To direct the Secretary of Education to provide grants to establish and evaluate sustainability programs, charged with developing and implementing integrated environmental, economic, and social sustainability initiatives, and to direct the Secretary of Education to convene a summit of higher education experts in the area of sustainability.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 11, 2007

Mrs. Murray (for herself, Mr. Bingaman, Mr. Kerry, Mr. Kennedy, and Mr. Dodd) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Education to provide grants to establish and evaluate sustainability programs, charged with developing and implementing integrated environmental, economic, and social sustainability initiatives, and to direct the Secretary of Education to convene a summit of higher education experts in the area of sustainability.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Higher Education Sustainability Act of 2007”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) The environmental life-support systems vital to the Nation’s economic and social prosperity are increasingly at risk.

(2) The Nation’s institutions of higher education have a unique role to play in fostering new knowledge, evaluating policies, and discovering new technologies to address the persistent and often linked environmental, social, and economic problems that exist.

(3) Achieving more sustainable environmental, economic, and social systems will require new research, education, and technology development, and innovative policy approaches that are flexible and use market mechanisms while engaging relevant stakeholders from the private and public sectors.

(4) For the Nation to remain competitive in this global world of increasingly limited natural resources, institutions of higher education need to take immediate steps to create new research, education, and technology development that reflect the framework of sustainability.
(5) The Nation’s institutions of higher education also are uniquely positioned to prepare the future labor force for addressing threats to, and seeking opportunities for economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

(6) The Nation’s institutions of higher education are places where approaches that integrate the environmental, social, and economic dimensions can be designed, tested, and refined for application to real world settings in collaboration with industry, government, and the nonprofit sector.

(7) The Nation’s institutions of higher education are uniquely situated to be models of sustainable management and operations that can provide examples to industry and government of operational strategies that integrate the basic principles of environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

(8) Numerous State governors, including those of Oregon, Washington, New Jersey, and California have issued executive orders for the development of State sustainability plans.

(9) Hundreds of college campuses have already made commitments to sustainable practices and lessening their carbon footprint, but lack a cohesive plan.
Additionally, many campuses now offer courses on sustainability, but no comprehensive system exists to evaluate and compare colleges and universities in terms of overall sustainability related academic programs and practices.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to provide support to faculty, staff, and students at institutions of higher education to establish administrative and academic sustainability programs on campus and a means to measure their effectiveness;

(2) to promote and enhance research by faculty and students at institutions of higher education in sustainability practices and innovations that assist and improve sustainability; and

(3) to provide support to institutions of higher education to work with community partners from the business, government, and nonprofit sectors to design and implement sustainability programs for application in the community and workplace.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.

Title VII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1133 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:
“PART F—UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS

“Subpart 1—Sustainability Planning Grants

“SEC. 781. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

“(a) In General.—The Secretary shall, from the funds appropriated under section 786, make grants to eligible entities to establish sustainability programs to design and implement sustainability practices including in the areas of energy management, green building, waste management, purchasing, transportation, and toxics management, and other aspects of sustainability that integrate campus operations with multidisciplinary academic programs and are applicable to the private and government sectors.

“(b) Period of Grant.—The provision of payments under a grant under subsection (a) may extend over a period of not more than 4 fiscal years.

“(c) Definition of Eligible Entities.—In this part, the term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(1) an institution of higher education that grants 2- or 4-year undergraduate degrees, or masters and doctoral degrees, or both; or

“(2) a nonprofit consortia, association, alliance, or collaboration operating in partnership with 1 or more institutions of higher education that received
funds for the implementation of work associated with sustainability programs under this part.

“(d) Administration of the Program.—

“(1) In general.—

“(A) Eligible institution.—In this subsection, the term ‘eligible institution’ means—

“(i) an institution of higher education;
“(ii) a nonprofit institution; or
“(iii) a consortium of institutions described in clause (i) or (ii), or both.

“(B) Contract to administer.—The Secretary shall enter into a multi-year contract with an eligible institution to administer the grant program established under this section.

“(2) Application.—An eligible institution desiring to enter into a contract with the Secretary under paragraph (1) shall submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such form, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

“(3) Awarding of contract.—The Secretary shall award the contract under this subsection on the basis of—

“(A) the capability to administer an effective and fair grant-making process that solicits
and identifies the best possible projects for funding for the uses described in section 783;

“(B) the expertise of the applicant in higher education sustainability;

“(C) the relative economic effectiveness of the program in terms of the ratio of overhead costs to direct services; and

“(D) such other factors as the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(4) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall establish procedures for a careful and detailed review and evaluation of the administration of the higher education sustainability program to determine the effectiveness of the contractor as an administrator of the grant program established under this section. The Secretary shall make the results of such a review and evaluation publicly available.

