

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Agenda of the January 27, 2020 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Bache Auditorium, Malott Hall

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call (5 Minutes)
- III. Approval of the Minutes (5 Minutes)
 - a. Minutes from December 9, 2019
- IV. Presentations (30 Minutes)
 - a. Dr. Gary A. Koretzky, Vice Provost for Academic Integration
 - i. Graduate School Dean Search
- V. Division Breakout (5 Minutes)
- VI. New Business (40 Minutes)
 - a. Introduction to Resolution 5: *Support of the Development and Implementation of a Cornell Campus Circular System*
 - b. Introduction to Resolution 6: *Support of Divestment from Fossil Fuels*
- VII. Open Forum (5 Minutes)
- VIII. Adjournment



Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly Committee Updates for the January 27th, 2020 Meeting

Executive Committee: The next general body meeting will be on February 10th, 2020

Finance Commission: The Student Organizations Business Office is now open Monday-Friday from 8am-4:30pm in Willard Straight Hall 102. Terry Ector and Loreen Geiger will be available to provide quick, friendly answers to questions about graduate organization funding and reimbursements. You can also email questions to sobo@cornell.edu

Operations: One-on-one onboarding meetings are done. First operations digest to come out soon. Also, compiled list of feedback from onboarding process is done. Excel documents are being filled out slowly (waiting on responses about external committee reps)

Faculty Awards: I'd like for us to have our first meeting soon, so anyone who is interested in participating should email me cjd259

Student Advocacy Committee: No update

Graduate and Professional Student-Elected Trustee: One: the Information Session for the Grad & Prof Student Elected Trustee election will be on Tuesday, January 28th from 4:30 - 5:30 in 321 Day Hall. Two: The Internal Mental Health Review Committee has been gathering information about the impact of campus culture on student mental health and well-being. One avenue with which they have been doing this is through an online survey. This survey will close at the end of January. I am providing the link to this survey so folks can share it with their field (https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ezft2gu1owYc4bX)

Programming Board: Free Ice Skating Night at Lynah Rink on Feb. 8th from 8:30-10:30. Grad Ball planning is starting this week, email Kasey (kml287) if you are interested in helping out!

Appropriations: By-line process has been completed! Looking for new members to join for the next semester/year!

White Paper on divestment drafted by the Campus Infrastructure Committee in response to the Trustees

We are deeply grateful for the care that generations of Trustees have taken to steward Cornell's resources for the long term. This is a grave and precious responsibility. We are submitting a new request to reconsider the 2016 decision on divestment from fossil fuels precisely because we know how seriously the Trustees take the work of stewardship. We believe that this responsibility cannot only be financial. If Cornell's budget comes at the expense of young lives and does grievous injury to the world in which future generations take shape, then the University is taking care of its funds in violation of human welfare here and everywhere. This was not Ezra Cornell's vision. "My greatest care," he said, is how "to do the most good."¹

We make this request now because we know more about global warming than we did when faculty, staff, and students last asked the Trustees to divest from fossil fuels in 2015:

- 1. There is now global agreement that we must keep planetary warming under 2° C above pre-industrial levels in order to avoid catastrophic and irreversible damage to society and the environment.** In December of 2015, a historic environmental accord in Paris brought together virtually all of the nations in the world.² These 195 nations reached a consensus that we must work quickly and seriously to reduce emissions. At the current rate of global warming, the Earth will warm to devastating levels within the next 20 to 30 years.³
- 2. We know that some of the most dire expert predictions are already coming true, and many of these much faster than expected.**⁴ Every region on the planet is now feeling the effects of climate change: the last three years have seen unprecedented storms and droughts, floods and fires, tick- and water-borne illnesses.⁵ We have learned from military leaders that global warming represents a major national security threat,⁶ and from major medical groups that climate change is the "greatest public health challenge of the 21st century."⁷ We know that sea levels continue to rise, just as scientific models predicted, and will make many coastal cities, from Miami to Mumbai, uninhabitable in just a few decades.⁸ We know that climbing temperatures are creating conditions for increasingly devastating droughts across the Middle East and Africa, which will displace millions of people, potentially provoking mass hunger, migration, and a high likelihood of violent conflict.⁹ We know that a million species are now threatened with extinction, and experts predict the extinction rate to rise to a level ten thousand times more rapid than the norm.¹⁰

We have felt all of these effects already in the Finger Lakes region, with our own community members affected by the drought across the area in 2016, flooding in Broome County in 2011 and in Seneca County in 2017, the emergence of toxic algal blooms in Cayuga Lake for the first time in 2017, and a rise in tick-borne illnesses. As the atmosphere continues to warm, all of these conditions will worsen.¹¹

3. **We know, with more certainty than ever, that the cause of these catastrophic events is the steep rise in greenhouse gas emissions—carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide—caused by human activity.** 97% of peer-reviewed publications and nearly 200 scientific organizations worldwide are in agreement on this point, including NASA, the US National Academy of Sciences, the European Science Foundation, and the 1300 independent experts who have contributed to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.¹²

4. **We also know that it is not too late to make a difference.**¹³ The single most important driver of global warming is greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels: coal, gas, and oil. These generate approximately 70% of worldwide carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions.¹⁴ In other words, the energy supply sector contributes more than any other to global warming. There are many ways to reduce these emissions, including efficiency technologies and renewable energy sources. In order to stop the worst effects of global warming, we need to make a rapid shift away from our dependence on coal, oil, and gas.¹⁵ And yet, the world’s major energy companies have instead continued to mine, drill, and build new pipelines for fossil fuels.¹⁶ Carbon emissions rose to an all-time high in 2018, rather than dramatically decreasing, as they should have done decades ago.¹⁷

Given the urgent pressure to act wisely now, we urge Cornell to act as a moral leader and divest from oil, coal, and gas. We believe that the fossil fuel industry meets the criteria for divestment outlined by the Trustees in 2016,¹⁸ and we make this case below.

I. **The case for moral reprehensibility**

What persuades us that the actions of fossil fuel companies meet the criterion set forth by the Trustees for **morally reprehensible action** is that these companies have long had knowledge of the consequences of global warming and yet have engaged in a deliberate campaign of climate deception.

Historians of science and investigative journalists have now shown, for example, that Exxon Mobil’s own scientists reported in the late 1970s that carbon dioxide emissions were affecting the earth’s climate and warned that unless the world shifted to other energy sources “some potentially catastrophic events” would follow, and the process “might not be reversible.” Their experts reported “unanimous agreement” about the devastating consequences of petroleum use. An internal memo read: “man has a time window of five to ten years before the need for hard decisions regarding changes in energy strategies might become critical.”¹⁹ At first, the company put substantial resources into understanding the climatic effects of fossil fuels. But then Exxon Mobil made an abrupt about-face. Instead of investing resources in a shift to renewable energy, the company hired the very strategists who had deliberately sowed public doubt about the connection between tobacco and cancer. What followed was a well-funded effort to spread uncertainty about the science of climate change.²⁰

Exxon Mobil is not the only guilty party. Koch industries were major sponsors of the campaign to sow doubt and stall government action on climate change.²¹ Until recently, British Petroleum misrepresented climate science on its website, and remains associated with groups that deliberately spread misinformation about the environmental impacts of climate change, including the American Petroleum Institute and National Association of Manufacturers.²² ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, BP, and Total have spent over \$1 billion since the Paris Agreement on misleading publicity and lobbying against climate regulation.²³ Chevron is still publicly stating that our knowledge about the impacts of fossil fuel use on the environment is uncertain.²⁴ Shell spends nearly \$50 million every year lobbying against government policies to address climate change.²⁵ Coal companies, including Peabody Energy, also knew about the dangers of fossil fuels and deliberately funded campaigns of denial and misinformation to hide this knowledge.²⁶

With media reporting doubt about the science, the public have not been appropriately alarmed, and politicians have not only failed to take major action to reduce emissions, but have allowed both mining and drilling to expand.²⁷ The case for moral reprehensibility rests on the fact that the major energy companies knew that fossil fuel emissions had potentially catastrophic effects and deliberately proceeded to misinform the public and to press for political support based on false and misleading claims.

