



Dr. Tim Collins

“Ways Universities Can Lead on the Issues of Climate Change”

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

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Dr. Tim Collins
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Opening Remarks

Good afternoon and Welcome to our Panel

- Ways Universities Can Lead on the Issues of Climate Change

I am Tim Collins, President of Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio, and I have the privilege of serving as our Moderator for this session of our national convention.

Before we start, I would like to take a quick moment to thank our sponsor for this session: Mutual of America.

- Cynthia Banks is with us today and I would like to invite her to the podium

Thank you, Cynthia, for your time and the generosity of Mutual of America.

The format for our session is following some framing remarks, we will have two of our colleagues offer their work on this important issue.

Following their talks, I will moderate a discussion and invite you to reflect on the material and join in the conversation.

So ... shall we begin?

Scene Setter

Climate change is a complex issue that impacts everything from the global economy to the availability of potable water, and much in between.

The United Nations, in “The Climate Crisis – A Race We Can Win,” paints an alarming picture:

“No corner of the globe is immune from the devastating consequences of climate change. Rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning. It is clear that business as usual is not good enough. As the infinite cost of climate change reaches irreversible highs, now is the time for bold collective action.”

That call to action is a moral, ethical, and spiritual mandate that has been knocking at our door for quite some time. His Holiness Saint John Paul II, in his 1990 World Day Peace Message, clearly stated our responsibility to Earth and to future generations when he said:

“When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of the search for peace within society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us: namely, that there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations. I wish to repeat that the ecological crisis is a moral issue.”

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in its 2001 statement, “Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good,” implored humanity to come together to face a global problem when it said:

“At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both 'the human environment' and the natural environment.”

Scripture calls for us to take care of each other and all of God's creatures and creations. By taking care of our world, and everything within it, we are recognizing our inter-related existence with what we call “nature.”

In his encyclical letter “*Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*,” Pope Francis urges us to realize that we are not separate from nature, nor is it “a mere setting in which we live.”

We are part of nature. And nature is in crisis.

As humans, as Catholics, we have a moral obligation to run that race, to act — intentionally and thoughtfully.

And we must act together, which is where institutions of higher learning can have a tremendous impact. From curricular elements to co-curricular service channels, the experience of today's college student on campuses across the country will shape how the next generation cares for and stewards the planet. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders, tomorrow's agents of change. By arming them with knowledge and awareness, we energize their passion and commitment, giving them a platform on which to build systems that are responsive, inclusive, and compassionate.

Today's conversation is about how universities can lead on the issues of climate change.

Our task may seem overwhelming, and we may be tempted to give up before we begin. But as St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and the environment, said: “Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

To offer us the benefit of their work, we have two amazing colleagues with us today.

Introduction of Speakers

Jose Aguto is the Executive Director of the Catholic Climate Covenant, an organization formed in 2006 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to guide the U.S. Church's response to climate change by educating, giving public witness, and offering resources. The Covenant equips Catholics to take action on climate change, and Jose works with partners across the country to carry out the organization's mission.

Before joining the team at the Catholic Climate Covenant, Jose served with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the National Congress of American Indians, and the EPA's American Indian Environmental Office. He is a veteran, having served with the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army, and an alumnus of Brown University and Villanova Law School.

Jose, thank you for joining us today and I invite you to the podium.

Dr Aguto offers the framework

Our other presenter and joining us via Zoom from Sunny California is **Lindsey Kalkbrenner**, the Director of the Center for Sustainability at Santa Clara University. In her role she leads strategic planning, programming, collaboration, and outreach to help the university achieve climate neutrality, develop a culture of sustainability, and establish the university as a living laboratory. She is also lectures on courses centered around sustainability at SCU.

Prior to her work at Santa Clara, Lindsey was an education specialist at Dolphin Quest Hawaii where she developed and led public programs for children and adults educating them on the marine environment and ocean conservation. She has a bachelor's degree in biology and an MBA from Santa Clara University, as well as numerous certifications from the Association of College and University Educators.

Lindsey, thank you for joining us today and I offer you the floor.

Ms Kalkbrenner offers the practical application at Santa Clara University, California

Thank you both for sharing with us your week in this field.

Discussion Period

Wrap Up

As we conclude our thought provoking session, I would like to again thank our Sponsor, Mutual of America, and encourage all of us to stop by their table and thank them again for supporting us. We could not do this without our Sponsors.

I would also like to thank the ACCU Staff for their hard work supporting this session, and to both of our presenters for taking the time to put together their presentations and sharing them with us.

Finally, I would like to thank each of you for your leadership and continuing reflection on how we can make this critical issue, the Care of God's Creation, come alive on our campus'.

Potential Questions

Our Sunday Visitor's publication of "Laudato Si," included a few thought-provoking discussion questions

- In Laudato Si, Pope Francis says that to solve the issues facing us today we must think of ourselves as "one world with a common plan." Do you believe that is possible? What would have to change to have this happen? Jose ... perhaps you can go first?
- Why is the impact of climate change disproportionately felt by the poor?

Others Potential Questions

- Rhetoric and politics appear to be more divisive than ever before, not just in the United States but also around the world. Is it possible to create and execute any strategies relative to climate change that could be effective?
- What do we say to those who disbelieve climate change is real?
- Do you believe solutions to climate change must be instituted from the top down or from the bottom up? Is this a government policy issue or a grassroots issue?
- What three things should every institution of higher education be doing right now in order to address climate change?