

Case Study Proposal

In order to better understand the full scope and effectiveness of campus climate action planning, four universities were selected to act as case studies for the project. These universities were identified based on a set of specific criteria aimed at narrowing down selecting schools that are most similar to Montana State University. The process of selection and the criteria used is detailed in coming paragraphs. After the selection process was completed, the following case study universities were decided: Utah State University, Colorado State University, Weber State University, and University of Montana.

To begin the case study identification process, four group members were assigned the task of creating created a comparability matrix that details specific information about potential comparable universities. This matrix acted as a spreadsheet where information could be quickly found for side-by-side comparisons of universities. Some of this information included each university's cost of attendance, enrollment, endowment amount, climate, along with many more. In total, 22 colleges were considered by the group. Once the spreadsheet matrix was completed and the university data was were gathered, it was time to begin the process of selecting four colleges for the case study.

Although there were many criteria for case study selection, only the most important of these will be detailed in this proposal. Perhaps the most important criterion on the comparability matrix was the political leaning of the state that the university resides in. State politics play a huge role in how invested a college is in climate change mitigation strategies, and also influences the level of support behind campus climate action plans. Because Montana is a primarily conservative state, the group wanted to look at universities that are also located in red states. Of the four chosen universities above, only Colorado State University resides in a liberal (blue) state. By primarily focusing on conservative state schools, the group is able to build a better understanding of how campus climate action planning works in states with similar politics to Montana.

The next important set of criteria that the group focused on, put generally, was the amount of money that is going into each university. This was based on each school's cost of attendance and endowment amount. How much money a college has at their disposal heavily influences the success of climate mitigation strategies and the level of funding that a climate action plan will receive. As of 2019, Montana State University's endowment amount was \$180.2 million, and their in-state annual tuition and fees cost \$7,320. Of the four universities chosen for study, Utah State had the highest endowment with \$402.9 million and Weber State had the lowest endowment amount at \$161.8 million. In-state tuition and fees for these universities ranged from \$5,090 to \$12,260 annually. Although there is some variance in these amounts, these four colleges should give the group an idea of university funding operations at the level of Montana State.

Finally, each campus's physical climate along with their climate action plan standings were taken into account. All four of the universities chosen are located in northern latitudes and experience warm summers and cold winters (although maybe not as cold as Bozeman). Climate and weather have many implications regarding the amounts of emissions from a university, the types of heating and cooling systems used, energy saving building techniques, and many more. This is why it is so important that these case study universities are located in cold, wintery places like Montana State. It was also required that the college has a current climate action plan, and preferably signed onto the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment

Commented [JHH1]: Perhaps replace with "The selection process identified the following case study campuses:" just for simplicity

Commented [LP2]: Perhaps add as Appendix?

Commented [JHH3]: Later, we can use citations from the lit review to confirm this

Commented [NF4]: Maybe add that endowment was looked at as it compares to the size of the student body.

Commented [JHH5]: This language might be a little bit loose. See suggestions

Commented [JHH6]: Theoretically, funding can constrain or enable climate-related decision-making on university campuses. By considering tuition and endowments, we gain an appreciation of the potential funding environment while recognizing that university funding is a function of other elements in addition to tuition and endowments. (Gang: the point here is that public universities also get money from state legislatures (not enough) and in theory campus climate action could be funded separately, as in a major private gift ... so the tuition & endowment don't really tell us how much they have to spend, but give us a sense of the ability to raise money in a relative sense.

Commented [LP7R6]: Agreed.

Commented [LP8]: Might be good to have an understanding of private vs public funds used.

(ACUPCC) like MSU. The ACUPCC lays out a framework for campus climate planning; schools signed onto the ACUPCC should have a similar goals to Montana State. Of the four universities chosen, all four have a current climate action plan and are signed onto the ACUPCC.

Although many of the decision criteria were discussed in this proposal, there are many more that were taken into consideration not mentioned in this write up. For example, the universities' standing as a public or private school was accounted for when choosing these case studies. Based on the overarching themes of state politics, university funding, and climate, the campus climate action plans of Utah State University, Colorado State University, Weber State University, and University of Montana are the most suitable universities to analyze going forward.

Commented [JHH9]: Maybe a final summary about what you hope to learn from these comparisons restating their value/relevance?