VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

The Vancouver Island University community acknowledges and thanks the Snuneymuxw, Quw'utsun, Tla'amin, Snaw-naw-as and Qualicum First Nation on whose traditional lands we teach, learn, research, live and share knowledge.

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Declaration statement

This PSO Climate Change Accountability Report for the period January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025 summarizes VIU's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions profile, the total offsets to reach net-zero emissions, the actions taken in 2025 to minimize GHG emissions, and plans to continue reducing emissions in 2026 and beyond.

2025 GHG Emissions and Offsets Summary Table

Vancouver Island University 2025 GHG Emissions and Offsets Summary	
GHG emissions for the period January 1 - December 31, 2025	
Total BioCO_2	35
Total Emissions (tCO_2e)	2900
Total Offsets (tCO_2e)	2856
Adjustments to Offset Required GHG Emissions Reported in Prior Years	
Total Offsets Adjustment (tCO_2e)	0
Grand Total Offsets for the 2025 Reporting Year	
Grand Total Offsets to be Retired for 2025 Reporting Year (tCO_2e)	2856
Offset Investment ($)	$71,400

Retirement of Offsets

In accordance with the requirements of the *Climate Change Accountability Act* and the Carbon Neutral Government Regulation, Vancouver Island University (**the Organization**) is responsible for arranging for the retirement of the offsets obligation reported above for the 2025 calendar year, together with any adjustments reported for past calendar years (if applicable). The Organization hereby agrees that, in exchange for the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions (**the Ministry**) ensuring that these offsets are retired on the Organization's behalf, the Organization will pay within 30 days, the associated invoice to be issued by the Ministry in an amount equal to $25 per tonne of offsets retired on its behalf plus GST.

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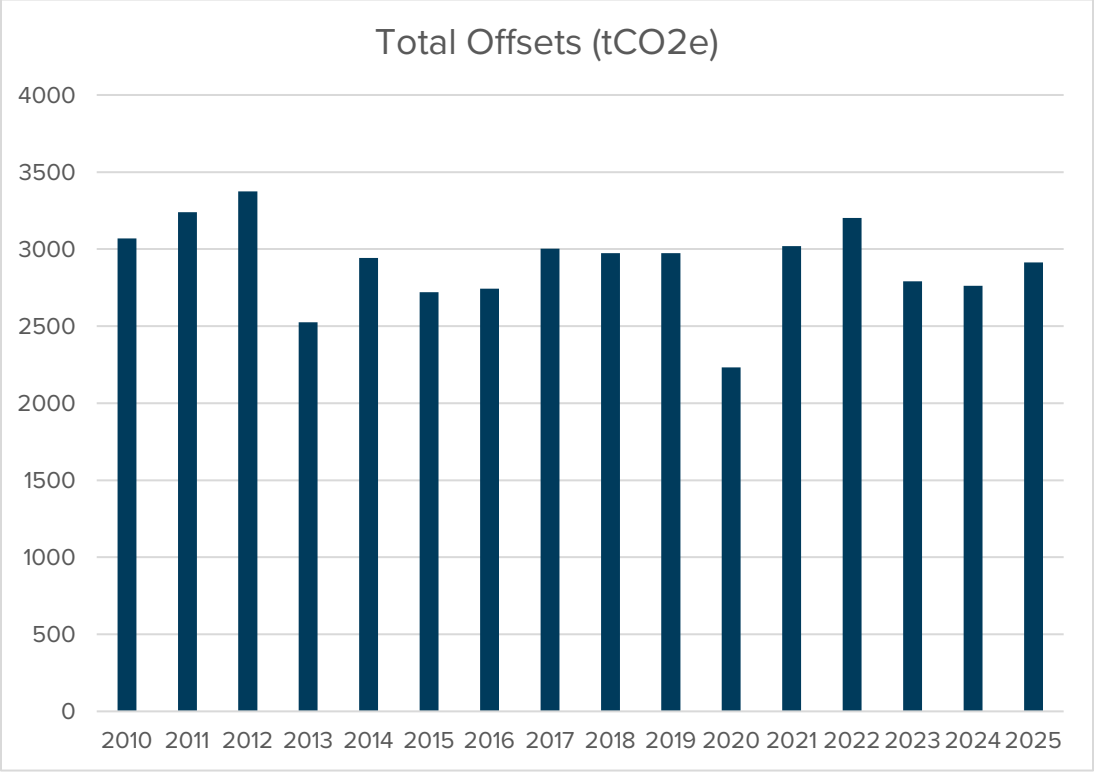
VIU's Climate Leadership and GHG Emissions Evolution: 2010 to 2025

VIU continues to build climate action and sustainability strategically and effectively into its profile with significant foundational steps already taken. Development of its governance around climate change accountability is ongoing and will continue to remain a key focus in the coming years as it strives to meet, and eventually exceed, its set goals. The institution has set an aim for an 85% reduction in campus operations emissions by 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2035. This is 15 years ahead of the original target of net zero by 2050. This includes emissions from buildings, energy, and fleet, and a 45% reduction in extended emissions. As the chart below shows, although progress has been made, there is still significant room for improvement to achieve these goals.

