

# Scope 3 Emissions Mitigation and University Air Travel: Understanding Institutional Climate Policies



Over the last decade, institutional focus on sustainability has shifted to higher education's role in the climate crisis and what institutions can do to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Recently, there has also been a growing focus on aviation's contribution to the crisis and the negative impact stemming from excessive air travel in academia.

This report summarizes institutional policies related to combatting these air travel emissions. The report includes analysis of 46 US public research institutions' climate policies.

Here are the major themes of university climate policies as they relate to air travel:

## Establishing an Offset Program

43% of institutions recommend establishing a program to offset university-sponsored travel, with some including study abroad travel.

43%

## No Mention of Air Travel

35% of institutions do not refer to university air travel or do not mention reducing emissions from them.

35%

## Lack of Data

26% of institutions mention not being able to track data consistently or the need to improve data tracking.

26%

## Supporting Videoconferencing

24% of institutions recommend improving infrastructure and supporting video conferencing as an alternative to in-personal conferences.

24%

## Other Actions

Other actions suggested include promoting **driving** over flying, **regional conference** attendance, **behavioral** changes, and **raising** awareness.

22%

## Recommendations

Research by Anthony Schmidt  
[www.anthonyschmidt.co](http://www.anthonyschmidt.co)  
[@anthonYTEACHER](https://twitter.com/anthonYTEACHER)

*Manuscript forthcoming.*

[#flyingless](https://twitter.com/flyingless)

- Establish department-level tracking of travel data and provide department-level carbon footprint profiles
- Develop a mandatory fee on university-sponsored air travel to fund local offset projects.
- Increase outreach to faculty, admin, and students.