II. The question of injurious impact

The Trustees are right to ask for evidence of the **injurious impact** of these actions. The exact number of injured people is unknown because it is difficult to isolate the role of fossil fuel use from other factors in any single event, and it is impossible to predict the future with perfect precision. But even cautious estimates are striking. We know that fossil fuels are a major contributor to species extinction, heat waves, storms, floods, fires, desertification, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, pollution, and droughts. Here we focus on four of the worst and most massive injuries: rising rates of hunger, damage and disease from flooding, large-scale displacements of human populations, and a mass extinction of the world's species.

- a. Among the most damaging effects of global warming is rising **hunger**. The number of climate-related disasters has doubled since the early 1990s, often laying waste to crops and driving up food prices.²⁸ Droughts have triggered severe famines across southern Africa.²⁹ In 2019, heat waves destroyed rice fields in Thailand and Indonesia, delayed corn and soybean planting in the United States, ruined sugar cane plantations and oilseed crops in India, and brought record-breaking heat to Europe.³⁰ After rates of world hunger had started to fall, extreme weather triggered by the warming of the oceans and the upper atmosphere has increased the number of chronically hungry people by 15 million people since 2016.³¹ This number is expected to rise rapidly over the next few decades as large areas of arable land turn to desert and as agricultural crop yields falter from heat stress, depleted soils, and crop disease.³²

- b. **Floods** are equally devastating. At least 600 million people live within a few feet of sea level. If we do not lower emissions, Boston, Miami, Houston, New Orleans, Hong Kong, Rio de Janeiro, Osaka, Alexandria, and Mumbai will find themselves mostly or completely under water in this century.³³ As sea levels rise, all coastal residents are at risk of water-borne disease and damage to homes, farms, power plants, navy bases, and fisheries. The World Health Organization estimates that flooding will cause high rates of malnutrition, malaria, cholera, diarrhea. Overall, they say, climate change will cause an additional 250,000 health-related deaths per year between 2030 and 2050,³⁴ which the *New England Journal of Medicine* calls “a conservative estimate.”³⁵
- c. Fossil fuel emissions are already driving a massive **displacement of human populations**—that is, homelessness on a new scale. In 2009, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees predicted that climate change would cause an unprecedented rise in the number of refugees worldwide.³⁶ It is estimated that there will be between 25 million and 1.2 billion environmental migrants in the world by the year 2050, driven from their homes by extreme weather events, floods and droughts, soil erosion, food and water shortages, and uninhabitably high temperatures.³⁷ Many warn that global instability will follow, as millions of people struggle to cross borders at the same time and fight over increasingly scarce food and water.³⁸ Researchers argue that climate change has already been a factor in the Syrian civil war,³⁹ and that severe hurricanes have forced people to flee from Guatemala, which has contributed to the border crisis here in the United States.⁴⁰ The U.S. intelligence community considers climate change to be a major threat to national security, “likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond.”⁴¹
- d. Global warming is contributing to **rapid decreases in biodiversity** worldwide. Approximately one million species of plants and animals are now facing extinction, including more than 40% of insect and amphibian species, and more than a third of all marine mammals—more than at any other point in human history.⁴² Without major changes, the world is heading toward a major extinction event, with accelerating species loss in an unstoppable feedback loop.⁴³ While fossil fuel emissions are only partly responsible for the rates of extinction, scientists cite the warming of the planet as a major factor.⁴⁴ For example, higher temperatures and ocean acidification are causing declines in marine biodiversity, including the bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef, the habitat of 9000 species.⁴⁵ Warming also has a multiplier effect: it can wipe out one heat-sensitive species that others depend on for survival, or benefit invasive species that wreak havoc on others. Often, it creates mismatches in the timing of species interaction: a bird that migrates may now travel too soon to feed on the insects that mature later.⁴⁶ Biodiversity is crucial not only for animals and plants but for human food security and health, including the pollination of crops, the health of fish and soil, and the flora and fauna needed for life-saving medicines.

What is perhaps most disturbing is the possibility of **runaway feedback loops** that may greatly accelerate global warming and climate destruction. Currently, 25% of the carbon dioxide emitted from burning fossil fuels is taken up by the oceans, lessening the impact on warming. But as warming continues, the melting of ice in the Arctic Oceans and glaciers of Greenland are changing the circulation patterns of the ocean, which may lead to much less uptake of carbon dioxide in the future.⁴⁷ Another possible runaway feedback may come from the melting of the Arctic permafrost. Thanks to global warming, the permafrost is melting much faster than scientists predicted. It contains vast amounts of carbon dioxide, which are released as it melts, accelerating warming trends.⁴⁸ Scientists concluded in November 2019 that we are much closer to several **tipping points** than we had thought before, and that the world is now in a state of “climate emergency.”⁴⁹ Because warming processes are irreversible on time scales of less than several thousand years, it is urgent to take action quickly—before they become unstoppable.

Taken together, the scale of suffering caused by climate change could quickly dwarf that of all past wars, epidemics, and genocides because of its accelerating feedback loops and multiplier effects. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report recommended that if we are going to prevent the worst injuries to human communities worldwide, we must make dramatic cuts in carbon emissions. To achieve a habitable planetary temperature and forestall massive suffering, humans will need to stop all digging and drilling for new sources of fossil fuels.⁵⁰

III. **The responsibility of coal, oil, and gas companies**

Given that the climate crisis is global in scope, and there is a rising demand for energy worldwide, why focus attention on energy companies—why not spread it to all of us, including politicians and consumers? The answer lies in the fact that energy companies are continuing to push for fossil fuel production, even as the evidence mounts for the destructive effects of this path.

Although the world’s largest oil companies have claimed that they are making the shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, a study by Aurora Energy Research showed that the lion’s share of their capital is going to new exploration and production of fossil fuels. British Petroleum, for example, allocated just 2.3% of its investment to clean energy, and Shell invested 1.3%.⁵¹ Exxon Mobil and Chevron have also resisted to the move toward renewable energy.⁵² The companies responsible for most of the world’s fossil fuel emissions are in fact doubling down on plans to increase oil and natural gas production now. Shell and Exxon Mobil have plans to produce 35% more oil by 2030, exactly the reverse of the reduction scientists are urging.⁵³ And they are spending millions of dollars each year lobbying governments to roll back environmental regulations, spreading misinformation about the link between fossil fuels and global warming, and continuing to push for new rights to mine and drill, including in nature preserves and national parks.⁵⁴

It is a comparatively small number of companies that are taking the world down this catastrophic path. Currently, 90 corporations are responsible for two-thirds of all greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity. Among these, just eight energy companies account for 20 percent of world carbon emissions. British Petroleum, Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, and Chevron are on this list.⁵⁵

Given the increasingly dangerous increases that fossil fuel companies are planning, it seems urgent to put pressure on them to stop as soon as possible. So far, ordinary actions have not succeeded in pushing these companies to change course. It is in this context that we respectfully request that Cornell University phase out all of its investments in oil, gas, and coal in as orderly manner as possible.

