

A resolution of the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) calling on the Duke community to divest from fossil fuels, and set up a university-wide Climate Crisis Committee dedicated to staying below 1.5°C of global warming

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Co-Sponsor:

Duke Climate Coalition

Whereas, in the first nine months of 2021, the US has experienced 18 climate disasters that incurred losses of more than \$1 billion, including cataclysmic floods, hurricanes, and wildfires.ⁱ

Whereas, the IPCC has warned that the world is almost out of time to limit global warming to 1.5 °C and avoid the most catastrophic effects of the climate crisis.ⁱⁱ

Whereas, Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment centers its mission around educating the next generation of environmental leaders and has made significant contributions to the global study of the climate crisis.^{iii, iv}

Whereas, hundreds of institutions worldwide have collectively divested almost \$40 trillion from fossil fuel companies, and countless others are planning to do so in the near future.^v

Whereas, the Duke University Management Company, Duke Endowment, Duke University Hospital System, and Duke employee retirement plans have not yet committed to divesting all investment categories from fossil fuels, nor reinvesting in sustainable business practices and funds in a transparent and accountable manner.^{vi}

Whereas, fossil fuel investments are a mechanism whereby institutions profit off of the exploitation of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, which stands in contradiction to Duke's 2020 commitment to anti-racism.^{vii, viii}

Whereas, Duke must hold itself to the same standards and values it promotes through research and educational activities by doing everything within its power to take action on the climate crisis.

Now, therefore be it resolved by the GPSG that the graduate and professional student body of Duke University:

Resubmits, Resolution 2018-03, calling for Duke's endowment to be completely divested of fossil fuels, across all asset classes, by January 1, 2024.

Calls, on Duke to reinvest the proceeds from the sales of former fossil fuel assets into industries actively combatting the climate crisis, such as renewable energy.

Calls, on Kyle Cavanaugh, Vice President for Administration, and Duke's Human Resources to add high-quality environmentally sustainable and socially responsible fund offerings to all Duke employee retirement plans.

Calls, on Duke's faculty and staff to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest the proceeds into industries actively combatting the climate crisis, such as renewable energy.

Calls, on Duke students to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest the proceeds into industries actively combatting the climate crisis, such as renewable energy.

Calls, on Duke's alumni to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest the proceeds into industries actively combatting the climate crisis, such as renewable energy.

Calls, for Duke to increase its commitments to environmental justice in the Durham community and beyond and to expand decision making power on climate actions to local communities of color and Indigenous populations.

Calls, on Duke to uphold its long-standing pledge in the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2024, and to push for additional climate action efforts beyond that date.^{ix, x}

Calls, on Duke to rename and restructure the University Sustainability Committee to the University Climate Crisis Committee and refocus the committee on comprehensive sustainability efforts in all aspects of the university's operations, on and off-campus.

Calls, for a student referendum on this resolution.

Calls, for a faculty and staff referendum on this resolution.

Calls, for an alumni referendum on this resolution.

Definitions:

"Fossil fuels" – the foremost 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies as designated by The Carbon Underground each year.^{xi}

"Divest" – the complete liquidation of all Duke University assets that are invested in fossil fuels, per the previous definition

“Environmental justice” – “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.”^{xii}

References:

ⁱ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (2021). “U.S. hit with 18 billion-dollar disasters so far this year.” <https://www.noaa.gov/news/us-hit-with-18-billion-dollar-disasters-so-far-year>.

ⁱⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2021). “AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis.” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nicholas School of the Environment (2021). “Mission & History.” <https://nicholas.duke.edu/about/mission-history>

^{iv} Nicholas School of the Environment (2021). “Climate Change.” <https://nicholas.duke.edu/research/research-areas/climate-change>.

^v Global Divestment Commitments Database. “The database of fossil fuel divestment commitments made by institutions worldwide.” <https://divestmentdatabase.org/>.

^{vi} Golchin, Rosa (2021). “Duke moves forward on sustainability but stops short of fossil fuel divestment.” <https://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2021/04/duke-university-divestment-sustainability-acir-fossil-fuel>.

^{vii} Greenpeace (2021). “Fossil Fuel Racism: How Phasing Out Oil, Gas, and Coal Can Protect Communities.” <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/reports/fossil-fuel-racism/>.

^{viii} Duke University (2021). “Our Commitments.” <https://anti-racism.duke.edu/commitments/>.

^{ix} <https://sustainability.duke.edu/metrics/climate>

^x <https://reporting.secdnature.org/institution/detail!2334/##2334>

^{xi} <https://fossilfreefunds.org/carbon-underground-200/>

^{xii} <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>