

Climate-U at the University of Passo Fundo: Implementation of the Green Office UPF

Aim

Through the International Project Climate-U “Transforming Universities for a Changing Climate” – Climate-U, the University of Passo Fundo (UPF) implemented its Green Office UPF as part of the participatory action research (PAR) conducted at the institution.



PAR Process

The PAR process at University of Passo Fundo (UPF) began with the formation of the PAR group. Different actors from the local community were invited to contribute to the Climate-U project as stakeholders. The PAR group was designed to be diverse, aiming to include members of the university, local government, students' unions, local businesses, NGOs and any other interested partners.

In addition to the group of partners that participated in regular meetings to discuss the impacts of climate change and the role of the university, the project's stakeholder group also included the teams from the Sustainability and Climate Action Projects, funded by the Green Office UPF.

Initiatives of the Green Office UPF

The PAR initiatives as part of the Green Office UPF can be divided into three major areas:

Learning and engagement:

Actions include internal lectures and workshops in courses and events at UPF. During the last two UPF Scientific Weeks, the Green Office team presented the "Be the Change" Workshop, aiming to demonstrate how we can implement the Sustainable Development Goals in our daily lives. The Sustainability Games is another significant action of the project. The 2022 edition had 9 teams and 75 participants, including professors, staff, and students, who took part in online and in-person challenges.

Project funding:

Every year, the Green Office releases calls for the selection of sustainability and climate justice projects. In 2023, the office reached a total of 14 funded projects covering various thematic areas, such as environmental education and composting, development of educational games, university gardens, rainwater harvesting, future scenarios, analysis of the impact of Postgraduate programs on the SDGs, carbon sequestration, sustainable mobility on campus, food security, and nutrition, among others.

Communication and dissemination:

through social media channels, the Green Office calls for proposals and engagement opportunities, and addresses nationally and internationally relevant topics such as the Plastic-Free July movement and discussions from Climate Conferences. The Green Office team also monitors the indicators to participate in the international university sustainability ranking called GreenMetric. In the 2022 edition, UPF showed significant progress and is now in the 14th position in the national ranking.



Student engagement

The qualitative case study conducted by the Climate-U project at UPF involved students, teachers, and administrators of the institution. The research aimed to describe the perspectives of the academic community on learning and engagement in climate change. Through interviews and focus groups, the study sought to identify opportunities and challenges. The results showed that the academic community wants to change their attitudes and behaviors and to learn more about climate change. However, for this to happen, the university needs to engage with climate action through its curriculum and operations.

More learning opportunities

The University of Passo Fundo was part of the group of universities in the Climate-U project that applied the survey "Climate Change – Practices, Experiences, and Attitudes". This questionnaire aimed to assess students' experiences, their engagement in climate-related actions, and their attitudes toward environmental issues. With 412 responses from over 40 courses at the institution, UPF's results indicate that 70% of students would like to learn more about climate change in their courses. The preferred strategies would include university-organised events, sustainability awareness practices, and involvement with research groups focused on climate change.

PAR POTENTIAL

- **Influencing Communication and Dissemination Strategies:** through its social media network, the Green Office UPF has added a channel to communicate with students;
- **Taking the role to participate in sustainability rankings:** the Green Office team collects and monitors indicators related to the GreenMetric sustainability ranking;
- **Promoting educational support:** through workshops offered in classrooms and university events, as well as the development of training modules on climate change and the role of professionals;
- **Offering incentives for Research and Outreach:** through funding for multidisciplinary projects and the promotion of networking opportunities among teams.

PROJECT IMPACTS

- **Strengthened partnerships** and recognition of the importance of climate change education;
- The use of **participatory methodologies** in new projects developed within the university;
- **Increased involvement** of academic members in climate-related research and activities;
- **Greater recognition** of the university's efforts (including international sustainability rankings) and support for other institutions to implement similar initiatives.

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