

## **Rebuttal to Arguments in Favor of the Memorial to the Regents**

- 1) The pro argument begins with: “avoiding catastrophic climate change requires that fossil fuels be phased out in the near future.” This is factually false. Zero carbon does not equate to zero fossil fuels. Ironically the pro argument reference (authored by Steve Chu, secretary of Energy in the Obama administration) clearly supports our thesis: “The capture of CO<sub>2</sub> in power generation and in industrial processes is a necessary part of the required transition to deep decarbonization.” Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) allows for fossil fuels to be used with zero carbon emissions. Existing fossil fuel companies are best positioned to develop and rapidly implement CCS.
- 2) The argument that we should support our students when they are misinformed makes no sense. As faculty we have an obligation to teach our students (and colleagues) about energy and climate change—not the other way around.
- 3) “Fossil fuel companies are a primary cause for insufficient action countering global warming.” This is incorrect – the key reason for insufficient action is a lack of political will. Only Exxon Mobil has been shown to have hidden their own research on the impacts of global warming. Divestment of UC endowment funds from Exxon would have less impact on this misbehavior than UC joining (or leading) a shareholder resolution to reduce the salaries of Exxon executives.
- 4) “Fossil fuel stocks are already a bad investment” cites CalPERS losses in coal and petroleum stocks in 2014/15. It is misleading to look at one year of stock market returns, and these years corresponded to a significant decline in oil prices. Moreover, UC’s endowment is currently shorting coal stocks. Other firms on the proposed divestment list have performed far better than in 2014/2015. Detailed portfolio selection decisions should be made by investment professionals, not faculty memorials.
- 5) “A rapid evolution to a largely carbon-free energy system is essential within the next 15 to 30 years. This is technically possible and increasingly affordable.” While we hope that this is true, the pro argument provides no reasons why the small amount of money UC could divest from the Carbon Underground list would do anything to help this evolution. In fact, it would hurt, as we have explained in our con argument.
- 6) We fully agree with the pro argument’s assertion that: “The effects of climate change will be greatest on youth and future generations for hundreds of years.” This makes it especially unfortunate that US voters ages 18-29 vote at under 2/3 the rate of the remaining adult population<sup>17</sup>.

We completely agree with the pro argument that climate change is a major threat. But as we document in our con argument, divestment could actually slow progress on deploying key technologies for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We urge our faculty colleagues to act as leaders of discourse and reason and not be swayed by simplistic politics and sound bites. We urge you to vote no on the proposed memorial.

---

17 See <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/demographics>