IV. **The case for divestment**

To be sure, it is not enough to show a strong link between global warming and fossil fuel emissions, or to show that fossil fuel companies have known of the harms they are causing and yet have hid this from the public through a campaign of purposeful misinformation. It is important, as the Trustees argue, to make the case that divesting the Cornell endowment from fossil fuel companies is a meaningful action that does not have other damaging effects.

We offer three arguments in favor of divestment here.

- a. The first argument is **moral**. If we seek to protect ourselves and future generations from unnecessary harm, to promote human flourishing, and to steward precious resources, then we cannot also knowingly support companies that are intentionally speeding unprecedented suffering and the irreversible destruction of civilizations and ecosystems.

Organizations that care for human health have made this case explicitly, including the American Medical Association and the British Medical Association. As the *British Medical Journal* put it: “Those who profess to care for the health of people perhaps have the greatest responsibility to act.”⁵⁶

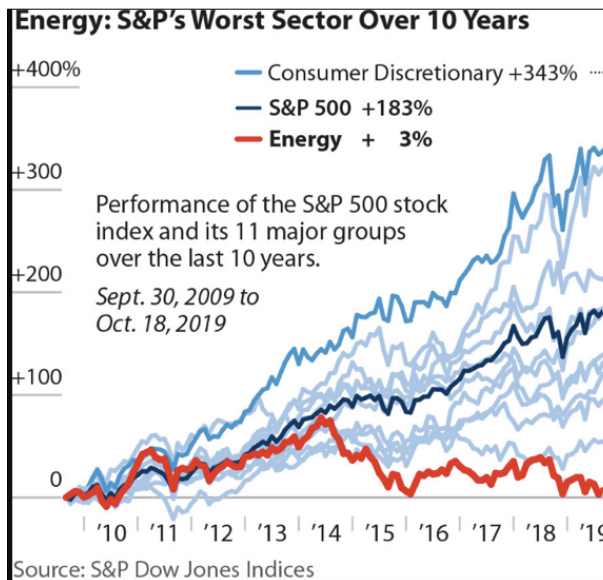
Faith-based institutions have also been strong in their case for divestment from fossil fuels. The Catholic Church has called for divestment, and numerous Protestant churches have divested from coal, oil, and gas, including US Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, the Uniting Church of Australia, the Church of Sweden, and the Church of England.⁵⁷ The United Church of Christ puts it this way: “As people of faith, we are called to be good stewards of creation, to care for it and heal it, and to live in harmony with it. While we can admit our role in using fossil fuels and work to reduce our carbon footprints as individuals, we must also work collectively to change the system.”⁵⁸ Other faith traditions make comparable arguments. “According to Islam's most basic and fundamental teachings, human beings have been uniquely charged with the great responsibility of being Guardians of the

Earth,” said Azha Razee, President of the Islamic Society of North America. “It goes against the mission of the ISNA to invest in fossil fuel companies whose operations and products cause such great harm to humanity and creation.”⁵⁹ Nobel Prize-winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu likened the moral urgency of divestment from fossil fuels to the divestment from South Africa that helped to end the Apartheid system in the 1980s. Tutu urges us to take moral responsibility. “It is a responsibility that begins with God commanding the first human inhabitants of the garden of Eden ‘to till it and keep it.’ To keep it; not to abuse it, not to destroy it.”⁶⁰

Colleges and universities have now begun to join health and religious organizations in substantial numbers, citing our moral responsibility to young people now and future generations as essential to our core mission. The President of University College London described the decision to divest this way: “Universities have a responsibility to lead change for environmental and social sustainability... By doing so, we will play our part in catalysing the broad changes we need to create a sustainable future for people and planet.”⁶¹ Other colleges and universities now pledged to full divestment include the University of California System, Middlebury College, Smith College, University of Copenhagen, University of Edinburgh, University of Gottingen, University of Essex, University of Hawaii, Trinity College, Dublin, Syracuse University, Seattle University, and the University of Maryland.⁶² The University of California system, with an endowment larger than that of Cornell, has announced that they have already completed divestment from fossil fuels.

- b. The second argument concerns the more specific arena of **business ethics**. Companies that purposefully mislead the public about the harmful effects of their products should be held accountable, in part to show other companies that as a society we condemn such deceit. The scale and impact of the fossil fuel companies’ ongoing deception is especially grievous. Their lies not only carry with them tragic consequences—in the many millions of human lives—but they are also deeply dishonorable in themselves, discrediting the hard work of scientists for profit, deliberately deluding governments, and violating the most basic norms of professional conduct. It is important to send the message that other social institutions do not tolerate this reckless level of intentional deception.⁶³
- c. The third argument is **financial**.

According to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), the energy sector, which does not include renewable energy, “finished dead last among sectors in the Standard & Poor’s 500 in 2018, in the wake of years of underperformance. In 1980, seven of the top 10-ranked companies in the Standard



& Poor's index were oil and gas companies. Today, there are none. In 1980, energy companies comprised 28% the S&P 500. Today, it is closer to 4%. The outlook for oil and gas companies is weak, at best."⁶⁴

Most forecasts suggest that the value of fossil fuels is not going rise. Given the huge global movement afoot to reduce dependence on fossil fuels since the Paris Agreement, with hundreds of nations and states committing to reducing their use, the value of fossil fuels may even drop dramatically. In July 2019, for

example, the State of New York enacted new legislation that mandates a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use, including transportation, residential, commercial, and industrial use, as well as electricity generation. The target is a 40% reduction within the next 10 years and 85% by 2050.⁶⁵ This mandate will require a massive decrease in the use of fossil fuels.⁶⁶ Moody's downgraded the credit rating of Exxon Mobil in November 2019 from "stable" to "negative."⁶⁷ As entire regions move aggressively away from fossil fuels, oil and gas investments seem increasingly unwise.

The UN-support independent group, Principles for Responsible Investing (PRI), argues that established financial models are not adequate to the task of assessing the financial value of fossil fuels. So much is changing—from the global regulatory context to the development of new technologies to the psychology of investors—that we cannot depend on past experience as a guide to the future of this sector. PRI makes the case that investors need more access to robust academic studies of the factors at work to make smart decisions.⁶⁸ "Markets today lack a strong basis for pricing climate transition risk, and do not seem to have priced in a forceful policy response to climate change within the near-term. According to the PRI's own analysis, only 2 percent of its signatories which include the world's largest investors are 'strategic' in their assessment and reporting of climate risk." Or, as the Governor of the Bank of England puts it: "Changes in climate policies, technologies and physical risks in the transition to a net zero world will prompt reassessments of the value of virtually every asset. The financial system will reward companies that adjust and punish those who don't."⁶⁹

PRI forecasts major changes in the energy system, including a peak in oil in 2026-28, an average 6% decline annually in the value of coal from 2025 to 2040, a peak in natural gas around 2040, and a rapid rise in renewables, including, solar, wind, and hydropower, which are predicted to generate 74% of all power in 2040.⁷⁰ During this global energy transition, fossil fuels could become stranded assets. As the

Rockefeller Brothers Foundation says: “At least 60 percent of all known fossil fuel reserves have to remain unburned if the world has any chance of meeting the 1.5-degree target set at the Paris Climate Summit in 2015, meaning these assets are likely to become stranded and lose value over time.”⁷¹

