

## Second Nature Presidential Fellows

### *A Project of the ACUPCC Learning Community*

### Program Overview, July 2011

#### INTRODUCTION

Transforming the way higher education teaches, learns, and operates is a necessary component – and a key, often overlooked, leverage point – in creating a healthy, just and sustainable society. Higher education trains nearly all our professionals and leaders, and generates a great deal of knowledge for all of society. To create an economy that can meet the needs of the 6.7 billion people on the planet today – and the 9 billion expected by 2050 – without undermining the social and ecological systems upon which we depend, higher education will need to produce the graduates and knowledge that will make such a transformational shift possible and do it rapidly.

Higher education must provide “Education for Sustainability” (EfS), by equipping graduates to live their personal and professional lives in alignment with sustainability principles, where the full social and ecological impacts – direct and indirect, current and future – of every decision and process are considered and addressed so that we can healthy, thriving communities and economic opportunity for all ad infinitum.

Higher education has begun to lead in this arena. Through the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), it is the first sector in which a critical mass has set the goal of climate neutrality and is actively working towards that goal. Institutions are addressing sustainability issues throughout their operations and experimenting with new approaches to incorporate them into the educational and research activities. However, very few have shifted these efforts from a collection of exciting, individual programs to the strategic imperative of the institution.

To support this shift in higher education, Second Nature has launched the Presidential Fellows program. This program formalizes Second Nature’s work with former presidents from colleges and universities by creating a fellowship position of prestige and honor.

#### THE PROGRAM

The Presidential Fellows program enables Second Nature to tap the experience and perspective of recently retired college and university presidents, who often have more time and fewer institutional constraints, as mentors and ambassadors on a part-time basis to more effectively support the ACUPCC. Fellows undertake interesting, hands-on, and high-leverage work. Second Nature will grant four Fellowships in the academic year ending June 2012, providing a diverse range of representation in terms of institution types (location, size, public/private, 2-yr/4-yr) and constituencies (gender and ethnic balance in Fellows group).

Fellowships are granted to recently retired presidents who are deeply committed to sustainability (writ large), who are dynamic, and who are willing to actively engage in moving the higher education system by working directly with other senior leaders in the sector, professional associations at the state, regional and national level (such as the American Council on Education, the Council of Independent Colleges, the

American Association of Community Colleges, etc.) and on national policy issues. Fellows bring a unique combination of very high intellectual capacity on the subject matter with years of experience leading institutions of various types.

The Fellows combine the leadership skills, practitioner know-how and intellectual depth to break new ground in conceiving of sustainability as a transformational process for campuses, making them facilitators of transformational change.

Fellows will work with Second Nature and the ACUPCC Steering Committee in the following ways:

1. Play a prominent role in fundraising for SN and the ACUPCC, by determining the most significant areas of need, and by using their networks to approach foundations and specific donors.
2. Help develop other new approaches to raising revenue for these initiatives, including more private sector partnerships.
3. Provide thought leadership on education for sustainability, writing articles, Op-Eds, blog posts, and possibly an annual publication from this group.
4. Act as ambassadors with key external constituencies (e.g., higher ed presidential, business officer, chief academic officer and trustee associations, business and government).
5. Recruit new ACUPCC Signatories.
6. Support existing ACUPCC Signatories (e.g., check-in on progress, help identify barriers and solutions, share experiences with the ACUPCC and leadership best-practices).
7. Build support for key national policy issues to advance sustainability.
8. Help shape, launch, and possibly lead or participate in new initiatives.

The Fellows receive \$15,000 each to cover approximately 10% of their time for one year — an average of approximately 16 hours per month. Additional expenses associated with this work (travel, accommodation, meeting registration fees, etc.) are reimbursed. One of the Presidential Fellows will serve as Director of the program, dedicated 25% of his or her time to the effort, and playing an active role in coordinating and leading the Fellows group and working closely with the ACUPCC Steering Committee and the leadership of Second Nature to set the strategic direction for the program. For the 2012 academic year, Mitch Thomashow, former president of Unity College, will serve as Director of the Presidential Fellows program.

The Presidential Fellows program was successfully piloted in 2009-2010 with two former presidents – Richard Cook, former president of Allegheny College and Ed Johnson, former president of Sterling College – who helped bring more than 50 new signatories into the ACUPCC network, represented Second Nature at conferences and events, and provided thought-leadership through publications and speeches.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Expand Second Nature's capacity to better serve senior leaders in higher education.
2. Increase fulfillment rates of the ACUPCC and increase the size of the ACUPCC network.
3. Generate thought leadership on the leading edge of education for sustainability in higher education.
4. Enhance and promote Second Nature's existing programs and identify and help shape new programs.

## ACTIVITIES



1. One-day kickoff meeting for orientation, capacity building and goal setting.
2. Each Fellow will determine the degree to which they undertake the following activities throughout the year in support of the goals of the Program:
  - a. Promote the ACUPCC at meetings and events of professional associations.
  - b. Direct calls to colleagues who have signed or may consider signing the ACUPCC.
  - c. Campus visits to meet with senior leadership and sustainability teams at institutions working on implementing the ACUPCC, as well as those evaluating whether or not to sign.
  - d. Writing articles, Op-Eds, and blog posts about EfS.
  - e. Engaging with policy makers in support of programs that promote EfS.
  - f. Contributing to ACUPCC Committees and other programmatic work.
3. Create and actively engage in a deep, relationship-based learning community with Second Nature, other Fellows, and active senior leaders in the higher education sector that promotes more effective advancement of education for sustainability.

## 2011-2012 FELLOWS

- Mitchell Thomashow, former president of Unity College
- Diana Van Der Ploeg, former president of Butte College
- Former president of a large research university
- Former president of a minority-serving institution
- Former president of a state college/university

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