“SEC. 782. APPLICATIONS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—To receive a grant under section 781(a), an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such form, and containing such information as the Secretary may reasonably require.

“(b) ASSURANCES.—Such application shall include assurances that the eligible entity—
“(1) has developed or shall develop a plan, including an evaluation component, for the program component established pursuant to section 783;

“(2) shall use Federal funds received from a grant under section 781(a) to supplement, not supplant, non-Federal funds that would otherwise be available for projects funded under such section;

“(3) shall provide, with respect to any fiscal year in which such entity receives funds from a grant under section 781(a), non-Federal funds or an in-kind contribution in an amount equal to 20 percent of funds from such grant, for the purpose of carrying out the program component established in section 783; and

“(4) shall collaborate with business, government, local workforce investment boards, and the nonprofit sectors in the development and implementation of its sustainability plan.

“SEC. 783. USE OF FUNDS.

“(a) INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS.—Grants made under section 781 may be used by an eligible entity that is an institution of higher education, as described in section 781(e)(1), for the following purposes:

“(1) To develop and implement administrative and operations practices at institutions of higher
education that test, model, and analyze principles of sustainability.

“(2) To establish multidisciplinary education, research, and outreach programs at institutions of higher education that address the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

“(3) To support research and teaching initiatives that focus on multidisciplinary and integrated environmental, economic, and social elements.

“(4) To establish initiatives in the areas of energy management, green building, waste management, purchasing, toxics management, transportation, and other aspects of sustainability.

“(5) To support student, faculty, and staff work at institutions of higher education to implement, research, and evaluate sustainable practices.

“(6) To establish sustainability literacy as a requirement for undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

“(7) To integrate sustainability curriculum in all programs of instruction, particularly in business, architecture, technology, manufacturing, engineering, and science programs.

“(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—Grants made under section 781 may be used by an eligible entity that is a nonprofit
consortia, association, alliance, or collaboration operating as a partnership with 1 or more institutions of higher education for the following purposes:

“(1) To conduct faculty, staff, or administrator training on the subjects of sustainability and institutional change.

“(2) To compile, evaluate, and disseminate best practices, case studies, guidelines, and standards.

“(3) To conduct efforts to engage external stakeholders such as business, alumni, and accrediting agencies in the process of building support for research, education, and technology development for sustainability.

“(4) To conduct professional development programs for faculty in all disciplines to enable faculty to incorporate sustainability content in the faculties’ courses.

“(5) To enable an appropriate nonprofit consortia, association, alliance, or collaboration operating in partnership with an institution of higher education to create the analytical tools necessary for institutions of higher education to assess and measure the institution’s progress toward fully sustainable campus operations and fully integrating sustainability into the curriculum.
“(6) To develop educational benchmarks for institutions of higher education to determine the necessary rigor and effectiveness of academic sustainability programs.

“SEC. 784. REPORTS.

“An eligible entity that receives a grant under section 781(a) shall submit to the Secretary, for each fiscal year in which the entity receives amounts from such grant, a report that describes the work conducted pursuant to section 783, research findings and publications, administrative savings experienced, and an evaluation of the program.

“SEC. 785. ALLOCATION REQUIREMENT.

“The Secretary may not make grants under section 781(a) to any eligible entity in a total amount that is less than $250,000 or more than $2,000,000.

“SEC. 786. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out section 781(a), $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2008 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years.

“(b) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated under subsection (a) are authorized to remain available until expended.
“Subpart 2—Summit on Sustainability

“SEC. 791. SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABILITY.

“Not later than September 30, 2008, the Secretary shall convene a summit of higher education experts working in the area of sustainable operations and programs, representatives from agencies of the Federal Government, and business and industry leaders, to focus on efforts of national distinction that—

“(1) encourage faculty, staff, and students at institutions of higher education to establish administrative and academic sustainability programs on campus;

“(2) enhance research by faculty and students at institutions of higher education in sustainability practices and innovations that assist and improve sustainability;

“(3) encourage institutions of higher education to work with community partners from the business, government, and nonprofit sectors to design and implement sustainability programs for application in the community and workplace;

“(4) identify opportunities for partnerships involving institutions of higher education and the Federal Government to expand sustainable operations and academic programs focused on environmental and economic sustainability; and
“(5) charge the summit participants or steering committee to submit a set of recommendations for addressing sustainability through institutions of higher education.”.