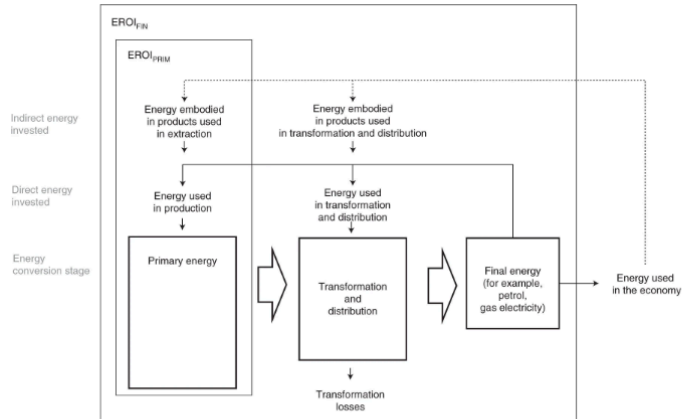
Several experts have made the case that conventional financial models misconstrue the specific conditions of the fossil fuel industry.⁷² For example, most modellers today calculate returns on fossil fuel investment at the energy source, where return ratios are high (25:1 or better), whereas estimating returns at the “energy carrier” stage—when it enters the economy as electricity, gas, or

petrol—yields a better basis for comparison with renewables, and a poorer outlook for the value of fossil fuel assets. Also, as sources of fossil fuels become harder to reach, they “require more energy to extract and, hence, are coming at an increasing ‘energy cost.’”⁷³

To add to the complexity of assessing fossil fuel values, it is often not clear to investors who is best placed to assess climate risks—individual fund managers, energy sector analysts, or climate specialists—and the sources of information they consult and the methods they use can lead to widely conflicting views.⁷⁴ North American investors are also lagging behind European and Australasian counterparts when it comes to understanding the potential impact of climate change: “to the extent that they consider climate risk at all, [they] are in many cases only now beginning, tentatively, the ascent of a steep learning curve.”⁷⁵

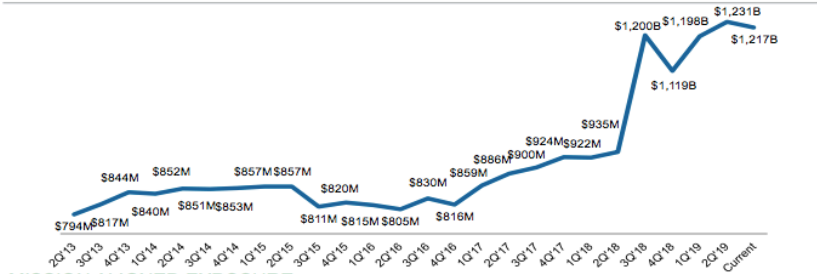
Meanwhile, fossil-free portfolios have been performing well. According to the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation: “more and more institutions are deciding to divest, and asset managers are increasingly willing to offer fossil fuel-free funds. We’re confident that sound portfolios can be created without exposure to fossil fuels, and our investment performance since 2014 supports that belief.”⁷⁶ The growth in the value of the Rockefeller endowment looks like this:

From: Estimation of global final-stage energy-return-on-investment for fossil fuels with comparison to renewable energy sources



$EROI_{PRIM}$ represents aggregate fossil fuel EROI at the primary energy conversion stage. $EROI_{FIN}$ denotes aggregate fossil fuel EROI at the primary energy conversion stage. ‘Direct energy invested’ is the energy consumed in the production, transformation and distribution of energy. ‘Indirect energy invested’ is the supply chain energy embodied in products that are used in the production, transformation and distribution of energy.

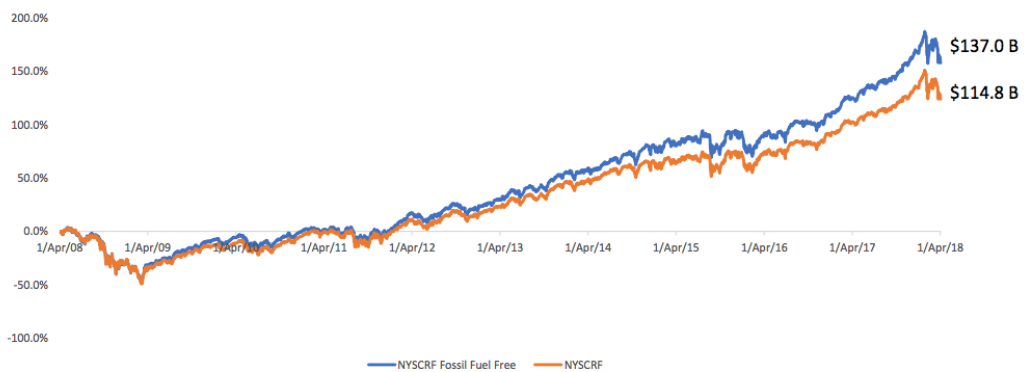
GROWTH IN VALUE



Comparing the recent performance of fossil-free portfolios to those that include fossil fuels, a study by Corporate Knights shows that the New York State Common Retirement Fund “would be an estimated \$22.2 billion richer had it decided to divest its fossil fuel stocks eleven years ago. A fossil fuel free version of the NYSCRF would have left each of its 1,122,626 members and retirees an additional \$19,820 richer at the end of the period of analysis”⁷⁷:

d.

| Portfolio Statistics | April 1 2008 to March 30 2018 | April 1 2008 to March 30 2018 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | NYSCRF Fossil Fuel Free Portfolio | NYSCRF Portfolio |
| Total Return | 157.7% | 123.8% |
| Mean Return (Annualized) | 17.3% | 15.1% |
| Standard Deviation (Annualized) | 19.8% | 20.1% |
| Downside Risk (Annualized) | 14.1% | 14.4% |
| VaR 95% (ex-post) | -1.75% | -1.77% |
| Sharpe Ratio | 0.60 | 0.51 |
| Tracking Error (Annualized) | 2.7% | |



So far, it is not clear how divesting from fossil fuels affects university endowments. In October 2019, the University of California’s chief investment officer explained that it made sense for the system to divest from fossil fuels because they are not financially sound. “Clean energy” is where there is “money to be made.”⁷⁸

Preliminary studies suggest that larger endowments are not hurt by divestment, while smaller ones are.⁷⁹ One analysis shows that divestment from fossil fuels “does not significantly impair the financial performance of investment portfolios.”⁸⁰ Another study shows that organizations do well when they not only divest from fossil fuels but also invest in clean energy, which keeps their portfolios diversified.⁸¹

Whatever the general outlook, it seems likely that Cornell could profit from the “first mover advantage.” Being the first of the Ivies to divest will mean drawing global attention as a leader in sustainability. This status could bring economic as well as reputational benefits, including donations and investments. There is evidence, too, that increasingly, prospective students weigh colleges’ commitments to sustainability as part of their decisions. According to the *Princeton Review*, “a solid majority (64%) of the 11,900 teens and parents that the company polled for its 2019 *College Hopes & Worries Survey* said that having information about a college’s commitment to the environment would affect their decision to apply to or attend the school.”⁸² Cornell did not rank in the top 50 on the Princeton Review’s list of green colleges in 2019.

V. The difference divestment makes

All of these arguments might be persuasive, and yet one might still make the case that divestment makes no material difference. Perhaps it merely makes stocks in fossil fuels cheaper, which is an invitation to other investors to snap up the opportunity to buy.