To note, emissions were at a record low in 2020 due to the extended lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the emissions bounced back once the campuses reopened in 2021. Due to limited capacity to collect complete data in 2023-2024, the numbers reported were not a fully accurate reflection of VIU's emissions. This year's numbers are a true reflection, with the added new requirement of BC Public Sector Organizations tracking of fugitive emissions from refrigerants, primarily hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), as part of their annual Carbon Neutral Government program requirements.



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Emission Reductions: Actions & Plans

Vancouver Island University (VIU) has continued to review its operations, leading to a series of strategic initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing environmental stewardship. These actions, ranging from infrastructure upgrades to energy conservation measures, signify VIU's unwavering commitment to building a greener and more resilient campus community.

Notable actions that are anticipated to decrease VIU's overall greenhouse gas emissions include, though are not limited, to the following:

- Completed design processes for further replacement of natural gas boilers and hot water tanks using a hybrid engineering strategy of heat pump technology and smaller, high efficiency condensing boilers which result in reduced carbon emissions and lower operating costs.

- Continued implementation of the extended energy conservation measures identified through BC Hydro's Continuous Optimization Program.

- Completed design processes for further necessary roofing renewals with sloped insulation and membrane replacement, providing improved energy efficiency and optimizing thermal performance as well as for building enclosure repairs and replacements, including high-performance insulation, thermally broken windows, and new doors.

- Ongoing installation of Building Automation System (BAS) controls and Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV) systems enabling remote control of each building's schedule and occupancy systems leading to energy conservation, heat loss mitigation, and indoor air quality improvement for occupants.

- Continued and expanded replacement of interior lights in classrooms, labs, and offices at the Nanaimo campus, leading to a lower energy draw and improved lighting in the buildings.

- Where possible, continued remote working and studying options are offered thus reducing not only institutional energy consumption and carbon footprint, but also decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from travel to and from campuses and sites.

In addition, VIU's district geo-exchange system has been expanded to include the new student housing building and is prepared to connect existing buildings 200 and 205 (3460 m^2 net space) reducing their natural gas consumptions to near zero. This innovative district energy system taps into flooded, abandoned coal mine workings underneath the Nanaimo campus, and when in operation, reduces the carbon output for heating and cooling subject buildings to near zero. It also offers real-world learning possibilities for physics, engineering, and power engineering students at the university.

A new 10-storey student housing building is currently under construction with planned completion in Spring 2027. The 9,547 m^2 mass timber building will be built to LEED Gold and BC Energy Step Code 4 standards. It will be a certified Zero Carbon Building and Rick Hanson Foundation Accessibility Gold Certified. The university's geo-exchange mine water energy system will heat and cool the building. There will be no natural gas feed to the building.

Committed to supporting low-carbon transport, three additional electric vehicle charging stations (EVCS) are being installed on the Nanaimo campus, bringing the total to thirteen. All VIU campuses and properties have active EVCS, totalling seventeen units by the end of 2026.

VIU is a host property for the City of Nanaimo's Evolve e-bike and e-scooter share program and hosts a "parking" zone mid campus, conveniently located near the bus loop and the secure bike park. These bikes and scooters can be parked at any of the city's many "parking" zones, making them a convenient form of alternative and active transportation.

End-of-trip facilities for active commuters have been further expanded, and several bike racks have been upgraded, in addition to the three secure bike parks on the main Nanaimo campus.

The institution continues to rigorously assess space utilization, undertaking strategic relocations to improve efficiency. These efforts have enabled the permanent closure of three underused buildings on the Nanaimo campus. They have also supported expanded seasonal and temporary closures during low-use periods, including summer and the institutional shutdown between Christmas and New Year. Collectively, these measures have reduced VIU's energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Recycling programs across campuses and sites—including batteries, pens, and razors—were reinstated in 2025 to divert waste from landfills. In that year, more than 30 lbs of batteries, 15 lbs of pens, and two pouches of razors and packaging from student residences were collected for recycling. Standard waste separation and recycling infrastructure has also remained in place across all campuses and sites for many years.

Another significant initiative was the reintroduction of reusable flatware in cafeterias, with single-use takeout containers available only for a surcharge. This change is expected to reduce environmental impact while also lowering VIU's operating costs.

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Research and Initiatives for a Sustainable Future

Research, initiatives, and events supporting sustainability are well established across Vancouver Island University, engaging both internal and external communities. Informal events help foster networks of climate action practitioners, while formal research initiatives provide students with valuable hands-on experience in sustainability. The following highlights a selection of these activities.

Sustainable Aquaculture and Coastal Research

At the Deep Bay Marine Field Station, researchers are studying the adaptability of fourteen families of Pacific oysters, supporting efforts to restore coastal habitats and advance sustainable shellfish aquaculture practices.

Wildlife Monitoring and Conservation

The Bird Monitoring and Banding Project tracks both migratory and resident bird populations, contributing to regional and continental monitoring efforts. The project also provides experiential learning opportunities for students and community members in bird identification, ecology, and conservation.

