

**RESOLUTION CALLING ON BIG 10 UNIVERSITIES TO COMMIT TO CLIMATE
CONSCIOUS INVESTMENTS**

Sponsor: Central Student Government - The University of Michigan

WHEREAS, The humanitarian and ecological crisis of climate change poses a paramount threat to the lives and livelihoods of current and future generations, and demands concerted and widespread action from society's leaders; **AND**

WHEREAS, We are facing a global crisis--which necessitates bold, immediate action--that is precipitated by humanity functioning as a conduit to widespread climate-caused society damage and the increased risk of cataclysmic events;¹ **AND**

WHEREAS, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (hereafter IPCC) stated that global GHG emissions, including scopes 1, 2 and 3, must be reduced to net zero by 2050 to avoid climate change's worst impacts;² **AND**

WHEREAS, Greenhouse gas (hereafter GHG) emissions--which are products of the combustion of coal, oil, and natural gas--are scientifically proven to result in harmful climate change, which will have widespread negative effects on Earth and its inhabitants;³ **AND**

WHEREAS, The fossil fuel industry is uniquely responsible for climate change; since 1988, 100 companies have emitted more than 70% of the world's carbon;⁴ **AND**

WHEREAS, In spite of these colossal harms, the fossil fuel industry has led a concerted, multi-decadal effort to mislead the public and sow doubt about the reality and causes of global warming.⁵ These efforts echo disinformation campaigns similar to those of the tobacco industry in direct opposition to our institutions' values of honesty and integrity;⁶ **AND**

WHEREAS, Nations and institutions which have developed through consumption of fossil fuels and contributed most to climate change have a moral imperative to mitigate the crisis and halt support for the industries which propagate it; **AND**

WHEREAS, Investing in the fossil fuel industry contributes to global climate change and therefore exacerbates climate injustice; **AND**

¹ "Global Warming of 1.5 °C." *IPCC*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Davenport, Coral. "Major Climate Report Describes a Strong Risk of Crisis as Early as 2040." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Oct. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/07/climate/ipcc-climate-report-2040.html>.

⁴ "CDP Carbon Majors Report 2017." *The Carbon Majors Database*, July 2017.

⁵ Mulvey, Kathy, and Seth Shulman. "[The Climate Deception Dossiers: Internal Fossil Fuel Industry Memos Reveal Decades of Corporate Disinformation](#)." *The Union of Concerned Scientists*, July 2015.

⁶ *Ibid.*

WHEREAS As a conference almost entirely made up by public universities, Big 10 schools have an obligation to act in the public interest; **AND**

WHEREAS, Of Princeton Review's Top 50 Green Colleges, no BIG10 schools are ranked, except for Michigan State University (#19);⁷ **AND**

WHEREAS, Big 10 institutions have the resources and positioning to lead the global energy transition to combat this crisis. The University of Michigan (hereafter U-M), for example, continually ranks as one of the top research universities in the world, with a record-breaking \$5 billion raised in the last five years alone and an endowment larger than the GDPs of 37% of the world's nations;⁸ **AND**

WHEREAS, Big 10 institutions who have committed to carbon neutrality, including the University of Michigan,⁹ Ohio State University,¹⁰ Michigan State University,¹¹ University of Illinois,¹² Indiana University,¹³ University of Minnesota,¹⁴ Northwestern University,¹⁵ University of Iowa,¹⁶ Rutgers University,¹⁷ University of Wisconsin,¹⁸ and Penn State University,¹⁹ cannot truly be carbon neutral while investing billions in the fossil fuel industry; **AND**

⁷ "Top 50 Green Colleges." *The Princeton Review*,

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings?rankings=top-50-green-colleges>.

⁸ "U-M Endowment Up \$500M After Another Year of Strong Performance." *University of Michigan News*, 17 Oct. 2019, <https://news.umich.edu/u-m-endowment-up-500m-after-another-year-of-strong-performance/>.

⁹ "Campus Sustainability Goals." *Planet Blue*, 19 Dec. 2018, <http://sustainability.umich.edu/about/goals>.

¹⁰ "The Ohio State University PAE-5: Climate Action Plan." PAE-5: Climate Action Plan | The Ohio State University | Scorecard | Institutions | STARS Reports, <https://reports.aashe.org/institutions/the-ohio-state-university-oh/report/2012-12-16/PAE/coordination-and-planning/PAE-5/>.

¹¹ "Michigan State University OP-1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions." *OP-1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions | Michigan State University | Scorecard | Institutions | STARS Reports*,

<https://reports.aashe.org/institutions/michigan-state-university-mi/report/2016-02-11/OP/air-climate/OP-1/>.

¹² [Climate Action Plan for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#). *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*.

¹³ [A Decade of Sustainability - 2020 Vision](#). *Indiana University*.

¹⁴ [Success Story: Climate Action Plan](#). *Facilities Management, University of Minnesota*.

