

## **Laudato Si' Planning Guide**

Welcome to the Laudato Si' Action Platform journey! Thank you for your commitment to developing or strengthening a Laudato Si' Plan for your University. You give hope to all those who look for signs of change, as we build a better future together. Whether you are beginning your journey towards integral ecology or have been on it for some time, these next steps in your path are cause for celebration. *Laudato si'!*

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## Summary

Together, we are walking the road to integral ecology, which is represented in the holistic Laudato Si' Goals. Integral ecology emphasizes the deep connections between our relationships with each other, our Creator, and all creation. These connections have frayed, which has given rise to an ever hotter and dirtier world, increasing the risk of hunger, thirst, sickness, conflict, and migration, a risk that the most vulnerable among us bear unjustly.

Laudato Si', Pope Francis's encyclical on our common home, gave voice to these concepts, putting the ancient teachings of our faith in new light for today's ecological crisis. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, in partnership with hundreds of Catholic organizations and subject-matter experts, has developed a common platform to help the universal Catholic Church act on this teaching.

The Laudato Si' Action Platform offers you tools and resources in the hopes that you will join us on this journey. God has given you unique gifts, gifts that you alone can bring to our shared project of building a better future together.

This guide, which was collaboratively developed, is one of the tools that has been offered in the spirit of helpfulness. You are the expert on your needs and priorities, and while it is hoped that the suggestions in this guide will be useful to you, you are entirely free to use it in any way you wish.

To remain committed as a Laudato Si' University, only three things are requested.

- Complete an annual self-assessment to discern where you are on the road to integral ecology, so that we might travel together.
- Upload a reflection on how your values are connected to the Laudato Si' Goals, so that others might be inspired by it.
- Upload an annual Laudato Si' Plan that includes your target outcomes and the actions you will take this year, so that others might grow along with you.

“All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (LS 14) It is the sincere hope of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development that our Laudato Si' journeys will be rich in hope, in joy, and in the authentic relationships that nourish our spirits and all creation. *Laudato si'!*

## The Context

### About Laudato Si'

Laudato Si' is one of the three encyclical letters written by Pope Francis. It is available to read or download [here](#). The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which has primary responsibility for promoting this encyclical, has created a Laudato Si' website, available [here](#).

Exploring the ancient teachings of our faith in the light of today's ecological crisis, Laudato Si' teaches us that “everything is connected.” (LS 91) As our relationship with our divine Creator has been neglected, human relationships have faltered, and our world has grown hotter, less

stable, and more lifeless. As a result, we all suffer, and the poorest and most vulnerable suffer above all. We face a “complex crisis that is both social and environmental.” (LS 139)

While the earth and the poor cry out, urgently calling us to change, there is hope. Pope Francis calls us to develop a “loving awareness” of this home we share and to act on the values we hold dear. (LS 220)

Standing on the firm ground of “three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor, and with the Earth itself,” we commit to setting out “on the long path of renewal.” (LS 66, 202) We embrace our rightful place in the “order and dynamism” that our Creator ordained, and we urgently embark on new ways of living with “creativity and enthusiasm” (LS 221, 220).

### About the Laudato Si’ Action Platform

The fruit of a unique collaboration between the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organizations, and “all men and women of good will,” the Laudato Si’ Action Platform creates a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. (LS 13) It empowers “decisive action, here and now” as we adopt full sustainability in the spirit of integral ecology. (LS 161)

Action is urgently needed. The Laudato Si’ Action Platform, a program promoted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, includes a website, available [here](#), and an engagement program that is intended to accompany your University on its journey to integral ecology. **The Laudato Si’ Action Platform brings together the efforts of people and institutions around the world, building a global community that is committed to walking together, one human family dedicated to realizing our loving God’s call for a new dynamic relationship with our common home.**

Because you have registered your commitment to create a Laudato Si’ Plan, you know that the website includes a tracking tool to help you measure and celebrate your progress from year to year and a list of suggested actions that is tailored to your needs. Remember that the website also includes a library of resources from hundreds of partner organizations and ways to connect with other Universities and Catholic communities all around the world. **Our faith calls us to develop authentic relationships with each other, and it is sincerely hoped that the Laudato Si’ Action Platform will help you do that.**

We are responding to the call for healing in our relationships with God, our neighbors, and the Earth itself as we build a better future. Through the Laudato Si’ Action Platform, we are walking the “path to renewal” together (LS 202).

### About the Laudato Si’ Goals

The Laudato Si’ Goals, which were shaped by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development through a richly consultative process, guide our actions. They serve as a common destination for our individual journeys to integral ecology, as “the urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together.” (LS 13)

The Laudato Si' Goals redefine and rebuild our relationship with each other and our common home. Their holistic approach acknowledges the planetary limits of all socio-economic systems and the human roots of the ecological crisis. They call for a spiritual and cultural revolution to realize full sustainability in the holistic spirit of integral ecology.

The Laudato Si' Goals are as follows.

The **Response to the Cry of the Earth** is a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability.

The **Response to the Cry of the Poor** is a call to promote eco-justice, aware that we are called to defend human life from conception to death, and all forms of life on Earth.