Marine Research and Community Collaboration (MABRRI)

The Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI), in collaboration with local volunteers and partners, leads a range of community-based environmental initiatives across Vancouver Island. These include:

- Monitoring marine debris at sites in French Creek and Qualicum Beach using NOAA methodologies to inform mitigation strategies
- Engaging citizen scientists across coastal communities—from Cowichan Bay to the Gulf Islands—to identify spawning activity of Pacific sand lance and surf smelt, with data contributed to the Pacific Salmon Foundation's Strait of Georgia Data Centre
- Tracking long-term environmental changes across six wetland sites in the Regional District of Nanaimo, including hydrology, water quality, and vegetation

MABRRI also collaborates with municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and First Nations to support stewardship within the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region. In partnership with the IISAAK OLAM Foundation, VIU has also launched a Post-Secondary program focused on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) planning.

Climate Change and Ecosystem Monitoring

The Coastal Plant Phenology Research and Monitoring Project, in collaboration with Milner Gardens & Woodland and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, examines the vulnerability of plant species and ecosystems in southeastern Vancouver Island to climate change.

Ongoing initiatives aimed at protecting species at risk and supporting ecosystem management include ecosystem inventories and the identification of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to advance biodiversity conservation and help meet regional and national targets.

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Ecological Restoration and Community Learning

The Garry Oak Restoration Project engages students, employees, and community members in hands-on ecological restoration. This initiative promotes awareness of native plant species, pollinators, and species at risk, while fostering a deeper connection to the natural environment and encouraging practical action in response to climate challenges.

Notable student initiatives include:

- Six Political Studies students completed a three-month internship in the Republic of Senegal to help address climate change issues and risks. The students worked with students from the University Gaston Berger to study the impact of climate change on women, fishermen, and climate refugees. The city of Saint-Lous, with a history dating back to 1450, is a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site at risk of flooding from the Senegal River and rising ocean levels.

- A third-year student started the initiative “No Hunger at VIU” and provided two hot meals per month to any student who needed one and distributed care packages with the assistance of other student volunteers and faculty. The group served more than 100 students for every homecooked meal they put together and secured funding to continue the project throughout the school year.

- Two Fisheries and Aquaculture students received scholarships from the Pacific Salmon Foundation in recognition of their outstanding academic performance and passion for wild salmon stewardship. One of the recipients highlighted the need for freshwater habitat restoration, which is critical for salmon during key life stages and is their habitats are heavily impacted by human activity. One activity undertaken was a habitat assessment field trip on Chase River near Nanaimo. Woody debris was discovered to have washed into the lower reaches after an atmospheric river, blocking fish passage near the estuary. Together with local partners and residents, the blockage was cleared.

- Students from Horticulture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Engineering, and the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic programs worked with the Heilsuk Climate Action Team to design aquaponics and aeroponic tower gardens as a land-based solution to food security and food sovereignty for the remote BC Heilsuk Nation (Haíłzaqv).

- A fourth-year Geoscience student used a wave generating devise and LIDAR technology to study the shoreline of Glacial Lake Missoula in Montana to determine how many times the lake filled and drained, and how these events impacted the present-day landscape. By looking at what has happened in the past, prediction and preparation for potential future events – such as the notable glacial melt in Greenland – is made much more relevant.

- A dozen students from different programs joined the Hunger Hack Challenge to think creatively about how to address the challenges of food insecurity on VIU’s Nanaimo campus. The Food Fix team came up with a mini market where food items could be bought by students on a sliding market system. The Hunger Busters created a kitchen equipment loan cupboard and organized a cooking class with the assistance of Nanaimo Food Share to teach students how to budget shop for food items and how to cook. The Full Bellies won

the challenge and created a website, the VIU Food Security Club, to share the abundance of ways students can find help on campus to bolster their food security.

- A Fisheries and Aquaculture student is working with the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust (NALT) to monitor urban streams in Nanaimo for the presence of cutthroat trout, a native species which is widespread in the region's small streams. The fish are an indicator species of water quality and habitat condition because they are sensitive to water issues changes in water conditions. Populations of the species can disappear overnight if the conditions change significantly. By building a database to determine whether the fish are present or absent, further questions such as investigating habitat enhancement can be tackled.

Conclusion

Vancouver Island University continues to demonstrate a strong and evolving commitment to climate leadership, sustainability, and responsible environmental stewardship. The 2025 reporting year reflects meaningful progress in improving data accuracy, advancing emissions reduction initiatives, and embedding sustainability across operations, infrastructure, and campus life.

Through targeted investments in energy systems, building performance, transportation, and waste reduction, VIU has taken measurable steps toward its ambitious goals of significantly reducing operational emissions and achieving net-zero ahead of provincial and national targets. At the same time, the university's research, community partnerships, and student-led initiatives highlight the important role of education and collaboration in addressing complex climate challenges.

While progress is evident, the path forward will require sustained effort, continued innovation, and strengthened governance to ensure accountability and long-term success. VIU remains committed to building on its achievements, refining its strategies, and fostering a resilient, low-carbon future for its campuses and the communities it serves.

Dennis Johnson, PhD
Interim President and Vice-Chancellor