¹⁵ "SustainNU." *Understanding Northwestern's Carbon Footprint: SustainNU - Northwestern University*, <https://www.northwestern.edu/sustainability/program-areas/built-environment/greenhouse-gas-emissions/index.html>.

¹⁶ "Office of Sustainability and the Environment." *Strategic Plan | Office of Sustainability and the Environment | College of Liberal Arts and Sciences | The University of Iowa*, <https://sustainability.uiowa.edu/our-vision/strategic-plan>.

¹⁷ "President's Task Force on Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience." *President's Task Force on Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience | Office of the President*, <https://president.rutgers.edu/public-remarks/speeches-and-writings/presidents-task-force-carbon-neutrality-and-climate-resilience>.

¹⁸ "Sustainability @ UW-Madison." *Office of Sustainability*, <https://sustainability.wisc.edu/sustainability-at-uw-madison>.

¹⁹ "Climate Action." *Sustainability.psu.edu*, <http://sustainability.psu.edu/climate-action>.

WHEREAS, Students across our conference are making their voices heard, from Michigan²⁰ to Indiana²¹ to Wisconsin,²² demanding just transitions to true carbon neutrality; **AND**

WHEREAS, Previously, institutions of higher education have historically been conduits for social change on issues of moral clarity, exemplified through academic boycotts of the U.S. Tobacco Industry in 1997;²³ **AND**

WHEREAS, Harvard University has recently frozen their investments in fossil fuels in response to student activism;²⁴ **AND**

WHEREAS, Institutions across the US are beginning to discuss divestment from fossil fuels; specifically, universities within the University of California system²⁵ and the University of Pennsylvania²⁶ have already committed to divestment from fossil fuels; **AND**

WHEREAS, The Big 10 represents many of the largest public universities in the United States; thus in the face of this crisis, we have an obligation to act; **AND**

WHEREAS, As students, as taxpayers, and as citizens of the world whose frontline communities are already being impacted by climate change and whose future is in peril, we feel an obligation and a right to demand our universities are not complicit in the harms of fossil fuel investment and lead the nation and the world towards a better future; **AND**

WHEREAS, The Association of Big Ten Students is debating a resolution to make an “ABTS Sustainability Commitment,” led by Indiana University, to enhance ABTS to further commit to leading sustainable and climate-conscious efforts at their Universities;

RESOLVED, Big 10 Student Body Presidents collectively acknowledge the severity of climate change, and further, the need for swift action to prevent the earth’s average temperatures from warming more than 1.5 °C; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

²⁰ Sourine, Katherina. “Washtenaw Community Demands Change in Global Climate Strike.” *The Michigan Daily*, <https://www.michigandaily.com/section/campus-life/washtenaw-community-demands-change-global-climate-strike>.

²¹ Schroeder, Joe. “An inside Look: Bloomington Climate Strike.” *Indiana Daily Student*, 21 Sept. 2019, <https://www.idsnews.com/article/2019/09/an-inside-look-bloomington-climate-strike>.

²² Garfield, Allison. “Madison Climate Strike: Hundreds Join World in Global March.” *The Daily Cardinal*, 21 Sept. 2019, <https://www.dailycardinal.com/article/2019/09/madison-climate-strike-hundreds-join-world-in-global-march>.

²³ Honan, William H. “Colleges Ending Investments in Tobacco Stocks.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 May 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/21/us/colleges-ending-investments-in-tobacco-stocks.html>.

²⁴ Milman, Oliver. “Harvard 'Pausing' Investments in Some Fossil Fuels.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 27 Apr. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/27/harvard-university-pausing-investments-in-some-fossil-fuels>.

²⁵ Irfan, Umair. “The University of California System Is Ending Its Investment in Fossil Fuels.” *Vox*, Vox, 18 Sept. 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/9/18/20872112/university-california-divestment-fossil-fuel-climate-change>.

²⁶ Wintman, Shoshi, and Shoshi Wintman. “Penn to Divest from Fossil Fuels.” *Under the Button*, <https://www.underthebutton.com/article/2019/10/penn-divest-from-fossil-fuels>.

RESOLVED, Big 10 Student Body Presidents will hereby advocate that their respective institutions commit to ceasing all further investments in the fossil fuel industry (as defined below) in FY2020; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, Big 10 Student Body Presidents call on the leadership of their respective institutions to commit to research and action towards future divestment from the fossil fuel industry in FY2020.

Suggested Fossil Fuel Investment Definition²⁷:

There is no regulated or universally accepted definition for fossil fuel free. We believe that fossil fuel free means:

- No investments in any company with proven carbon reserves.
- No investments in any company that explores for, extracts, processes, refines, or transmits coal, oil, and gas.
- No investments in any utilities that burn fossil fuels to produce electricity.

²⁷ “Make a Clean Break: You Guide to Fossil Fuel Free Investing,” www.350.org