**Ecological Economics** acknowledges that the economy is a sub-system of human society, which itself is embedded within the biosphere – our common home.

The **Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles** is grounded in the idea of sufficiency, and promoting sobriety in the use of resources and energy.

**Ecological Education** is about re-thinking and re-designing curricular and institutional reform in the spirit of integral ecology in order to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.

**Ecological Spirituality** springs from a profound ecological conversion and helps us to “discover God in all things,” both in the beauty of creation and in the sighs of the sick and the groans of the afflicted, aware that the life of the spirit is not dissociated from worldly realities.

**Community Resilience and Empowerment** envisage a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels.

## About the Laudato Si' Planning Guide

### How This Guide Was Developed

As Pope Francis says in Laudato Si', “Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*.” (LS 164) Although our faith encompasses diverse regions and perspectives, the gifts of the Holy Spirit unite us as one, enabling us to see the ties that bind us together in the common home we share.

In keeping with this spirit of unity, this planning guide was developed through a cooperative process led by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, in partnership with nearly 200 Catholic organizations and leaders from around the world. Over 100 benchmark programs were examined in-depth, dozens of subject matter experts were consulted, and on-the-ground volunteers in 20 countries contributed perspectives about the challenges and

strengths of their communities.

The precious wisdom contributed by these co-leaders has been fundamental to the development of this planning guide, and indeed to the development of the Laudato Si' Action Platform itself. This guide is not intended to be definitive or mandatory, but inspirational and informative. **This is a living document, open to new invitations from the Holy Spirit and new perspectives from the community of the faithful, both of which are essential to its usefulness.**

### The Invitation to You

Your University is warmly invited to continue the collaborative process that has helped shape this planning guide. **You are a co-leader in this work, endowed by our Creator with unique gifts that you alone can bring to our shared project of protecting our common home and all who share it.**

You are invited to create your own Laudato Si' Plan by using this planning guide as it is helpful. This guide offers well informed suggestions in the spirit of humble collaboration. You are welcome to adapt these suggestions to your needs, to incorporate outside expertise and existing programs, and to use this guide and the Laudato Si' Action Platform itself in whatever way is best for you.

**Only three actions are requested to continue your participation as a Laudato Si' University:**

- uploading a reflection document or video so that others may learn from and be inspired by your commitment;
- uploading a document or video that outlines your Laudato Si' Plan, which will be shared so that others may learn from and be inspired by the unique ways that you act in community;
- completing the baseline evaluation and annual self-assessment each year.

You may find information about these things in your dashboard, available at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](http://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org)

### Overview of Suggested Phases

Three general phases might be helpful as you think about your Laudato Si' Plan. **These phases resonate with the experiences and rhythms of many Catholic communities, but they are just suggestions. If your University finds another organizing model helpful, please feel free to use it.**

The suggested phases are to reflect, act, and evaluate. A brief description follows, with detailed information below.

### Reflect

- Begin with a baseline evaluation to establish a starting point for your practices.
- Consider how your University's unique values and identity are connected with the Laudato Si' Goals, and upload a reflection document or video to the Laudato Si' Action Platform.
- Consider the processes that you use to make decisions about your Laudato Si' Plan.
- Establish the objectives you would like to reach through your Laudato Si' Plan.

### Act

- Review a suggested list of actions provided by the Laudato Si' Action Platform (or others, as you prefer).
- Create an annual Laudato Si' Plan and upload it to the Laudato Si' Action Platform.
- Implement the actions you have chosen.

### Evaluate

- Complete an annual self-assessment to see how you have made progress.
- Based on the results of your annual self-assessment, reflect on your journey thus far.
- Attend an online recognition ceremony hosted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and hold your own annual celebration, if you wish.
- Create a Laudato Si' Plan for the coming year.

It is anticipated that these phases will be cyclical, and that your University will undertake reflection, action, and evaluation each year.

Although the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will host a shared moment of celebration through an annual recognition ceremony, it is hoped that your University will weave celebration into every aspect of its Laudato Si' Plan. **Your commitment to realizing integral ecology and protecting our common home is cause for joy.** Your journey is embraced with the warmth and love with which our Creator embraces all creation, and we are called to embody the spirit of joyful celebration which led St. Francis to proclaim, "Laudato si'!"

## Suggested Phase I: Reflect

### About Reflection

Laudato Si' tells us that "an integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence 'must not be contrived but found, uncovered'." (LS, 225) It is suggested that you incorporate a profound period of reflection in your Laudato Si' Plans, deepening the "ecological conversion" to which St. John Paul II and Pope Francis call us.

**The steps that are outlined below are suggestions, informed by the co-creators of this document.** Please be aware that only three things are necessary for your continued enrollment as a Laudato Si' University: completing an annual self-assessment, sharing a reflection document or video, and sharing an annual Laudato Si' Plan.

## First Annual Self-Assessment

As a first step in your journey to integral ecology, you are invited to complete your first annual self-assessment. This first annual self-assessment offers a baseline evaluation from which you will be able to see progress every year. The form is available in your dashboard at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](https://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org).

