



## **Youth Climate Institute® Fact Sheet**

*Building the next generation of climate leaders*

The Youth Climate Institute's mission is to educate and certify the next generation of leaders on climate science, environmental justice and real world solutions. Youth Climate Institute student voices are amplified for civic action and positive change in their communities leading to aware, engaged, and responsible stewards of our shared planet.

In this three year program, students will enter as Scholars and graduate as *Certified Ambassadors with Honors*®. The goal of this program is to educate and empower students to create awareness and understanding of global climate change. They will identify and initiate action in their communities to lessen the adverse effects of climate change on human health, biodiversity and the economy.

We are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion for participants. While the application will include a short essay and teacher recommendation, the Youth Climate Institute (YCI) will not require students to take advanced placement or honors classes to participate. Registration fees will be waived for students with financial need.

**YCI Scholars** - Students begin their journey in the fall of their 10th grade year. They will be provided with foundational knowledge on climate science, impacts, and solutions. Topics include climate justice, biodiversity, positive solutions and mitigations within local communities. In the spring, students will join action teams led by professionals in climate science fields focusing on specific topics such as legislation, food waste, energy, tree planting and messaging. Students who have successfully completed the requirements for YCI Scholars will graduate to ***YCI Ambassadors***®.

**YCI Ambassadors** - During a student's 11th grade year, they will engage in a climate change messaging course to become better science communicators. In the spring they will continue their work with action teams in the community. At the end of the spring semester they will graduate as ***YCI Certified Ambassadors***® and receive a digital badge.

**YCI Certified Ambassadors** - In their final year in the program, students have the option to work closely with a community partner and identify an issue within their community or school for a Climate Change Capstone Project. Upon completion of the project, students will become ***YCI Certified Ambassadors with Honors***® and receive a digital badge and pin.

**YCI Certified Ambassadors with Honors** - Having completed a three-year, rigorous program, students will have set themselves apart and laid a great foundation for college and careers. Graduating seniors that have completed the program will also receive compostable natural fiber

cards to wear with their cap and gowns, digital badges to place on online profiles, along with eligibility for YCI scholarships.

The Howard County Conservancy began this program as a pilot in 2021. More than 50 students from 12 high schools have participated in the first year. We will unveil this regional opportunity at our annual student Watershed Report Card Summit on April 21, 2022. Based on funding opportunities, we expect to grow this program locally over the 2022-23 school year, with regional opportunities beginning in the fall of 2023.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can begin your own chapter of the Youth Climate Institute, please contact [YCI@howardnature.org](mailto:YCI@howardnature.org)