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RAMAPO COLLEGE MAKES COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY

(Mahwah) – Ramapo College of New Jersey, a pioneer in environmentally green practices since its inception in 1969, has made a commitment to climate neutrality. Dr. Peter P. Mercer, president of the college, has charged a Climate Commitment Task Force to develop and implement an institutional action plan for the college to move toward becoming climate neutral. Climate neutrality is having no net greenhouse gas emissions, achieved through energy conservation, use of renewable energy and carbon offsets.

The endeavor is an offshoot of Mercer signing the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment--a nationwide push by a growing number of college and university presidents who hope to have their institutions lead by example by becoming climate neutral--expressing his concern about the unprecedented scale and speed of global warming and its potential for large-scale, adverse health, social, economic and ecological effects.

The American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment will address global warming by garnering institutional commitments to neutralize greenhouse gas emissions, and to accelerate the research and educational efforts of higher education to equip society to re-stabilize the earth's climate.

Dr. Emma Rainforth, an assistant professor of environmental science/geology, serves as chair of the Task Force charged by the president. "Faculty, students and staff will be working together, through working groups coordinated by Task Force members,

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to develop immediate and long-term actions that will lead to Ramapo College becoming climate neutral,” she said.

The first task will be to conduct an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, both on-campus and those associated with the generation of energy purchased by the college. Among other areas that will be explored are energy savings in buildings and transportation, the use of renewable energy sources, and increased recycling, which, in addition to reducing solid waste, also reduces overall greenhouse gas emissions.

The impetus for Mercer’s commitment was initiated by the student-led Environmental Alliance. Leaders of this college club obtained more than 750 student signatures on a petition seeking his support and met with the president to request his commitment to the ACUPCC. Mercer signed the document at a Green Meets Green Conference and Expo held on campus.

“The ACUPCC commitment requires the development and implementation of programs to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions directly and indirectly connected to the college and members of the campus community,” said Mercer. “It will require all members of our community, faculty, staff, students and the administration, to actively participate in achieving this goal.”

College and university presidents that sign the commitment agree to initiate the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality on their campuses. Towards that end, the Environmental Alliance will take part in Focus the Nation on January 31. The event is a national teach-in, campus-wide event relating environmental issues to every academic discipline and field. Focus the Nation will serve as the kick-off to the National Campus Energy Challenge, a national contest to reduce power consumption on campus. During February, the college will sponsor a variety of events, all themed on having fun while learning about campus sustainability and conservation.

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