental devastation, and speak to the deep desire of the next generation of college students to restore and protect our planet. Thank you for your support of this initiative as we work together to care for our common home and honor the indigenous lands upon which we walk.

Warmly,



Chinyere Oparah
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs



Erin Brigham
Executive Director, Lane Center for Catholic Social Thought and the Ignatian Tradition
Chief Mission Officer

Join the conversation **#USFCA**



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