But the story is more complex than the stock price alone. There is evidence that divestment can make a **material difference**. One study shows that announcements of plans to divest from fossil fuel companies by “powerful and legitimate stakeholders” do have a meaningful effect, influencing share prices.⁸³ As major investors like Norway’s Sovereign Wealth Fund, the University of California, and the nation of Ireland divest, they send a message to the market as a whole that trusted institutions are moving away from fossil fuels,⁸⁴ no longer accepting the misleading claims of energy companies. One of the key supports for businesses to succeed is social acceptability.⁸⁵ As long as fossil fuel companies seem like respectable businesses, they can draw consumers, government favor and support, and the benefits of high reputations. Divestment sends the message that these are disreputable companies, no longer acceptable to the mainstream investor.⁸⁶ And this matters. As Shell stated in 2018, the movement to divest “could have a material adverse effect on the price of our securities and our ability to access equity capital markets.”⁸⁷

With over \$6 trillion of funds worldwide committed to divestment, and fossil-free portfolios now outperforming the stock market by almost 2% each year for five years, divesting from oil, gas, and coal has the potential to be triply effective: it sends a clear moral message to businesses pursuing a destructive course, strengthens the global movement for constructive change through this perilous climate crisis, and makes smart financial sense.⁸⁸

VI. **The companies in question contribute to harm so grave that it is inconsistent with the goals and principles of the University.**

The denial of scientific knowledge and the destruction of present and future human flourishing strike at the very heart of Cornell's great mission. Two goals guide every aspect of our work here at Cornell: first, "to educate the next generation of global citizens"; and second, "to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge."⁸⁹ Investments in oil, coal, and gas companies powerfully undercut these cherished goals and principles.

a. Educating the next generation of global citizens

Every day, as classrooms hum with activity, and young brains buzz with new ideas, Cornell commits itself to developing the skills and knowledge that current and future generations will need to lead full, meaningful, and productive lives. Since its founding, Cornell has been especially committed to training a wide range of talented students to become wise and knowledgeable leaders. For over a century, we have succeeded admirably in this effort. Cornell graduates figure among the world's best judges, entrepreneurs, CEOs, diplomats, teachers, philanthropists, philosophers, politicians, writers, and architects. Today, this work is more urgent than ever. As Martha Pollack put it in her 2019 State of the University Address, the challenges the world faces now "require the kind of education and knowledge that we strive for at Cornell—one that will do the greatest good not just for each individual student, but for the communities and societies they will live in, lead, and serve."⁹⁰

Our support for fossil fuel companies directly contravenes this mission. We are investing our most passionate energies in the generations to come, and yet at the same time we are investing our endowment in companies that are knowingly and recklessly profiting off those same generations. With one hand, we educate young people to the highest standards in the world so that they will fulfill their dreams; with the other, we wrest their dreams from them, supporting a path of destruction that researchers know leads to widespread conditions of food shortages, catastrophic flooding, devastating species loss, and global violence. As the President of Unity College argues, "It is ethically indefensible that an institution dedicated to the proposition of the renewal of civilization would simultaneously invest in its destruction."⁹¹

b. Discovering, preserving and disseminating knowledge

The second of our most precious missions is the discovery of new knowledge. Cornell is renowned worldwide for our rigorous and cutting-edge research, which includes Nobel-Prize winning science, energy innovations, knowledge of social impacts, and works of creative art.

Fossil fuel companies have actively worked against this mission, undermining the passionate pursuit of truth we hold precious here. Organizations funded by fossil fuel interests have circulated knowing deceptions and unsubstantiated attacks on science and even on individual scientists, which have led to threats to their lives, families, and careers. The American Natural Gas Alliance, for example, paid for a campaign that smeared Cornell Professor Robert Warren Howarth with misleading Google ads after he published a study of the damaging effects of natural gas.⁹² Energy in Depth, which calls itself “a research, education and public outreach campaign focused on getting the facts out about the promise and potential of responsibly developing America’s onshore energy resource base—especially abundant sources of oil and natural gas,” attacks research scientists at Cornell who are investigating the damaging effects of fossil fuels.⁹³ Fourteen oil and gas companies, including Shell, Occidental Petroleum, BP, Chevron, and Halliburton, have funded this group.⁹⁴

The misinformation campaign about climate hits Cornell especially hard. This university is a world leader in research on the environment, with no fewer than 569 researchers from 90 departments and programs at Cornell currently affiliated with the Atkinson Center for Sustainability.⁹⁵ Cornell researchers are developing new knowledge about climate and exciting solutions for the climate crisis that range from energy storage to sustainable architecture to economic development.

Cornell is frequently featured in national and international news for the knowledge of climate pioneered here. It is the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that discovered that billions of birds have disappeared from North America since 1970.⁹⁶ It is the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions that developed ‘Climate Change in your County,’ a tool that can help farmers and community leaders plan for the future.⁹⁷ Cornell Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Professor Natalie Mahowald testified about the scientific consensus on climate change before the House Science, Space and Technology Committee in 2019⁹⁸; Robert Howarth was one of 50 people in the running for *Time’s* Person of the Year in 2011 for his research on methane and climate change; and chemist Geoffrey Coates has developed new polymers that are more sustainable than conventional plastics.⁹⁹

As long as we invest in fossil fuels, it is as if one side of Cornell is working against the other. At the same time that Cornellians have spent thousands of hours in research labs and classrooms developing our understanding of the climate crisis, energy interests have put their money into discrediting this hard-won academic knowledge. The more our research is discredited, the harder we need to work to counter the attacks, and the more difficult the solutions we will need to develop to save lives, protect crops, and nurture biodiversity. In this sense, fossil fuel interests weigh down Cornell’s world-class research program.

Nor should we ignore the financial benefits brought to the University by our cutting-edge research on climate change. In the latest report of the research office, Cornell expended a total of over one billion dollars in organized research.¹⁰⁰ The Atkinson Center awards seed grants to scholars here who then leverage that funding to attract larger grants, with a return on investment of more than \$7 for every \$1 that the Atkinson Center funds.¹⁰¹ To give a small sense of the vast array of externally funded projects on climate at Cornell under way now: an international research network expanding the boundaries of the field of computational sustainability recently won funding from the National Science Foundation for \$7.4 million,¹⁰² and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the NSF have awarded a \$2.4 million grant to an interdisciplinary team of Cornell researchers studying the impacts of converting farmland to renewable energy production.¹⁰³

To be sure, one could argue that Cornell should not use its investment portfolio in ways that might disturb current and potential funders to the University. Money from fossil fuels may themselves further our mission. In 2016, Cornell Earth and Atmospheric Science Professor Larry Brown warned that divestment would damage “the many research and academic programs at Cornell that are funded by the oil, gas and petrochemical industry, and the career prospects of Cornell students that are interested in working in those industries.”¹⁰⁴ His conclusion was that divestment “undermines the most precious asset a university has in addressing any controversial issue: its reputation as an unbiased source of scientific knowledge.”¹⁰⁵ But the opposite argument is compelling: as long as researchers depend on money from oil and gas interests, they are not free to produce unbiased science. And since fossil fuel companies have been engaged in campaigns to intimidate and discredit our colleagues, they endanger scientific neutrality more than divestment ever could.

In short, since we invest so much world-class talent and energy in building a sustainable world, we should not at the same time invest our funds in companies that knowingly contradict that goal.

c. Core values: public engagement and care for the natural environment

President Pollack launched an initiative this past year to meet with members of the community to identify our shared values. Beyond our “bedrock” academic mission, the Cornell community sets store by two values—public engagement and care for the natural environment—that are profoundly compromised by continued investments in fossil fuels.¹⁰⁶

i. Changing Lives through Public Engagement

From the beginning of this great university, Cornell has valued “engagement in our community, our state, and the broader world,

learning about their needs and strengths, and applying the knowledge we create for the benefit of society.”¹⁰⁷ Cornellians work every day to improve human health and well-being, to strengthen communities, to preserve civilizations, species, and languages, and to reduce violence. Major energy companies today are undermining all of these goals.

ii. Respect for the Natural Environment

A value that was repeatedly articulated to President Pollack during her conversations with students, staff, faculty, and alumni was our shared respect for the environment. “We value our role in advancing solutions for a sustainable future and we recognize the close relationship between people and the Earth, acting in ways to live and work sustainably.”¹⁰⁸ It would be difficult to identify a greater threat to this core value than a continued legitimization of companies that are responsible for the imminent extinction of a million species, the dramatic drop in numbers of mammals and birds, severe droughts and floods, and the destruction of large numbers of habitats, including the acidification of the oceans.

