

Columbia Announces Divestment from Thermal Coal Producers

March 13, 2017

Building on Columbia's longstanding commitment to addressing climate change, the University's Trustees have voted to support a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing (ACSRI) to divest from companies deriving more than 35% of their revenue from thermal coal production and to participate in the Carbon Disclosure Project's Climate Change Program.

Thermal coal is used in coal-fired electricity generating plants (whereas metallurgic coal is used in steel production). The basis of the **ACSRI recommendation** adopted by the Trustees is that coal has the highest level of CO₂ emission per unit of energy; it is used ubiquitously across the globe as a source of electrical energy; and there exist today several cleaner alternative energy sources for electricity production (including but not limited to natural gas, solar, and wind). The University's divestment from thermal coal producers is intended to help mobilize a broader public constituency for addressing climate change and, in the words of ACSRI, to "encourage the use of the best available knowledge in public decision-making."

"Divestment of this type is an action the University takes only rarely and in service of our highest values," said University President Lee C. Bollinger. "That is why there is a very careful and deliberative process leading up to any decision such as this. Clearly, we must do all we can as an institution to set a responsible course in this urgent area. I want to recognize the efforts of the many students, faculty and staff whose substantive contributions have brought us to this point."

The Trustees also encouraged the University to continue to strengthen efforts to reduce its own carbon footprint, as well as to further support research, educational efforts, and policy analysis in the field of climate change and carbon emissions reduction.

Many elements of this effort are already in place or underway. A multi-year planning process will result in the announcement next month of Columbia's new plan to further enhance the environmental sustainability of our operations. Columbia's renowned Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, on the forefront of the science of "global warming" since the term was first coined by a faculty member, is once again leading by example, having announced that it will rely on solar power for 75% of its electrical energy needs. Lamont-Doherty is part of the Columbia University Earth Institute, which brings together one of the world's most significant collection of researchers across multiple fields to deepen human understanding of climate change and the solutions for a sustainable future.