Having an overall view of our current practices in integral ecology can be very helpful. **Being able to see where we stand gives us a sense of direction, an understanding of how far we've come and where we might want to go from here.**

The annual self-assessment asks about your practices across the Laudato Si' Goals. Simply answering these questions might spark new ideas about ways your University can grow into its Laudato Si' calling. More importantly, the annual self-assessment provides a clear, comprehensive snapshot of where you stand this year. It establishes a baseline and enables you to celebrate your progress from year to year.

The annual self-assessment is tailored to the context of your sector and region. To begin, you will see a few questions about what life is like in your University. These questions help the tool adapt to your needs.

Then, you will see questions about your current practices. These questions address the holistic Laudato Si' Goals, so you can expect to consider everything from your electricity and water use to your educational and spiritual practices.

It will be helpful to have documentation on hand. Before sitting down to complete the self-assessment, you may want to gather this information:

- how much electricity, water, heating fuel, and petrol/gas you've used;
- the food you have served;
- whether you've planted trees;
- whether you've incorporated themes from Laudato Si' into your prayer and spiritual initiatives; and
- whether you've participated in any trainings to learn more about science and Catholic social teaching on ecology.

The self-assessment offers several ways to share this information, and is flexible to adapt to your needs.

**The self-assessment will provide information to help you understand where you stand along the road to integral ecology:** a carbon footprint, a report on your current practices that you may share with others if you wish, and information about how your practices compare with those of other Universities.

**Once your information is gathered, the self-assessment will take 30-60 minutes to complete.** It may be helpful for two people to complete the self-assessment together. One of

them might have detailed, in-depth practical knowledge about the administrative functions of the University, while the other might have broad knowledge about the University's programs and initiatives.

The annual self-assessment is available in your dashboard at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](https://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org).

Reflecting on the Laudato Si' Goals

**The Laudato Si' Goals encourage us to realize radical changes in our relationships and ways of living, moving away from the destructive technocratic paradigm and towards our loving God's embrace.**

While the Laudato Si' Goals are relatively new, being published on the occasion of the Laudato Si' Special Anniversary Year in 2020, they express ancient concepts of our faith. In the light of today's ecological and social crises, the ancient ideas of responsible stewardship and love for all humankind are being expressed in a new way, giving clear goals to those who are grappling with a response to the signs of the times.

Similarly, your University is not new to these values. Whether you have long had an ecological program or are in the first steps of its development, your University has long embraced the themes that underlie integral ecology. **Working towards the Laudato Si' Goals is not so much a change of direction as it is a deepening of purpose.**

By further exploring the Laudato Si' Goals, you may enrich your understanding of how "everything is connected," and how your efforts to prepare students for the future, for example, are linked to changing weather patterns that increase the risk that storms are more intense, heat waves are hotter, droughts are longer, and small-scale farming is more difficult, leading to an increased risk of migration and conflict. (LS 91)

Your University may already be engaged in a reflection or synodal process that touches on similar themes. If this is the case, please consider ways that this reflection might be integrated into your existing process, perhaps as an additional set of questions that are addressed to the groups that are already working. It is hoped that this reflection offers you joy and richness of spirit, rather than being an obligation that does not serve your needs. Please feel entirely free to pursue it in whatever way works best for you.

A Shared Reflection

**You are invited to create a brief reflection document or video that explores how your values connect with the Laudato Si' Goals.**

As you begin this reflection, you may want to consider the ways that your programs already reflect your mission, with the aim of including the leaders of those programs in a reflection on your Laudato Si' efforts. These areas may include your departments, colleges, faculties, or schools; your office of religious life; any research, business development, or government engagement programs; any medical or science centers that you support; your library and any student newspaper or creative programs; your sport programs; your communications,

maintenance/facilities/grounds, and finance offices; any student council or government; your programs for student and faculty support and engagement; and your alumni engagement programs.

Representatives from these initiatives may want to be involved in your reflection on the Laudato Si' Goals, and you may also wish to consult the list of "stakeholders" below for more ideas. Additionally, you may wish to consider including current and potential students, residents of the community surrounding the university, and members of local groups that are especially vulnerable to the ecological crisis. **This period of reflection offers an opportunity for joyful contemplation of how your mission connects with the Laudato Si' Goals; please feel free to follow where the Holy Spirit leads as you consider who should take part.**

In the experience of the Universities and University networks that have helped develop this guide, these conversations are often welcomed with open arms.

If you are already engaged in a reflection or strategic planning process, then you are warmly invited to consider ways that this reflection might be integrated. If you have not undertaken a reflection process, these suggested steps might be useful.

- Engage the head of the university (sometimes called president, rector, chancellor, or principal), the senior academic administrator (sometimes called provost, vice-chancellor, head of academic affairs, or dean), and any members of the governing board (often called governors, regents, or trustees) in the process of reflection, ensuring that their voices guide the conversation.
- To lead the day-to-day work, it may be helpful to appoint a coordinator. Ensure that the coordinator includes a range of people in the reflection, and that these people are aware of how the process is relevant to their roles.
- Schedule a day or several days for reflection.
- It may be helpful to begin by offering a formation workshop on Laudato Si'. Explore the signs of the times by reading or discussing the science on climate change and environmental destruction along with reflections by Catholic leaders.
- Review the Laudato Si' Goals.
- Review the ways your University already expresses its values, such as statements of your mission or values; any statements of mission from academic departments/colleges/faculties; foundational documents from the sponsoring religious order; any strategic plans; the results of previous conferences dedicated to University development; or materials it sends to prospective students and to alumni.
- Explore how integral ecology, which connects our relationships with each other, our Creator, and all creation, can help us understand University culture in a new way. Key themes might include teaching, research, service, administration, and operations; relationship-building, listening, collaborative practices, social justice, and team work; and nonviolence, a way of life rooted in the Gospel and many religious traditions, that can equip the next generation to be agents of change in developing options and strategies for our future.

