

Statement Denouncing the NYU Board of Trustees Decision Not to Divest from Fossil Fuels

On Thursday June 16th 2016 the New York University Board of Trustees announced that, despite years of student activism, a University Senate resolution, and the Board's own acknowledgement of the urgency of anthropogenic climate change, our university will continue to invest the its endowment in fossil fuels. We, the members and activists of GSOC-UAW-Local 2110, strongly denounce this decision as ethically, ideologically, and materially short-sighted.

The Board suggests that NYU's role in addressing climate change should be institutional. They cite as evidence of their efforts to this end several investments and initiatives in green technologies on campus that will serve to reduce the university's carbon footprint. The Board is pleased with these measures and would like you to be pleased as well. The Board thinks that these are enough to assure itself of the moral high ground.

GSOC, by way of contrast, insists that NYU's role in addressing climate change must by necessity be collective and societal in impact and orientation. While NYU's existing efforts are by no means unimportant or unworthy of celebration, we must emphasize that they are in themselves woefully inadequate to the scale of the problem or the kinds of political configurations that it demands that we pursue. The neoliberal calculus of individual actions—of green consumerism and so-called corporate sustainability—is ineffectual and out-scaled by the urgency and magnitude of a rapidly warming world.

It is social movements and societal actions—people looking outward to effect systemic change—that are called for in this context. This is the register in which the call to divest operates and the one that the Board of Trustees has so woefully ignored. Our own carbon budget is far less important than Exxon's; our own moral responsibilities extend further than Washington Square. If we are to be a global university, we must be accountable to the world beyond our walls.

NYU's cowardly fortress-mentality today is a failure of both leadership and intellectual rigor that we cannot permit. GSOC stands in continued solidarity with NYU Divest and reiterates its demand that our university divest from fossil fuels.

Statement ratified by the GSOC-UAW-Local 2110 Assembly of Stewards



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The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University