

Cornell University University Assembly

University Assembly Resolution 5: Support of the 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:

Caroline Levine – University Assembly Campus Infrastructure Committee Member

Adam Howell – University Assembly Member

Reviewed by: Campus Infrastructure Committee, 12/04/2019

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;

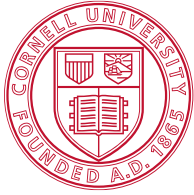
Whereas, the climate emergency is unlike all other cases for divestment in that fossil fuel use is threatening human civilization as we know it, with millions if not billions of people soon to suffer its impacts, including massive displacements of populations, hunger, disease, droughts, and floods around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



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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,

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

Adopted by Unanimous Vote of the Assembly, 02/18/2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caroline Levine, UA CIC Member
Adam Howell – UA Member

References:

Core Values: <https://president.cornell.edu/initiatives/university-core-values/>