An appeal by the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) to Washington State Governor Jay Inslee to call a special legislative session in November of 2013 and a call to the Washington State Legislature to pass a transportation package that includes the option for the local funding of transit.

WHEREAS the Washington State Governor Jay Inslee has called a special session to commence on Thursday, Nov. 7th 2013.

WHEREAS members of the Washington State Legislature assert that they are committed to ensuring access to education for students; and

WHEREAS transportation is essential for the public’s access to education; and

WHEREAS transit provides social and environmental benefits to the common good, including access to education and employment from low-income areas, as well as decreasing emissions and traffic congestion; and

WHEREAS the GPSS views transit as a vital service to the University of Washington’s research and teaching missions, University of Washington’s core value of environmental sustainability, the economic prosperity of the surrounding region, and the common good; and

WHEREAS the current level of transit service is already underserving the region’s demand by approximately 10%, already stifling educational opportunities for University of Washington students; and
WHEREAS the King County Metro faces a 17% budget cut beginning in September 2014, with a $75 million shortfall, 600,000 hours of service cut, and up to 74 routes eliminated;

and

WHEREAS the King County Metro’s transit service is an economic priority to the state, providing over 65 million trips to and from school and work; and

WHEREAS public transit saves King County Metro riders $367 million annually in time and fuel costs, while taking approximately 175,000 cars out of traffic congestion per day; and

WHEREAS the proposed budget cuts facing King County Metro will add approximately 25,000 cars to traffic congestion every day, inhibiting the fluidity of the state’s economy; and

WHEREAS King County Metro has done its part by increasing fares by 80% since 2008; and already exhausted efficiency measures, including reducing labor costs, reducing capital investments, and reducing operating reserves used for emergency situations; and

WHEREAS University of Washington students depend on King County Metro for over 6.2 million rides per academic year; and

WHEREAS 78% of UW students and faculty utilize their U-PASS to commute to work and school; and

WHEREAS many routes serving the University District area, including the 48, 65, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 271, and 372 -- are at risk of having reduced service; and

WHEREAS the University of Washington has contributed to the mission of creating sustainable, long term support of transit, by approving a universal U-PASS, a collective agreement to support affordable transit in the Puget Sound region; and
WHEREAS it is unlikely that legislators will reach a deal on transportation before King County Metro cuts will go into effect, if they do not act in a special session; and

WHEREAS public transportation in King County affects constituents from every legislative district in Washington State.

And THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the Graduate and Professional Student Senate formally recommend to the Governor and the Washington State Legislature:

THAT the GPSS formally recommends to the Governor that a special legislative session be called in November of 2013 to approve a transportation package for Washington State; and

THAT the GPSS formally recommends that an option for local funding for transit be included in the approved transportation package; and

THAT the GPSS urges State legislators to take into consideration the impact that would be felt in the Puget Sound region if King Country Metro proceeds with the proposed budget cuts, and the widespread effect it would have on the economic health of Washington State; and

THAT the GPSS urges State legislators to take into consideration the contradictory message they would be sending constituents if they don’t find a sustainable solution to fund public transit, which is an imperative component of increasing access to higher education, which many state politicians have made the assertion that they are committed to; and

THAT the GPSS directs the Vice President to forward a copy of this resolution, with an accompanying cover letter, to the offices of Governor Jay Inslee; House Transportation Committee Chair Judy Clibborn, and Vice Chairs, Jake Fey, Marko Liias, and Luis Moscoso; Senate Transportation Co-Chairs Curtis King and Tracey Eide; King County Executive Dow Constantine; King County Council, Randy Hodgins, Vice President of the University of Washington Office of External Relations others.


8 “UW UPASS Advisory Board Annual Report 2013” http://www.washington.edu/facilities/transportation/commuterservices/policy/u-pass_ab#other


10 “What will happen if the congestion reduction charge is not approved?” King County Metro. http://metro.kingcounty.gov/am/future/PDFs/p2_Metro_route_list_17percent_reduction_062411.pdf
RESOLUTION SEEKING CLARIFICATION ON THE ROLE OF ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS DIRECTIVES ON THE UWMC AND WITHIN AFFILIATE HOSPITALS

Sponsored by: Esra D. Camci (Oral Health Sciences), Joseph E. Telegen (English), and Chris Lizotte (GPSS President)

Resolution Number: 02.13-14

WHEREAS the University of Washington and University of Washington Medical Center is a publicly funded institution charged with the provision of fair, comprehensive, and full spectrum care, as decreed by Washington State public policy; and

WHEREAS PeaceHealth is an institution which follows Religious and Ethical Directives for Catholic Health Care (ERDs); and

WHEREAS students at the University of Washington have voiced their concern regarding the affiliation of the University of Washington Medicine & PeaceHealth, and the potential impact the affiliation may have on their ability to receive comprehensive training when placed or working in an affiliated site that follows Catholic ERDs; and

WHEREAS affiliations between public university teaching hospitals and faith-based medical providers are nearly unprecedented and therefore the future impacts of the present affiliation are unpredictable; and

WHEREAS previous communication by UW and UWM leadership regarding the affiliation with PeaceHealth including impacts or lack thereof at UWM facilities on research, medical training, and medical practice is not easily accessible, contained in multiple and disjointed online and offline sources, and therefore difficult to understand as a complete and coherent statement of values

