

Tuesday, March 31, 2015 By [Erin Martin Kane](#)

University Formalizes Commitment to Prohibit Direct Investment in Coal, Fossil Fuels

Syracuse University today announced that it is formalizing its commitment to prohibit direct investment of endowment funds in coal mining and other fossil fuel companies. The University will also continue to seek additional investments through its endowment in companies that are developing new technology related to solar energy, biofuels and advanced recycling.

This action mirrors commitments recently announced by other national universities, including Stanford University and the University of Maine.

The University's endowment supports the University's people, programs and facilities. Through its investment return, the endowment funds support student scholarships, faculty chairs and professorships, academic programs, and academic and student-life initiatives.

In late February, University officials met with members of Divest SU, a student-based group seeking to divest the University's endowment from the fossil fuel industry. The meeting enabled positive conversation and information sharing and a commitment to continue dialog on the issues of divestment from fossil fuels.

"It is heartening to see our students fully engaged on this important issue," says Bea González, dean of University College and special assistant to the Chancellor. "We have already had productive dialogue on divestment, and this step underscores our mutual commitment to acting in a way that supports the best interests of the University, our students and the world."

This commitment means that Syracuse will not directly invest in publicly traded companies whose primary business is extraction of fossil fuels. The University will also direct its external investment managers to take every step possible to prohibit investments in these public companies as well.

"Syracuse has a long record of supporting responsible environmental stewardship and good corporate citizenship, and we want to continue that record," says Chancellor Kent Syverud. "Formalizing our commitment to not invest directly in fossil fuels is one more way we do that."

In research, education, campus initiatives and fiscal matters, the University is attuned to its role in leading change that can have a meaningful impact on issues regarding climate disruption.

From nearly 40 years ago when the University sought to increase energy efficiency on campus to the University's signature on the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) in 2007 and beyond, the University has instituted its own policies, such as the [Climate Action Plan](#) designed to achieve "carbon neutrality" by 2040; created innovative centers for sustainability, such as the [Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems](#); and developed coursework and programs in [sustainability](#).

The University's participation in the ACUPCC led to its creation of a Climate Action Plan in 2009 and the development of targets to reducing greenhouse gases. Those measures include Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for new building and renovation projects of more than \$10 million and the installation of 240 solar thermal panels on the roofs of 20 buildings, serving 160 South Campus apartments.

In regard to investing, the University has also made meaningful investments through its endowment in companies that are developing new technology related to solar energy, biofuels and advanced recycling. The University's investment in private partnerships is the primary vehicle used to invest in alternative energy companies.

To ensure socially responsible investments, the Board of Trustees' Investment and Endowment Committee conducts regular audits of its investment portfolio to ensure that the University's investments meet the requirements for socially responsible investing. Those decisions are supported by Institutional Shareholder Services, an organization that provides investment decision-making tools to the University. On matters related to social and environmental issues, the guidelines reflect a broad consensus of the socially responsible investing community.

The University's work in reviewing its investments follows the Syracuse University Board of Trustees adoption of its Socially Responsible Investment Policy in 2013. The policy reiterated the board's commitment to investments that demonstrate good corporate citizenship while providing for growth in the University's endowment