VII. Stewardship for the future

Cornell University’s reputation rests on our ongoing academic excellence and our public service mission. Both of these prompt scholars and students across the university to dedicate our energies to understanding climate change and to developing wise solutions. In every college in this magnificent institution, we see a far-reaching commitment to sustainability. We rank first in the Ivy League for sustainability overall; we are the number one Ivy League Institution for overall carbon reduction; and we have some of the most aggressive carbon reduction goals among research universities.¹⁰⁹ From the Atkinson Center for Sustainability and the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions to Cornell Cooperative Extension and Climate Change AI, Cornell researchers lead the world when it comes to climate change and sustainability. Our students are passionate about understanding and responding to the dangers of global warming. In its first year, 400 undergraduates signed up to major in the new cross-college Environment and Sustainability major.

In this context, it is surprising that Cornell is lagging behind other colleges and universities as these begin to divest from fossil fuels in significant numbers. Our peers are sending the message that the catastrophic disregard for scientific knowledge and human welfare is not acceptable to institutions entrusted with the sacred task of advancing knowledge for the public good. Cornell could make history as the first Ivy League university to divest. We certainly do not want to be the last.

Responses to counter-arguments

Members of the Cornell community raise excellent questions about divestment. Here we respond to several common concerns and objections:

1. *Divestment politicizes the endowment, which is divisive.*

Our common future is at stake. Given the devastating effects of climate change on future generations, it is a mistake to understand climate change as a narrow or partisan issue. While it is true that this issue was politicized for a period, both parties have a long history of fighting environmental threats. George H. W. Bush was in fact the first US President to call for action on global warming.¹¹⁰ Today, young members of both parties are concerned about climate change,¹¹¹ and majorities of citizens favor action to prevent the earth from dangerously warming.¹¹²

2. *Divestment distracts attention from the other important work we could be doing as a campus to make Cornell sustainable.*

In this moment of “climate emergency,” it is crucial to do as much as we can to reduce carbon emissions and slow the pace of warming before feedback loops become unstoppable. Divestment is one strategy among many others that we need to make the large changes that are necessary to preserve human communities and nonhuman life worldwide. We expect Cornell to continue to invest our best energies and commitments in carbon neutrality with or without divestment.

3. *How much money does Cornell have invested in fossil fuels?*

The specific details of Cornell’s investments are not public knowledge. If it is a small amount, it should be easy to divest and will still send a powerful public moral message that we do not tolerate this deceptive and dangerous business. If the amounts invested are substantial, then it seems the more urgent to move this money to less dangerous and better performing investments.

4. *Divestment harms our reputation as a neutral and impartial institution.*

It is precisely for the sake of scientific truth and the general public good that we seek divestment. Oil, gas, and coal companies have launched multiple campaigns to intimidate and discredit scientists, deliberately endangering both scientific neutrality as well as human communities worldwide.¹¹³

5. *How can we demand accountability from fossil fuel companies as long as we ourselves continue to drive cars, fly, heat our houses with natural gas, and eat meat?*

Existing institutions and infrastructures have fostered our dependence on fossil fuels, and it is difficult for any of us to extract ourselves completely. Change at the

institutional level will make individual environmental action more likely. For example, ordinary households will find it financially easier to shift to sustainable energy if fossil fuels are not subsidized to make them cheaper than renewables.¹¹⁴

6. *Divestment insults and alienates alumni/ae who work in the fossil fuel industry.*

Investment in fossil fuels is alienating members of our community, too, including our current and future students who are deeply concerned for their future. According to the *Princeton Review*, “a solid majority (64%) of the 11,900 teens and parents that the company polled for its 2019 *College Hopes & Worries Survey* said that having information about a college's commitment to the environment would affect their decision to apply to or attend the school.”¹¹⁵

7. *Divestment is a slippery slope. If we start divesting from all companies culpable of immoral action, we will have nowhere left to invest the endowment.*

The current “climate emergency” is no ordinary case. It is threatening human civilization as we know it. As warming begins to hit irreversible tipping points, millions if not billions of human lives will be lost to hunger, disease, drought, and floods. We have made the case that the fossil fuel industry meets the stringent criteria for divestment set forth by the Trustees.

8. *How does divestment work?*

Universities typically commit to divesting over a period of time, such as 5 years. Full divestment means taking away funds that are directly owned or commingled that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds; it means freezing all new investments in fossil fuel companies, and it means putting an end to all fossil fuels sponsorships, which are relationships that help to create a ‘social licence to operate.’¹¹⁶ The Trustees could use this list of the [top 200 fossil fuel companies](#) by reserves or they could decide to divest from all fossil fuel companies.

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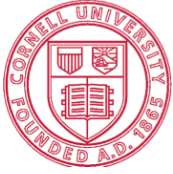
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Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the December 9, 2019 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Bache Auditorium, Malott Hall

I. Call to Order

- a. 5:30 A. Barrientos-Gómez calls meeting to order

II. Roll Call

- a. Present: P. Vinhage, A. Barrientos-Gómez, R. Harrison, A. Johnson, M. Keefe, L. Louis, K. Laurent, D. Yucalan, N. London, W. Andersson, A. Woods, K. Esannason, M. Daly, M. Gelsinger, J. Faulk, K. Masters
- b. Absent: C. Duell, A. Cirillo, A. Sontag, D. Wang, M. Sawey, V. Kasonde, A. P. D. G. Everett, E. Call

III. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Minutes of the November 4, 2019 Meeting
- i. **Approved** with no dissent
- b. Minutes of the November 18, 2019 Meeting
- i. **Approved** with no dissent

IV. Presentations

- a. Graduate and Professional Student-Elected Trustee Election – Dr. Bruce Lewenstein, Manisha Munasinghe, Jaewon Sim
- i. B. Lewenstein introduced himself as one of the two faculty-elected members of the Board of Trustees. He is looking to begin the process of building interest and sharing information about the opportunity for graduate and professional school students to serve as a Student-Elected Trustee. The election will be in the spring and undergraduates will vote as well. This new committee was created to restructure the process of the election and they are seeking candidates from across the student body who are engaged across campus activities. Candidates can be from the graduate schools, professional schools, Cornell Tech, or the Geneva campus. The trustee will become a full member of the Board of Trustees. His or her legal and fiduciary obligation would be to the university as a whole, and not the constituency that elected them. It is a two-year term and the trustee would bring the student voice.

