

Did Not
Pass

Council of Graduate Students
Michigan State University

Resolution: 22-SS-45

Title: A Resolution to Advocate for MSU to Divest From Fossil Fuels

Introduced by: Representative Puchalsky

Introduced on: April 20, 2022

**THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE STUDENTS OF MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY ENACTS:**

WHEREAS, Worldwide, human-induced climate change poses an existential threat to current and future generations and the ecosystems that support human livelihood. Increasingly, climate change is having devastating impacts on ecosystems and human systems, like infrastructure, food production, and human health. The IPCC warns that the effects of climate change may soon overcome our ability to adapt to them¹; and,

WHEREAS, Climate change has already begun to impose many hardships on the people of Michigan— extreme heat waves, crop failures, and catastrophic flooding². In 2012, Michigan fruit farmers suffered \$225 million in damages due to spring temperature swings³. The extreme heat waves brought on by climate change will put the more than 270,000 Michiganders who are especially vulnerable to climate change at great risk. Without transformative action on climate change, Michiganders will continue to pay, both economically and with their health; and,

WHEREAS, MSU is the pioneer land grant university, and therefore, has an obligation to act in the best interest of Michiganders. The MSU 2030 Strategic Plan states, “To achieve our vision, we will be good stewards of resources and pursue initiatives in a manner that ensures our long-term sustainability and success.”⁴ MSU has made some progress in decreasing its climate impact; for example, it has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 30% from a 2010 baseline. However, this can only be a first step; and,

WHEREAS, In the MSU Energy Transition Plan (ETP), the MSU Energy Transition Steering Committee developed a bold roadmap to transition campus to 100% renewable energy. To achieve this goal, a plan was created to address energy supply and demand, develop transformative knowledge, and foster partnerships.⁵ However, MSU cannot truly meet its sustainability goals while still investing in fossil fuels; and,

¹ [IPCC Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#)

² [Michigan Must Prepare for Climate Future](#)

³ [How is the Climate Crisis Affecting Michigan?](#)

⁴ [MSU 2030 Strategic Plan: Stewardship and Sustainability](#)

⁵ [Energy Transition Plan PDF](#)

WHEREAS, The MSU 2030 Strategic Plan, Stewardship and Sustainability Objective 1 states that MSU will, “Develop and implement a long-term, comprehensive financial model and budget process that aligns resources with strategic priorities; ensures university-wide effectiveness and efficiency; and sustains, expands and diversifies revenue sources;” and,

WHEREAS, Despite this goal, MSU has not aligned their financial strategy with its goal of Stewardship and Sustainability. As of July 30, 2021, MSU has millions invested in fossil fuel-containing assets⁶; and,

WHEREAS, Many of MSU’s investments are tied up in hedge fund contracts that typically last 10-15 years, but can be longer. This means that current investment policies will have impacts long after they are enacted. To fulfill the vision outlined in the 2030 Strategic Plan, MSU must enact divestment policies immediately; and,

WHEREAS, One example of the many fossil fuel companies that MSU’s money is invested in is the Marathon Petroleum Corporation, in which MSU has invested roughly \$49.6 million through hedge funds^{7,8}; and,

WHEREAS, Marathon Petroleum Corporation has a net annual production of 101 million barrels of crude oil and natural gas liquids plus 315 billion cubic feet of natural gas, according to the most recent available report;⁹ and,

WHEREAS, Despite MSU’s statement that the Marathon Petroleum Corporation has a “strong commitment to education, and particularly to ensuring those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds have opportunities to succeed,”¹⁰ Marathon’s Southwest Detroit refinery is located in one of the most polluted zipcodes in Michigan. This refinery has received multiple EPA and EGLE violations for exceeding emissions limits¹¹ and directly contributes to toxic pollution throughout this region. This pollution harms both the environment and the people who live there, including MSU’s 22,099 enrolled students from Southeast Michigan¹² and their families; and,

WHEREAS, At the Association of Big Ten Students 2020 Winter conference, the student body presidents across the Big 10 unanimously committed to climate conscious investments, stating that “The Big 10 represents many of the largest public universities in the United States; thus in

⁶ [List of MSU Investments](#)

⁷ [List of MSU Investments](#)

⁸ [ASMSU Bill 57-89](#)

⁹ [Marathon Production Data](#)

¹⁰ [Marathon Invests in Student Success | Giving to Michigan State University](#)

¹¹ [Detroit Metro Times: Struggling to Breathe in 48217](#)

¹² [MI Spartan Impact - Southeast Michigan](#)

the face of this crisis, we have an obligation to act” and “a right to demand our universities are not complicit in the harms of fossil fuel investment ;”¹³ and,

WHEREAS, Other U.S. universities, with a range of endowment sizes, have already divested from fossil fuels, including University of California,¹⁴ Middlebury College,¹⁵ Georgetown University,¹⁶ and Creighton University;¹⁷ therefore be it,

RECOGNIZING, COGS cannot uphold its mission to promote graduate and professional student welfare while being invested in companies that contribute to climate injustice; therefore be it,

RESOLVED, COGS shall advocate for the divestment of its own assets from any present and future fossil fuel interests; and be it,

RESOLVED, COGS shall advocate for the MSU Administration to begin talks surrounding the movement of fossil fuel investments to more sustainable investment accounts and portfolios; and be it further,

RESOLVED, COGS shall advocate for the non-renewal of all of Michigan State’s University’s fossil fuel investments after existing contracts expire, whenever that may be; and be it further,

RESOLVED, COGS shall coordinate its advocacy with ASMSU, which passed Bill 57-89 on March 18, 2021, which also calls on MSU to divest from fossil fuels¹⁸; and let be it further,

RESOLVED, COGS shall support ASMSU’s Bill 57-44 and advocate that in addition to an undergraduate student, at least one graduate student be placed on the University Investment Advisory Subcommittee¹⁹; and be it further,

RESOLVED, This resolution will take effect at the end of the Full Council meeting in which it was adopted.

¹³ [Big 10 Climate Conscious Investment Bill](#)

¹⁴ [University of California Divestment From Fossil Fuels](#)

¹⁵ [Middlebury Divestment From Fossil Fuels Strategy](#)

¹⁶ [Georgetown University Will Divest From Fossil Fuel Companies](#)

¹⁷ [Creighton University Divests Fully From Fossil Fuels](#)

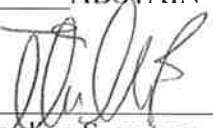
¹⁸ [ASMSU Bill 57-89](#)

¹⁹ [AMSU Bill 57-44](#)

VOTED ON: 04/20/2022 (Failed)

VOTE TOTALS: 30

15 FOR
5 AGAINST
10 ABSTAIN



Recording Secretary



President