- Ask participants to reflect on a set of questions that will help them connect the values of the University with the Laudato Si' Goals. You may either develop your own questions or use these suggestions: How does our mission reflect the values of the scriptures and the teachings of the Church? How are we called to interpret our mission in the light of today's ecological crisis, which is seeing the rising risk of hunger, sickness, migration, and conflict related to changing weather patterns and the destruction of nature? What could be some of the ways in which our various initiatives and programs could reflect that new interpretation of our mission? Are our practices sufficiently flexible and innovative to meet the unprecedented peril facing our common home? How do the Laudato Si' Goals connect with our overall vision for ourselves as a University in service of God's Kingdom?
- Provide space for discussion and strive to reach consensus.
- **Create a reflection document or video. Upload it to your dashboard at LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org, where it will be shared with others.**
- Share your reflection with others in the University and with any regional or international University networks. You may also wish to share a description of the next steps that you will take.

Depending on how you choose to proceed, your process might take a few days or a few weeks. As a co-creator of this work, you are entirely welcome to pursue your reflection in the way that is most meaningful to you.

#### Practical Suggestions for Creating Your Reflection Document or Video

Your reflection will be shared publicly via the Laudato Si' Action Platform as a way to grow the connections and relationships that nourish us.

**The hope is that the website of the Laudato Si' Action Platform will be a real source of inspiration, created by all and shared by all, a use of technology that is "put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral." (LS 112).**

Uploading a Laudato Si' Reflection is necessary to remain enrolled as a Laudato Si' University. A few practical details may be helpful:

- The reflection may be submitted in the form of either a document or a video. Please feel free to use the format that is most comfortable and natural for you.
- The reflection may be any length you wish. For a written document, you may wish to create a reflection of a few pages or a longer booklet. For a video, you may wish to create something short and informal on a smart phone or something more professional in a video studio. The hope is that you create whatever fits your needs and local culture.
- There is no required content for the video. Please include whatever themes seem most relevant, and act in the way that the Spirit leads you. The hope is simply that you will reflect and connect your values with the Laudato Si' Goals.
- Your reflection will be uploaded on your dashboard, available at LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org.

- If you choose to create a video, please upload it as a YouTube link. This will help comply with security requirements. If you do not have a YouTube account, one can be easily created by following the instructions that are widely available online.
- If you choose to upload a document, there is a wide choice of formats. Documents may be in the form of a Microsoft Word doc, a PDF, or even an Excel spreadsheet, if you prefer to reflect in that form.
- All reflections will pass through a minimal security review and will be made publicly available a few days after they are uploaded.

You may also wish to consider sharing your reflection widely within the University. Depending on your needs, you might prefer to circulate a more detailed version internally and a condensed version externally. **Reflecting on how the Laudato Si' Goals connect with the values of your University is a joyful step forward on your journey to integral ecology.** *Laudato si'!*

#### A Focus on Processes

Having an understanding of where you are in the journey is an important element in your reflection. To help inform where you go from here, you may find it useful to reflect on the processes that you use to make decisions.

**Whether you are just beginning the journey to integral ecology or have been on it for some time, taking a moment to pause and consider *how* you walk on this journey might be helpful.**

As Pope Francis says, “ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems.” (LS 111) Instead, we are called to embrace new ways of growing and acting together. Embedding this new culture in a concrete process can nourish it over the long term.

Having a structured process can suggest opportunities to connect with universities around the world that are pursuing efforts on integral ecology, finding common interests and shared ways of working. A process can suggest ways to engage teaching, research, and community service in an articulated project linked to the curriculum. Finally, having a clear structure can ensure that responsibilities are clear.

**You are invited to formalize the process that you use to take action on Laudato Si'.**

You are entirely welcome to formalize your decision-making process in the way that is most appropriate to your University's culture and needs. You might create a simple document, a multi-page booklet, or a webpage. If your community prefers to communicate information visually, rather than in writing, you might formalize your process by describing it in a video. You might prefer to mark the formalization of your process more quietly, or to celebrate it publicly as a significant step in your journey.

In whatever form is best for you, formalizing a decision-making process can be a way of bringing new attention and care to your work on Laudato Si', as "a fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power." (LS 78)

### Suggested Components of a Decision-Making Process

Whether you have already been taking action on Laudato Si' for some time or are just beginning your journey, reflecting on your decision-making process can drive new insights.