- ii. M. Munasinghe added that the board has 64 voting members. Most of the members are alumni and work in other places. The important role about the Student-Elected Trustee is that they would be part of a small number on the Board who can speak to how the whole community is feeling. In addition to those responsibilities, the Student-Elected Trustee is expected to write a trustee viewpoint for the Cornell Daily Sun once a month and present on student and campus community issues. Previous topics she has covered include students with disabilities, the Intergroup Dialogue Project, and first-generation and low-income students. The Board of Trustees has four meetings a year, one of which is hosted in NYC. In addition, the Student-Elected Trustee may be asked to sit on university committees. For example, she sits on the Mental Health Coalition. The obligations during board meetings are significant. Meetings will start at 7:30am and continue until 9:30-10pm for four days in a row. There is also a fair amount of reading before the meeting. However outside of that, the commitment is a couple hours a week, which may include attending events. As the Student-Elected Trustee, she is an ex-officio member of the GPSA and while she is clued into the resolutions, her job is not to intervene and get involved.
- iii. B. Lewenstein added that there is a variety of actions that can happen at the Board level that is confidential. There may not be as much reporting back as students would want.
 1. M. Munasinghe added that the Student-Elected Trustee does have to sign a non-disclosure agreement.
- iv. B. Lewenstein gave an overview of the committee's goals in informing the community about the role, generating interest in running and the election, and managing the election process. In future years, they hope to have these presentations earlier in the fall semester to build interest throughout the year. While the committee has oversight, the day-to-day operations of the election is managed by the Office of Assemblies. They are looking to set the election schedule and hold information sessions in the fall. In the spring, they hope to have public information sessions and detailed meetings with information for candidates. The election will occur just before Spring Break.
- v. V. Kasonde asked about the duties of the committee.
 1. B. Lewenstein responded that the committee consists of the two Faculty-Elected Trustees, two Student-Elected Trustees, and one Employee-Elected Trustee. The SA, EA, and GPSA also each appoint a member. Those who are interested in running or endorsing a candidate cannot be on the committee.
- vi. M. Munasinghe spoke about the campaign process. Starting in January, petitions will become available. Interested candidates have a month to collect 300 student signatures and must submit a

statement of candidacy. Campaigning lasts about three weeks and can be a very rigorous process. Candidates are also expected to participate in a debate usually hosted by the Cornell Daily Sun.

vii. J. Sim noted that the Student-Elected Trustees have staggered terms. Every year there is one trustee who has been in the role for a year and can help the incoming member. The new Student-Elected Trustee will typically spend the first two meetings learning and getting acquainted.

V. Division Breakout

a. A. Barrientos-Gómez announced that they will not be having division breakout.

VI. Elections

a. Finance Commission Chair

i. E. Ottot-Kovacs, the GPSA Finance Commission Chair, highlighted the position as an opportunity for those interested in being more involved in GPSA activities. The Finance Commission is one of the more demanding committees with almost monthly meetings to review the budget. The Chair is tasked with leading those meetings, organizing the meetings, answering emails, and ensuring everything is in order.

ii. A. Barrientos-Gómez asked for nominations for the Finance Commission Chair position.

1. E. Ottot-Kovacs nominated A. Johnson.

a. A. Johnson accepted the nomination.

2. A. Barrientos-Gómez closed nominations and called for a ballot vote.

iii. A. Johnson introduced herself as the current VP of the Finance Commission. She noticed not many people on campus understood the purpose of the committee to allow graduate and professional students to have input on how the Student Activity Fee is spent. Her main goals as Chair would be to improve awareness of the Commission's purpose, integrate its goals with the new Student Organization Business Office (SOBO) in Willard Straight Hall, and ensure that the Commission institutionalizes knowledge. In addition, she is seeking a volunteer for Vice Chair.

iv. A. Johnson was **confirmed** as the new Finance Commission Chair.

VII. Old Business

a. Discussion of Resolution 3: *Demanding Mandatory Arbitration and Class Action Bans Be Removed from CASHNet and Other Community Agreements*

i. J. Kent-Dobias stated that resorting to switching services is unnecessary, citing that Cornell has enough sway with service providers to accomplish the removals with an email. Companies that depend on large institutions like Cornell tend to be incredibly responsive and he does not anticipate it will be much of an issue.

ii. A. Johnson made a call to question to vote on the resolution

iii. Motion is seconded

iv. Resolution 3 **passed** with a vote of 13-0-11

VIII. New Business

- a. Introduction to Resolution 4: *Recommendation for the Graduate and Professional Student Activity Fee for 2020-2022*
 - i. A. Barrientos-Gómez noted that the deadline to submit the resolution to the President was tomorrow.
 - ii. J. Bogdanowicz added that if the resolution is not passed, the old fee structure will stay. He explained that the Student Activity Fee is a small part of their tuition bills that fund large organizations across campus, including the clubs listed on the resolution. The Appropriations Committee has looked to include Cornell Tech on the byline in the last few cycles. However, they do not always respond in a timely manner and try to get in on the last second. The committee came up with an equitable solution where Cornell Tech is going to get some funding out of the GPSAFC for this cycle with pressure that they will be on time in the next cycle. He projected an outline report of the committee's decisions showing funding comparisons from the last cycle (2018-2020), the organization's request, and the 2020-2022 recommendation. They do not have much contention with the organizations, and the organizations have provided adequate financial budgets. He also noted that the graduate and professional student population has been increasing significantly in the last few years. He gave an overview of a few clubs.
 - iii. M. Gelsing questioned the Athletic and Physical Education allocation.
 1. J. Bogdanowicz replied that Cornell Athletics offers graduate students access to a wide array of sporting events and did not request more funding. Within the student population increasing each year, they are still getting some more funding. The committee's recommendation to every organization is to always increase participation as that is the easiest way to justify asking for larger allocations.
 - iv. J. Kent-Dobias asked what club insurance was.
 1. J. Bogdanowicz responded that every club in the university has insurance. It includes protecting club officers from lawsuits, enabling clubs to use off-campus facilities, allowing clubs a more liberal use of the Cornell name, among others.
 - v. GPSA member asked for clarification on the International Student Union (ISU) allocation.
 1. J. Bogdanowicz responded that this was one of the more contentious organizations. Last cycle, they provided them money and ISU agreed to reach out to graduate students more. Within two years, membership increased from one graduate student to 11. While the undergraduate population is roughly 10-15% international, it is almost 40% for graduate and professional students.
 2. E. Law explained that ISU is a board that distributes funding to a wide array of organizations. A quarter of their members are now graduate students.

- vi. A. Johnson highlighted that the Graduate Orientation is not asking for funding anymore. She asked whether the orientation program was changing.
 - 1. A. Barrientos-Gómez replied that it was a GPSA choice. They decided at the last byline cycle to take it off as none of their counterparts were funding the graduate orientation.
 - 2. Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs at Graduate School J. Allen added that the Graduate School agreed with the decision on the basis of optics.
- b. A. Cohn made a motion to suspend the bylaws and open the floor to discussion.
 - i. E. Law voiced concern over allocations being one of the larger responsibilities of the GPSA. Waiting a meeting between the introduction and voting of a resolution is put into place so people are made aware of upcoming changes. Here, students can know how much they are going to be charged for the Student Activity Fee in the next two years and can come speak at the next meeting if they have concerns. While he is not a voting member, he noted it as something for voting members to take into account.
 - ii. M. Gelsing asked if it was possible to vote tomorrow.
 - 1. A. Barrientos-Gómez reiterated that the deadline to submit the resolution was tomorrow. It would require everyone to vote before the deadline and it is not a risk he is willing to take.
 - iii. A. Cohn's motion to suspend the bylaws **passed** with a vote of 13-0-11.
 - iv. A. Johnson asked how often Cornell graduate students use the Emergency Medical Service.
 - 1. J. Bogdanowicz responded that the organization is at ever large event hosted.
 - v. J. Faulk asked for the rationale behind Big Red Barn's allocation being lower than what it requested. It is frequented by many graduate students.
 - 1. J. Bogdanowicz stated the committee decided that around a 15% raised seemed fair. When organizations submit documents, they base it on a certain number of student enrollment that may or may not be accurate. Currently, enrollment is at 8,900 and has been significantly increasing. They discussed the funding with Big Red Barn, who stated it would be satisfied with an amount around \$13.
 - vi. A. Cohn made a call to question to vote on the resolution as it stands with the activity fee being a total of \$86 for the next byline funding year.
 - vii. Motion was seconded.
 - viii. Resolution 4 **passed** with a vote of 13-0-11. A. Barrientos-Gómez announced he was not abstaining from the vote and voted in favor of the resolution.
 - ix. A. Johnson made a point of order, asking if a vote would not pass if there were more abstentions than votes in favor.
 - 1. A. Barrientos-Gómez replied that the vote would still pass.

