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Universities urged to act on climate change McDavis attends Climate Leadership Summit in Chicago

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By Monica Chapman

Ohio University President Roderick McDavis spent the latter half of last week participating in the 2009 Climate Leadership Summit. Designed to empower universities to exercise leadership in the fight against global warming, the summit took place Aug. 13-14 at The Palmer House Hilton in Chicago.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton gave the keynote address on the first day, speaking about the importance and urgency of moving forward with sustainability initiatives on college campuses. Through his foundation, Clinton currently oversees the Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI) -- a campaign to improve energy efficiency in cities, increase clean energy supply and stop deforestation.

S. Richard Fedrizzi, president, CEO and founding chairman of the U.S. Green Building Council, delivered the second day's keynote on the rapid expansion of green building initiatives on college campuses. Such initiatives include [LEED \(Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design\) certification](#), an internationally recognized green-building rating system that Ohio University committed to in May.

Through the various speakers and small group discussions, McDavis said he gained valuable insight on developing and maintaining sustainability initiatives on campus, including some good ideas about how to create public and private partnerships to finance such initiatives.

"If we can make good use of at least one of these finance ideas, we will be able to move forward at a faster pace with the development and implementation of some of our green initiatives," he said.

The 2009 Climate Leadership Summit was co-hosted by The Wege Foundation and the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), a campaign to reduce global warming through research, education and institutional commitments to climate neutrality.

In March 2007, Ohio University became the first four-year public university in Ohio to sign the ACUPCC. As a signatory, the university committed to developing a climate action plan by Sept. 15 to move the institution toward a net zero carbon footprint.

To this end, the Climate Leadership Summit offered planning sessions on practical strategies for reducing campus greenhouse gas emissions and creating climate-literate graduates. Other sessions focused on leading change initiatives, funding sustainability efforts, climate policy, biomimicry, and international perspectives and approaches to education for sustainability.

In addition to a climate action plan, Ohio University has committed to developing a [comprehensive sustainability plan](#), which seeks to address broad institutional priorities from a conservationist standpoint. A [Presidential Advisory Council for Sustainability Planning \(PACSP\)](#) was formed in July to help make recommendations to the president on both policies.

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McDavis said he intends to share the information he gathered from the summit with the PACSP and rely on the council to provide recommendations about specific climate neutrality and sustainability initiatives to pursue in the future.

Related Links

Presidents' Climate Commitment: <http://www.ohio.edu/climatechange/ClimateLeadershipSummit> (following this link takes you outside Ohio University's Web site):

<http://www2.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/summit/>

The American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (following this link takes you outside Ohio University's Web site):

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