In the spirit of providing helpful guidance, the co-creators of this guide offer the following components for your consideration. **A process like this may help you to either start drafting a Laudato Si' Plan or to make decisions from year to year.**

#### *Identify decision-makers*

- The administrative head of the university (sometimes called president, rector, chancellor, or principal) may want to issue a directive to all departments to begin engaging in this project.
- The University may want to establish a central planning committee or other team to lead this project.
- Each department may want to appoint a lead to engage with the planning committee and to coordinate efforts on this project.
- Departments may want to discuss how pursuing a Laudato Si' Plan would affect their work and how they will contribute to the overall decision-making process.
- Regular meetings between departments may take place in order to coordinate efforts.

#### *Set objectives*

- The University should establish measurable objectives that it wishes to achieve through this project, such as reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% within five years, developing ecological spirituality initiatives to take place monthly, or ensuring that a measurable number of the most vulnerable members of the community are given the resources they need to thrive. Depending on the practices of your University, you may be familiar with calling these objectives "indicators," "metrics," or "goals." However you phrase them, you are encouraged to define the concrete, measurable outcomes that you wish to aim for.
- The University may want to publish information about its objectives, the processes it will use, the timeline for the project, and other logistical information.

#### *Engage stakeholders to decide how to take action*

- If a planning committee will not take on this responsibility, the University may want to appoint a liaison to consult with constituent bodies about this project and the actions that they wish to take.
- You may want to review a list of actions that has been collaboratively developed to help your University move towards the Laudato Si' Goals. This list is available in your dashboard at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](http://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org). Complete information about actions is below.

- The University may want to suggest actions collaboratively through the planning committee or another group, with final decisions about actions coming from the leadership.
- The University may want to create a multi-year calendar of actions to plan for phases of its progress.

#### *Manage finances*

- The leadership may want to dedicate a line item in the budget to this project.
- The finance office may want to prepare an analysis of how much actions that are suggested by the planning committee would cost.

#### *Grow relationships*

- The University may want to appoint a liaison is appointed to consult with donors and members of the governing board (often called governors, regents, or trustees), students, or selected faculty members about this project.
- The University may want to appoint spiritual director to this project.
- The University may want to publish information about its objectives, the processes it will use, the timeline for the project, and other logistical information.
- The University may want to formalize a process for resolving conflicts.

#### *Stakeholders*

As a first step in formalizing its decision-making process, your University may want to consider the people who make decisions. We are blessed to be people of community. Particularly as we pursue integral ecology, which calls us to reimagine how we care for all those around us, we are invited to develop plans with “the active participation of all members of the community.” (LS 44)

In developing the decision-making processes that you will use, the spirit of synodality is key. Invite the guidance of the Holy Spirit through all of the many people through whom She works, striving to reach consensus wherever possible. As a practical way of implementing this, you may wish to create a multi-disciplinary planning committee.

The co-creators of this guide encourage you to consider the following potential members of your planning committee.

- *The administrative head of the university (sometimes called president, rector, chancellor, or principal):* Leadership is essential to achieving integral ecology across the University. The head of the university may have an important role in endorsing the project and initiating work, as well as in raising money for Laudato Si’ programs, projects, and research.
- *The senior academic administrator (sometimes called provost, vice-chancellor, head of academic affairs, or dean):* The academic administrator may have essential insight into the curricula and overall academic direction of the university, an important input for decision-making.
- *Any members of the governing board (often called governors, regents, or trustees):* As the ultimate approvers of any strategic shifts, members of the governing board may want to participate in the planning process.

- *The heads of academic units (sometimes called department head or chairperson or dean):* The heads of academic units might generate knowledge ideas, implement programs, and support faculty and students interested in Laudato Si' issues.
- *Professors and other educators (sometimes called faculty):* Educators can implement Laudato Si' activities through teaching, researching, advocating, and serving as mentors.
- *Facilities, grounds, or maintenance staff:* The leadership and expertise of these staff members are essential, as they can inform decisions and will implement all physical plant adjustments.
- *Administrative staff:* Administrative staff may be leaders in implementing actions and in retaining information about work on Laudato Si' issues
- *Students:* Students have a vital role as learners, advocates, sparks of innovation and new ideas, future leaders, and the generation that will inherit the consequences decisions made today.

While some of the stakeholders consulted will fulfill well defined roles within the University, others might simply demonstrate Christ-centeredness, a close connection to the charism of the university, a strong sense of community, a sense of call or commission, and an ability to devote themselves to charitable works. Still others might simply have a strong interest in Laudato Si' issues.

The planning committee or other leaders should actively seek conversations among themselves and with others, identifying where individual leaders' interests lie and where the energy in the University is. **The overall aim of the conversations is to continue reflecting on how the University's values connect with the Laudato Si' Goals, to discuss how current initiatives might tie into a Laudato Si' Plan, and to draft a list of suggested actions for the University to take in the coming year.**

#### Overcoming Hurdles

"The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge." (LS 80) With the development of any new project, challenges emerge, and honestly acknowledging and preparing for them can help prevent confusion.

The co-creators of this guide anticipate that your University may have difficulty in, for example, budgeting, or staying motivated for the long term. Practices that other Universities have found helpful in overcoming these challenges have been following a deliberative process with a clear leadership commitment and community buy-in, seeking outside funding (particularly in the light of budget cuts), and appointing a person in charge for each department with a periodic inter-departmental meeting.