IX. Open Forum

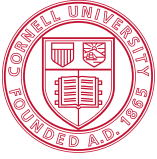
- a. A. Cohn relayed a message from C. Silver, the Field Member from Applied Economics and Management, regarding an issue within the Ithaca Commons Council. Long-term residents are making it more difficult to change the number of dwelling units on properties, which would make it more difficult to increase housing in the community and thus decrease the price of housing. A constituent of C. Silver brought it to her attention. Interested individuals can contact crs376@cornell.edu for more information.

This meeting was adjourned at 6:51pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Tran

Clerk of the Assembly



Resolution 5: Support of the Development and Implementation of a Cornell Campus Circulator System

Abstract: For the past eleven years, a Cornell Campus Circulator System of transportation has been under discussion as a way to improve access to many university functions and to address the continual challenges related to transportation and parking that Cornellians face every day. We propose that this project become a priority for Cornell and be realized within the period of the next five years.

Sponsored by:

Andy Barrientos-Gomez

Whereas, the need for a Campus Circulator was identified in the 2008 Campus Master Plan as essential to the efficiency and productivity of Cornell campus which depends on how well Cornell students, faculty, employees, and alumni, as well as guests and visitors can move about the campus; and

Whereas, the 2013 Cornell Climate Action Plan calls for the reduction of fossil-fuel consumption of the Cornell Fleet through alternative-fueled vehicle purchasing and the increased use of mass transportation, leading to the fulfillment of the Carbon Neutrality 2035 goal approved by the Board of Trustees; and

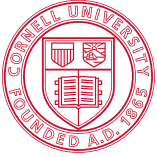
Whereas, the 2015 Game Farm Road Athletic Complex Facilities Master Plan requires the improvement and expansion of Cornell's current transportation system to make that complex more accessible to student athletes, coaches, and staff in a timely and safe fashion throughout the day; and

Whereas, the need for a Campus Circulator was identified in Cornell's 2018 Parking Optimization Study, as a way to reduce the reliance on TCAT large bus traffic through the center of campus; to provide more frequent transit to more locations across campus; to increase connectivity and reduce the confusion inherent in current transit options; to reduce the anxiety and challenges around current parking proximity to destination; to reduce the amount of car traffic on campus; and to increase the use of existing available perimeter parking options; and encourage the use of sustainable intra-campus mobility options when on campus; and

Whereas, only students in their first year at Cornell have free access to TCAT and there is an opportunity to provide and encourage the use of barrier free, sustainable, mass transportation for all students; and

Whereas, pedestrian and bike safety are a priority and this is another step towards Vision Zero by reducing car traffic, parking hunting, and bus traffic on campus; and

Whereas, it is important to continue to protect Cornell's natural landscapes, green spaces, and maintain our campus aesthetics (which are among the most beautiful in the world) for all future Cornellians; and



Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

40 **Whereas**, efficient mass-transit supports the One Cornell vision, including the ease of access and utilization
41 of the Martin Y. Tang Welcome Center, and allowing students, faculty, guests, and staff to move across
42 campus easily to cross collaborate more often between schools and disciplines and to attend meetings and
43 campus events more frequently; and

44
45 **Whereas**, TCAT is committed to working with Cornell to improve their service and pilot new sustainable
46 initiatives to better meet Cornell's needs and goals; and

47
48 **Whereas**, our 2019 Drafted Core Values statement outlines Changing Lives through Engagement by
49 applying knowledge that we and others create for the benefit of society and engagement with our community,
50 state, and the broader world; as well as our Respect for the Natural Environment and the need to live and
51 work for a sustainable environment.

52
53 **Be it therefore resolved** that the Cornell Administration support, prioritize, and assign ownership to the
54 development of an innovative and sustainable Campus Circulator System;

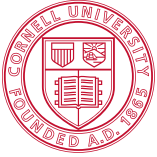
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56 **Be it further resolved** that the Cornell Administration secure funding, develop a pilot system, and
57 implement and fully realize such A Campus Circulator System over the period of the next 5 years.

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59 **Be it finally resolved**, a copy of this resolution be presented to Martha Pollack, President; Mary Opperman,
60 Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer; Joel Malina, Vice President for University Relations

61
62 **Respectfully Submitted,**

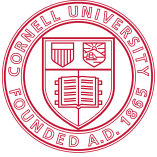
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64 Andy Barrientos-Gomez
65 President of GPSA

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- 70 References:
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- 78
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- 80 **Cornell HR Workforce Report, Page 14**
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- 87 **Page 10,12 of the Transportation Parking Optimization Presentation**
- 88
- 89 **Core Values:** <https://president.cornell.edu/initiatives/university-core-values/>
- 90



Resolution 6: Support of Divestment from Fossil Fuels

Abstract: Given the global climate emergency and our desire for Cornell to remain a leader in promoting a sustainable future, we request that Cornell divest from all investments in coal, oil, and natural gas in an orderly fashion.

Sponsored by: Alexa Cohn

Whereas, 195 nations reached a global agreement in Paris in December of 2015 that we must keep planetary warming under 2° C above pre-industrial levels in order to avoid catastrophic and irreversible damage to society and the environment; since then, warming trends and their devastating consequences are happening more quickly than many predicted, leading to the likelihood of runaway feedback loops and prompting over 11,000 scientists to declare a “climate emergency” in November 2019;

Whereas, the climate emergency is unlike all other cases for divestment in that fossil fuel use is threatening human civilization as we know it, with millions if not billions of people soon to suffer its impacts, including massive displacements of populations, hunger, disease, droughts, and floods around the world, the collapse of ecosystems, and violent unrest sparked by the struggle for scarce resources;

Whereas, Cornell is world famous as a leader in teaching and research on sustainability, with an important responsibility to maintain this reputation;

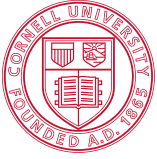
Whereas, On January 29, 2016, the Cornell Board of Trustees laid out clear and stringent criteria for the review of divestment requests;

That divestment should “be considered only when a company’s actions or inactions are ‘morally reprehensible’ (i.e., deserving of condemnation because of the injurious impact that the actions or inactions of a company are found to have on consumers, employees, or other persons, or which perpetuate social harms to individuals by the deprivation of health, safety, basic freedom, or human rights. Morally reprehensible activities include apartheid, genocide, human trafficking, slavery, and systemic cruelty to children, including violations of child labor laws).

That divestment “will likely have a meaningful impact toward correcting the specified harm, and will not result in disproportionate offsetting negative societal consequences”; or

That the companies in question contribute to “harm so grave that it would be inconsistent with the goals and principles of the University.”

Whereas, the University Assembly Campus Infrastructure Committee has prepared a White Paper, attached to this Resolution, that documents in detail how fossil fuel companies meet all of these criteria,



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40

41 **Be it therefore resolved,** that Cornell divest from all investments in coal, oil, and natural gas in an
42 orderly manner and as rapidly as possible.

43 Respectfully Submitted,

44 Alexa Cohn

45 Executive Vice President, GPSA