

# Revitalizing Harvard Climate Week

## Background

In the spring of 2015, Harvard University held its first Climate Week, an event that brought together students, faculty, staff, and community members from each Harvard School to collaborate on climate change. Unfortunately, Climate Week was not held in 2016, but we had a vision to bring together Harvard's community to increase our chances of finding viable solutions to this growing global problem.

With the support of President Faust, the Harvard University Center for the Environment (HUCE), the Office for Sustainability (OFS), and the Harvard Business School Business and Environment Initiative (BEI), a group of [Student Sustainability Associates](#) led by David Chan (MBA, '18) successfully revitalized this important event for 2017.

## Planning



### CLIMATE WEEK - AT - HARVARD UNIVERSITY

JOIN US FOR A WEEKLONG SERIES OF EVENTS  
ACROSS ALL OF HARVARD'S SCHOOLS TO EXPLORE  
THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**April 24 - 28**

For the full schedule of events please visit:  
[environment.harvard.edu/climateweek](http://environment.harvard.edu/climateweek)

 Harvard University Center for the Environment

We began coordinating with schools and inviting speakers in December, and by February, we had a tentative schedule of the events. We worked closely with Dr. Jim Clem at HUCE who led logistics and scheduling. One takeaway was the importance of strong communication between student organizers and HUCE—we believe this was a key ingredient in Climate Week materializing in 2017.

Scheduling was another major decision, and we decided to hold the event during the last week in April to coincide with Earth Day and Harvard's release of its [2016 Sustainability Report](#). The week was also bookended by a nationwide Science March and Climate March, which increased community awareness and interest for our event.

*Marketing material that was used to advertise Harvard Climate Week 2017.*

## Showtime

The 2017 Harvard Climate Week comprised nearly every Harvard School and totaled 20 events between April 24 and April 28. Events spanned from Harvard Medical School in Downtown Boston to the Harvard Forest in Petersham, MA, and hundreds of community members of the Greater Boston Area attended. President Faust delivered remarks and reiterated University support for climate action, and Gina McCarthy, the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Obama Administration, delivered the week's keynote address.

We also achieved a good deal of variety in the types of events that were held. Some events, such as "Human Health in Changing Climate," featured a panel of academic and industry experts, while a screening of "Time to Choose" allowed participants to view the work of Academy-Award winning documentary filmmaker, Charles Ferguson. David Doniger, the Director of the Climate and Clean Air Program at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) shared the work that the NRDC is accomplishing to maintain and further environmental standards against unfavorable political headwinds, while Nicole Dulaney, a NASA Associate Researcher and New York City Earth Science teacher led a workshop on how educators can leverage NASA's resources to introduce high school students to academic research.



*Colin Butterfield, Managing Director of Natural Resources at Harvard Management Company, speaks with Professor George Serafeim at Harvard Climate Week.*

## Conclusion

The interest, energy, and intellect invested in solving climate change at Harvard is encouraging, and the attendance at Climate Week confirmed this is an event that the community appreciates. We believe that the structure of Climate Week may need to be adjusted to take the event to new heights; for example, we learned that constraining each sub-event during that one week in April limited the number of speakers who could join us on campus. Next year event organizers might consider “Harvard Climate Month” and host events throughout all of April. We would also advise starting the recruitment of keynote speakers as early as possible, preferably at least six months in advance of the event.

Given the acute threats posed by climate change, Harvard Climate Week serves an important role in bringing together all members of the Harvard community to collaborate and learn from one another. It was our distinct privilege to bring this event back to Harvard, and we look forward to having it on-campus for years to-come.