#### Conclusion to Suggested Reflection Phase

Your University's growing culture of care for our sisters and brothers, our Creator, and all creation deepens the roots that you've already planted. This period of reflection brings you into communion with all the Universities and other Catholic communities around the world that are engaging in similar efforts. The conversations that you have in community contribute to the "joyful noise" that all on the Laudato Si' journey are making before our Creator. (Psalms 100:1)

This period of reflection allows us to embrace together "the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us." (LS 216)

## Suggested Phase II: Act

### About Action

Laudato Si' tell us that "the effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now." (LS 161) As our spirits deepen, as we become attuned to the suffering of creation and to the movement of Catholics who are building a better future together, we are naturally called to take action.

It is hoped that the suggestions below will be useful, but you are entirely welcome to adapt them to suit your needs. Please be aware that only three things are necessary for your continued enrollment as a Laudato Si' University: completing an annual self-assessment, sharing a reflection document or video, and sharing an annual Laudato Si' Plan.

### Choosing the Actions That Are Right for You

It is likely that the decision-making process that you have established will heavily focus on choosing the actions that you would like to undertake. **You are the expert in your context, and you will know which actions best suit your spiritual, social, and practical needs.**

Because the Laudato Si' Goals represent the wide breadth of a holistic approach to integral ecology, the stakeholders in your decision-making process may find that they lack expertise in certain areas.

To help overcome this challenge, the Laudato Si' Action Platform provides a list of suggested actions. This list is available in your dashboard at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](https://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org).

- This list of suggested actions is grounded in the wisdom of the co-creators of this guide and in the knowledge of subject-matter experts.
- Actions are organized by Laudato Si' Goal, so that you can easily explore areas that are of the greatest interest or need. The suggested actions are tailored to the context of your region.
- Starting in 2022, most actions will be paired with suggested resources from partner organizations, who are co-creators of this project. This will enable you to access practical, concrete information about how to complete each action.

**The list of suggested actions has been collaboratively developed in order to provide a clear and effective path towards the Laudato Si' Goals.** However, you may find that another set of actions better suits your needs. Perhaps you are already engaged in a Laudato Si' program (such as the AASHE STARS program), and you have a different list of actions that you plan to pursue. Or, perhaps there is a special need in your region, one that is specific to the context of your University, and you'd like to include that action in your plan. Again, perhaps a member of your University has an extraordinary idea to pursue, and you'd like to follow up on it.

**You are a co-creator in our shared project of building a better future.** You are entirely welcome to undertake any actions that seem appropriate to you. It is hoped that the well researched and collaboratively designed list of actions in your dashboard will be helpful; if you find other resources helpful, please do feel free to use them.

**It is suggested that your decision makers create a list of actions that the University intends to complete this year.** If they feel called to do so, decision makers might also wish to create a set of actions that it might complete over the next three to five years. In this way, you can address both short-term and long-term planning.

### Actions and Objectives

While the Laudato Si' Goals give us all a shared direction to aim for, your University may wish to set its own measurable objectives, giving even greater clarity of direction to your efforts.

Objectives are clear, specific, and measurable signs that your actions are making a difference. Depending on the practices of your University, you may be familiar with calling these objectives "indicators," "metrics," or "goals."

Many Catholic organizations find that having clear and specific objectives can help generate enthusiasm. Clear, specific objectives can also help prioritize and shape the actions you take. Setting objectives might also help organize your efforts from year to year.

For instance, perhaps you'd like to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by 25% over the next three years. In that case, you might both select practical actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and shape community events to focus on that objective. The milestones of 10%, 15%, or 20% reductions that you achieve along the way to your objective might be the occasion for shared celebrations, helping all to see and embrace the tangible progress that is being made. (The Laudato Si' Action Platform will create a carbon footprint each year as a result of your self-assessment.)

As another example, perhaps you'd like to ensure that key staff members of your University are trained in ecological science and Catholic social teaching before you pursue deeper actions. In that case, you might have a short-term objective of completing training within the next year. Over the coming three to five years, your objectives might encompass establishing an annual practice for the Season of Creation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25%, and ensuring education about Laudato Si' issues is a required aspect of student academic development.

In order to set objectives, you may wish to review the Laudato Si' Goals and the list of suggested actions in depth. Information about methods that participants often use to set objectives will be available on the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Additionally, you might seek to define objectives by speaking with others in your area, learning what other Universities hope to achieve (via the shared plans available on the Laudato Si' Action Platform), or simply brainstorming objectives that would represent meeting the Laudato Si' Goals for your University.

**You are the expert on your needs and priorities, and defining your objectives is entirely up to you.** You are invited to deeply reflect on the objectives that would both represent meaningful progress as we build a better future together, and be feasible for your University.

### Completing Your Actions

As your outcomes are defined and your actions planned, you may see a need for practical know-how to bring your plans to fruition.

Starting in 2022, most of the suggested actions in your dashboard will be paired with specific resources from the partner organizations that are the co-creators of the Laudato Si' Action Platform. This will enable you to immediately access practical, concrete information about how to complete each action.

