21-2: Divest
Introduced - Olivia Chandler ‘23

Recommending measures to pledge to divest Hamilton College’s endowment from fossil fuel companies

ARTICLE 1  Student Activism

WHEREAS the Mission Statement of Hamilton College declares, “Hamilton College prepares students for lives of meaning, purpose, and active citizenship”, the Hamilton student, “engages issues ethically and creatively”, and, “Hamilton enables its students to effect positive change in the world”\(^1\); and

WHEREAS protests and rallies are an effective way to be an active citizen, engage with issues ethically and creatively, and effect positive change in the world; and

WHEREAS students of Hamilton College and the Hamilton Divests group have been rallying and asking for the total divestment of Hamilton College’s endowment from fossil fuel companies since the Student Assembly passed a resolution asking the college to do so in 2013\(^2\), and considering the climate emergency has become more urgent in the years since then, this request becomes even more relevant; and

WHEREAS the administration and Board of Trustees of Hamilton College have refused to respond to the actions of the student body despite the Mission Statement declaring that the college encourages and fosters active citizens that engage with pressing issues; and

\(^1\) https://www.hamilton.edu/about/mission-statement
\(^2\) https://www.hamilton.edu/news/story/should-hamilton-divest-from-fossil-fuels
CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE STUDENT ASSEMBLY
RESOLUTION 21-2
Monday, April 26, 2021
WHEREAS these actions are most often led by marginalized communities on campus, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, LGBTQ+, women, and their allies; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council commends the student body’s positive actions to constantly improve campus culture and challenge the College to keep improving to reflect the students’ needs and wants.

2. The Central Council urges the administration and Board of Trustees to acknowledge and issue a public written response to student activism and engagement when a group of students seeks to address a concern with the college, considering the Mission Statement of Hamilton College.

3. The Central Council acknowledges and appreciates the consistent leadership of marginalized communities on campus and desires to amplify their voices.

ARTICLE 2 Climate Justice

WHEREAS members of the Hamilton College Board of Trustees are responsible for serving as ultimate fiduciaries for the College3; and

WHEREAS fiduciary responsibilities extend beyond financial matters and includes every matter that is within the best interest of the beneficiaries, in this case, the beneficiaries being the current and future students of Hamilton College4; and

WHEREAS the climate crisis is the biggest existential threat students will face in their lifetime and the futures of all students of Hamilton College will be directly impacted by the climate crisis, especially marginalized communities on campus; and

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3 https://my.hamilton.edu/college/institutional_research/Board%20of%20Trustees%20Statement%20of%20Commitment.pdf
4 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fiduciary
WHEREAS Hamilton College has tens of millions of dollars of the endowment invested in fossil fuel companies, and is therefore directly contributing to the climate crisis that will harm the future of the students of Hamilton College; and

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees is breaking their fiduciary duty to the College by working against the best interests of the students; and

WHEREAS the students of Hamilton College have asked for the College to pledge to divest the endowment from all fossil fuel companies since at least 2013; and

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees has not responded in writing, publicly to these requests since 2014\(^5\) and has repeatedly rejected community requests to divest from fossil fuel companies; and

WHEREAS the Central Council acknowledges that the College has created the Sustainability Working Group to improve its sustainability practices on campus, in which divestment is directly aligned with those goals; and

WHEREAS Columbia University pledged to divest from fossil fuels on the first day of a student tuition strike this year\(^6\), and other peer institutions including Vassar College, Middlebury College, Amherst College, Wesleyan University, Cornell University, Georgetown University, Boston University, Syracuse University, Brown University, and Yale University have also pledged to divest; and

WHEREAS the Central Council passed the 2017 resolution “Recommending measures to empower Student Voices at Hamilton College” calling for the administration to respond to any submitted resolutions in writing within seventy-two hours and to better incorporate student voices into administrative decisions\(^7\); and


\(^6\) [https://inthesetimes.com/article/columbia-university-students-tuition-strike.xda](https://inthesetimes.com/article/columbia-university-students-tuition-strike.xda)

\(^7\) [https://students.hamilton.edu/documents/Student-Voices-Resolution-Passed-10-16-17.pdf](https://students.hamilton.edu/documents/Student-Voices-Resolution-Passed-10-16-17.pdf)
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Central Council calls upon the Board of Trustees to pledge to divest Hamilton College’s endowment from all companies directly involved in the extraction, production, and/or distribution of coal, oil, or natural gas as soon as is legally possible and to make this timeline for divestment public on the College’s website.

2. The Central Council urges the Board of Trustees of Hamilton College to make it an explicit policy of the College that the endowment must not be invested in any fossil fuel company or larger fund which contains fossil fuel assets from this day forward.

3. The Central Council urges Hamilton College to look to other universities and colleges that have pledged to divest as a model.

4. The Central Council emphasizes that the response to this resolution must reflect the urgency of the climate crisis and its dire effect on the future of the students of Hamilton College.

5. The Central Council requests that other facets of institutional governance, including faculty and staff assembly, pass resolutions similar to this one.