

## **Class C Resolution Regarding Fossil Fuel Divestment**

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in 2018 that "... human-induced warming reached 1°C above pre-industrial levels around 2017 and, if this pace of warming continues, would reach 1.5°C around 2040" (1); and

WHEREAS, the estimated economic damages of such a rise in atmospheric temperatures would be \$54 trillion (1); and

WHEREAS, the damages from climate change, which will accrue principally in communities with low historical greenhouse gas emissions, represent the "largest health inequity of our time" (2); and

WHEREAS the University of Washington Board of Regents Statement of Ethical Principles states "...it is our responsibility to hold ourselves and one another to the highest ethical standards, guiding our quests for the discovery and dissemination of knowledge and the conduct of other University affairs with a deep respect for the rules and societal standards that define the right way to conduct our work" (3); and

WHEREAS the Statement of Ethical Principles later reads "As stewards of University resources, we each have a responsibility to ensure that all assets under our control are used prudently, ethically, and for their designated purposes..."(3); and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington has recognized its part in confronting climate change by signing the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (4), the Washington Business Climate Declaration (5), and the "We Are Still In" letter (6); and

WHEREAS, The University of Washington divested from only thermal coal in 2014, and have yet to take public actions towards further divestment from fossil fuels (7), (defined to include, but not limited to: coal, natural gas, and/or any other petroleum-based fuel, as well as extraction, refinement, distribution, use, or digital support for those processes); and

WHEREAS, many of the University of Washington's peer institutions have pledged to or have already fully divested from fossil fuels; these institutions include the University of Hawaii, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, University of British Columbia, and the University of California system (8); and

WHEREAS, divestment from all fossil fuels is currently not a part of the University of Washington's Climate Action or Sustainability plans; and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington student body has called for divestment for all fossil fuels through resolutions passed by the Associated Students of the University of Washington and the University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate; and

WHEREAS, the University of California's chief investment officer stated that the University of California divested from fossil fuels because maintaining the investments posed a significant financial risk (9); and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington's continued investment in fossil fuels not only promotes the continued emission of fossil fuels and hinders necessary changes to renewable energy sources but puts in jeopardy the University's pension and endowment funds; and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington Regents have requested input from the University of Washington faculty regarding its position regarding fossil fuel divestment; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate of the University of Washington calls on the University of Washington Board of Regents to publicly announce that climate change is an ethical and population health crisis and therefore to commit to using all available means at its disposal to respond to the threat by decarbonizing the university's investments, operations, procurement contracts, and supply chain.

*Approved by:*  
Senate Executive Committee  
May 3, 2021

*Approved by:*  
Faculty Senate  
May 13, 2021

#### **References:**

- (1) Allen, M.R., O.P. Dube, W. Solecki, F. Aragón-Durand, W. Cramer, S. Humphreys, M. Kainuma, J. Kala, N. Mahowald, Y. Mulugetta, R. Perez, M. Wairiu, and K. Zickfeld, 2018: Framing and Context. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. In Press.
- (2) Patz JA, Gibbs HK, Foley JA, Rogers JV, Smith KR. Climate change and global health: quantifying a growing ethical crisis. *EcoHealth*. 2007 Dec;4(4):397-405.
- (3) BRG, Regent Policy No. 2, Statement of Ethical Principles. (2019, April 3). University of Washington. <https://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/BRG/RP2.html>
- (4) UC3 Members. (n.d.). Second Nature. <https://secondnature.org/about-uc3-2/uc3-members/#UW>
- (5) UW Sustainability. (2015, April 14). UW signs Washington Business Climate Declaration. University of Washington. <https://green.uw.edu/news/uw-signs-washington-business-climate-declaration>
- (6) University of Washington | We Are Still In. (n.d.). We Are Still In. <https://www.wearestillin.com/organization/university-washington>
- (7) Divestment Commitments. (n.d.). Go Fossil Free. <https://gofossilfree.org/divestment/commitments/>
- (8) Long, Katherine. "Student Group Seeks End to UW Coal Investments." *The Seattle Times*, The Seattle Times Company, 11 Mar. 2015, [www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/studentgroup-seeks-end-to-uw-coal-investments/](http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/studentgroup-seeks-end-to-uw-coal-investments/).

(9) Bachher, J. S., & Sherman, R. (2019, September 17). Opinion: UC investments are going fossil free. But not exactly for the reasons you may think. Los Angeles Times.  
<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-09-16/divestment-fossil-fuel-university-of-californiaclimate-change>