**For now, practical, concrete guidance on how to complete actions is available from many sources.**

- The Laudato Si' Action Platform's resource library has a wealth of information. This library contains resources from partner organizations, many of which are leaders and experts in your region. You may access the resource library at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](https://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org).
- A relationship with another University or another Catholic organization can be a wonderful way to share ideas and guidance. If you don't already have one, you are invited to connect with an institution that wishes to develop a relationship. Contact information is available in your dashboard on the Laudato Si' Action Platform website.
- The co-creators of this guide include Catholic organizations that have deep experience in accompanying Universities in their Laudato Si' journeys. Contact information to reach these organizations is available in your dashboard. Look for the list of working group members.
- The Laudato Si' Action Platform shares news and stories about people and institutions that are taking action. Reviewing these stories might provide inspiration and ideas.
- NGO and/or government agencies in your area may provide information and guidance free of charge or at reduced cost. Developing strong relationships with these partners can be very helpful.
- Completing a simple search for information about how to complete an action in your region is often fruitful. You might find a detailed step-by-step guide, or you might find information about an organization that has done something similar, in which case you

may find it useful to simply contact that organization for an informal conversation to learn more.

### Practical Suggestions for Creating Your Plan

It is hoped that this planning guide will provide helpful guidance. Ultimately, however, you are the expert in your own context. **God has given your University unique gifts, which you alone can bring to our shared project of building a better future.**

Your Laudato Si' Plan will be shared publicly via the Laudato Si' Action Platform. By sharing our plans, we inspire each other, creating a mutually supportive community of practice.

You are invited to be authentically open about the process by which you arrived at your plans, what you hope for, and what inspires you. Sharing our plans in this open way helps to create “the kind of society we want to build,” a society in which an “authentic humanity” is treasured. (LS 107, 112)

Uploading a Laudato Si' Plan is necessary to remain enrolled as a Laudato Si' University. A few practical details may be helpful:

- You will have already created a reflection, which focuses on your values. In contrast, your Laudato Si' Plan focuses on the practical steps in your journey.
- You are invited to include both the objectives that you hope to reach and the actions that you hope to take in the coming year.
- If you feel called to plan for the long term, please do feel entirely welcome to mention actions that you will take in the years beyond this one.
- **You know your needs and priorities, and you are entirely free to shape the content of your Laudato Si' Plan in the way that is best for you.**
- Your Laudato Si' Plan may take the form of either a document or a video, following your culture and the decision-making process that you use. For instance, perhaps your decision-making process focuses on the revision of a shared document, and you would prefer for the final plan to be communicated in written form. Or, perhaps your decision-making process focuses on conversations, and you would prefer for the final plan to be communicated in a video from the head of the University. Please feel free to use the format that is most comfortable and natural for you.
- If your plan takes the form of a document and you feel so called, please do include a photo of your leaders, your campus, your logo, or anything else that is meaningful to you. These photos may help develop a sense of connection and community.
- Your Laudato Si' Plan will be uploaded to your dashboard, available at [LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org](https://LaudatoSiActionPlatform.org).
- If you choose to create a video, please upload it as a YouTube link. This will help comply with security requirements. If you do not have a YouTube account, one can be easily created by following the instructions that are widely available online.
- If you choose to upload a document, there is a wide choice of formats. Documents may be in the form of a Microsoft Word doc, a PDF, or even an Excel spreadsheet, if you prefer to plan in that form.
- If you have been on this journey for some time and have already developed a Laudato Si' Plan, please feel entirely welcome to use it. You may want to briefly review your

existing plan to see whether there is any opportunity to update it in response to this guide.

- All Laudato Si' Plans will be pass through a minimal security review and will be made publicly available a few days after they are uploaded.

**Developing a Laudato Si' Plan is a wonderful step in your journey towards integral ecology.** It is a warmly welcomed sign that your University is joining the community of the faithful that is building a better future together.

You may wish to publish your plan after it is completed, either through University communications channels or through any networks to which you belong.

Additionally, you may wish to hold a celebration. Sharing the creation of a new plan in a prayer service, student event, or University conference can be the occasion for joyfully embracing this major milestone in your journey towards integral ecology. *Laudato si'!*

### Conclusion to Suggested Action Phase

It's important to recall *why* we act. In the midst of our ecological crisis, we are called to develop new ways of living and working together, striving to achieve an integral ecology that honours our Creator and protects all creation. These deep roots of our faith prevent "action from becoming empty activism." (LS 237)

At the same time, taking action does matter. Our actions are the way that we mount a practical response to the signs of the times, as our Christian love "makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world." (LS 231)

## Suggested Phase III: Evaluate

### About Evaluation

As we develop greater "care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment," we begin to see "the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us." (LS 208) The Laudato Si' Action Platform includes tools to assess our impacts on the world around us.

These tools will help you see how far you have come on your own Laudato Si' journey and see the distance we are all traveling together. It is hoped that using these tools will develop a sense of collective hope and joy for our shared momentum, as we witness the true transformation of our world.

While the steps suggested here may be useful, you may find another process better suited to your needs. Please be aware that only three things are necessary for your continued enrollment as a Laudato Si' University: sharing a reflection document or video, completing an annual self-assessment, and sharing an annual Laudato Si' Plan.