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SENATE:

THAT the GPSS urges the UW and UWM leadership to consolidate all pertinent statements and announcements regarding the UW-PeaceHealth affiliation in one easily accessible online location so that the public may clearly understand the nature of the affiliation between the two organizations; and

THAT the GPSS directs the GPSS President to monitor UW Medicine policy, and in the event that such policy is altered such that it impacts student training at UWMC and
affiliated facilities, and advocate on behalf of medical and other clinical students as needed; and

THAT copies of this resolution be sent to UW President Michael Young, Provost and Executive Vice President Ana Mari Cauce, CEO of UW Medicine and Dean of the School of Medicine Paul Ramsey, and Chair of the Board of Regents Orin Smith.
RESOLUTION TO ALIGN THE UNIVERSITY’S FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS WITH ITS COMMITMENT TO LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY

Sponsored by: Justin Bare, GPSS Senator
Written by: Justin Bare, GPSS Senator; Members of Confronting Climate Change
Resolution Number: 03.13-14

WHEREAS the current value of fossil fuel companies is based on the assumption that they will burn all of their fossil fuel reserves; and

WHEREAS fossil fuel companies together possess reserves of at least three times the amount of carbon that scientists have deemed relatively safe to burn; and

WHEREAS fossil fuel investments are therefore becoming increasingly financially risky, and have lost value over the past decade compared to a stock market average which excludes fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS in carbon-constrained scenarios compatible with a livable planet, the fossil fuel extraction projects with the highest break even costs and most egregious contributions to climate change (e.g. oil sands, tar sands, and coal) will suffer financial losses first; and

WHEREAS even conservative economic analyses show that the costs of coal outweigh the benefits that it provides, and

Carbon Tracker Initiative: http://www.carbontracker.org/site/wastedcapital

1 A study done by Standard & Poors showed that if a university with a $1 billion endowment had divested 10 years ago their endowment would have grown by an extra $0.12 billion when compared to an endowment that had not divested (Begos & Loviglio, 2013). Providing a more comprehensive analysis of the potential benefits from divestment, IMPAX Asset Management conducted an analysis to determine how a fiduciary should compare the risks to portfolios presented by stricter carbon regulations (IMPAX Asset Management, 2013). IMPAX compared four different investment strategies with varying aggressiveness towards reducing carbon risk, using the MSCI index from 2008-2013. The study concluded that each of the fossil-free strategies offered equal if not slightly better returns than a portfolio which did not screen out carbon risk.

2 For instance, “through Deutsche Bank, WWF swapped its coal and tar sands-related stocks for returns from the S&P 500 index. The hedge has already worked, producing a net annualized gain of 21.7 percent over the last three years.” (http://www.cnbc.com/id/101669392).

3 Looking forward, consider that the ratings agency Standard and Poor’s recently concluded that the business models of tar and/or oil sands could be “invalidated” in a world acting to constrain carbon (Redmond & Wilkins, 2013). Recently, Carbon Tracker Institute concluded that oil companies risk wasting $1.1 trillion of investors’ cash through 2025 on expensive, uneconomic projects from the Arctic and deep seas to tar sands. Similarly, for the coal industry, Paul Gilding points out that “even with the modest goal of giving us just a 50 per cent chance of not crossing the agreed 2°C threshold, two-thirds of proven reserves of coal, oil and gas can never be burnt, with the loss of income for the coal industry estimated at around $1 trillion per year by 2030.”

WHEREAS investing in fossil fuels bets against the world’s ability to prevent catastrophic climate change; and

WHEREAS fossil fuel companies have undermined common understanding and the political process through public relations schemes, bribery, corporate coalitions, lobbying efforts, and think tanks, which created an illusion that scientific controversy exists around the imminent dangers posed by climate change; and

WHEREAS the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and leading economists, engineers, scientists, and academics have all published studies showing that it is quite feasible for us to transition to a clean energy alternative and that it is in our collective interest to do so, and

WHEREAS the university is committed to being a leader in sustainability; and

WHEREAS the university has a fiduciary responsibility to protect the endowment from risky assets,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON:

THAT the GPSS requests that the Board of Regents of the University of Washington immediately instruct the UW Treasury to divest the endowment from direct holdings in oil sands, tar sands, and coal assets - the three riskiest and most destructive carbon assets; and

THAT the GPSS supports implementing a carbon risk assessment tool to screen all fossil fuel assets for financial risk to align our finances with a carbon-constrained world.

THAT copies of this resolution be sent to the UW Board of Regents; the UW Associate Treasurer Ann Sarna; UW President Michael Young; UW Provost Ana Mari Cauce; Faculty

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8 http://priceofoil.org/fossil-fuel-industry-influence-in-the-u-s/
11 The International Energy Agency estimates that even when excluding costs associated with the impacts of climate change we can save $71 trillion by 2050 by transitioning away from fossil fuels.
14 Carbon risk is defined as the family of financial risks correlated with the greenhouse gas emissions associated with an asset.
Senate Chair John M Lee; GPSS President Chris Lizotte; ASUW President Michael Kutz; GPSS Director of University Affairs Austin Wright-Pettibone; ASUW Director of University Affairs Jeffrey McNerney; Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Joshua Bessex; the 2014-2015 GPSS leadership; and the 2014-2015 ASUW leadership.