### Annual Self-Assessment

Just as you did at the start of your engagement as a Laudato Si' University, you are invited to complete a self-assessment in each following year.

Completing an annual self-assessment is a way to see where you stand on the road to integral ecology. **The annual self-assessment will be the same from year to year, allowing you to easily see progress along your Laudato Si' journey.**

**You are encouraged to share your annual progress report with the stakeholders in your decision-making progress and more widely in the University if appropriate.**

You may also wish to share your annual progress report through networks. The practical ways in which your University has embraced the Laudato Si' Goals are cause for celebration. Sharing them widely offers the light of inspiration to all.

The Laudato Si' Action Platform will share results about the shared progress that has been made across all Platform participants each year on 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis and the final day in the Season of Creation. Additionally, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will hold an online recognition ceremony and moment of celebration for all Laudato Si' Dioceses and all others who have remained committed to the Laudato Si' journey, recognizing the extraordinary efforts made by all as we strive to build a better future together.

Either during the Vatican celebration or after receiving your annual progress report, you are warmly welcomed to hold a local event to celebrate your co-leadership of this global movement. An outdoor Mass, a creative student celebration that brings in elements of art or dance, an academic conference, a statement from the head of the University — there are many ways to celebrate your progress and our unity on the road together. You are welcome to joyfully embrace the distance you've traveled on this journey each year.

### Reflecting On Your Results

Completing the annual self-assessment can offer an opportunity for continued reflection on the connections between the Laudato Si' Goals and our values. You are invited to engage the stakeholders in your decision-making process in a structured moment of reflection each year.

This reflection can encourage a sense of motivation and commitment. **It can also be an opportunity for concerns, questions, and suggestions to arise, giving space for the Holy Spirit to speak through diverse voices.**

You may already use a process to reflect on progress you have made. If not, a half-day or full-day conversation in which you discuss the following questions may be useful.

- How has working towards a Laudato Si' Plan strengthened the life of the University over the last year?
- How has working towards a Laudato Si' Plan enabled us to better serve our sisters and brothers, our God, and all creation?
- How has consideration of the Laudato Si' Goals deepened our sense of purpose and mission?

- How have we contributed to the global movement of the Church towards integral ecology?
- What actions did we take? Which actions were particularly fulfilling? Which actions were less fulfilling?
- Where have we made progress towards our objectives? Where have we not made progress? Should we revise our objectives, either to make them more ambitious or to make them more feasible?
- What actions should we take in the coming year? In the coming three to five years?

**By reflecting on these or similar questions each year, your University will stay rooted in the precious values of our faith, recalling why you began this journey, envisioning where we are traveling together, and deciding which steps you plan to take in the coming year.**

### Developing an Updated Annual Laudato Si' Plan

As part of reflecting on your annual self-assessment, you are invited to create a Laudato Si' Plan for the coming year.

As our relationships with each other, all creation, and our Creator are always evolving, so too you may wish to revisit the decision-making process that you used to develop your initial Laudato Si' Plan. Your group of stakeholders may have changed, you may have obtained new information about your budget, or new events may have shifted your social-economic context. A review of your decision-making process, whether brief or more in-depth, could help ensure that your journey ahead is as richly nourishing as the journey behind you.

Ideally, each year you will have completed the actions that you planned to complete. If you find that you have not realized what you planned, you're invited to seize the opportunity for continued growth. **The Laudato Si' Action Platform embraces progress, not perfection.**

Keeping in mind your overall mission, the Laudato Si' Goals, your objectives, and your annual self-assessment, you are invited to share an updated Laudato Si' Plan each year. As was the case with a plan you originally created, this may take the form of either a document or a video. You are entirely free to shape your annual plan in the way that is best for you, defining objectives and a list of actions however you would like.

### Your Calendar

Although we take this journey to a better future together, each of us walks in his or her own way. Your University has already established a cycle of activities for each year, and it is hoped that this work can be seamlessly integrated into it.

The pace of life in your University may be tied to many different things: the academic cycle, the calendar year, the fiscal year, or other things. You are welcome to take key Laudato Si' Plan decisions in line with any dates that are meaningful to you.

For example, perhaps you'd like to complete an annual self-assessment each year on 1 January and draft a new list of actions by 1 February, aligning with the calendar year. Or,

perhaps you'd prefer to complete your annual self-assessment each year at the end of your academic cycle, and create an updated annual plan by the start of the following academic cycle.

You are completely free to plan around any dates that make sense for you. **Please be aware that to remain committed as a Laudato Si' University, your annual self-assessment and annual Laudato Si' Plan should be uploaded each year no later than 1 September.**

1 September is the first day of the Season of Creation. The Laudato Si' Action Platform will share results about the shared progress that has been made on 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis and the final day in the Season of Creation.

#### Conclusion to Suggested Evaluation Phase

Pope Benedict XVI encouraged us to realize that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word.” (LS 6; Address to the Bundestag, Berlin) An honest evaluation of where we stand helps us to take a step back from our actions, reorienting ourselves on the road to integral ecology and recommitting to the next steps in our journey.

Wherever we stand today, we know that we are traveling together, and “our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.” (LS 244)