

TUFTS

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Vote shows 74 percent of Tufts students support fossil fuel divestment

Posted by Matt Rocheleau October 15, 2013 12:10 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Three in every four Tufts University students want the school to divest from fossil fuel companies, so long as doing so does not harm the university's financial status, according to results from a campus-wide vote this month.

Organized by the school's student government, the [Oct. 9 vote](#) drew 1,588 responses, with 1,151 answering yes, 413 answering no, and 24 abstaining to the question: Should Tufts University divest its endowment from fossil fuel companies provided that doing so does not adversely affect the financial status of the university?"

A group of students at Tufts has been pressuring the university's trustee board to divest its holdings in the top 200 publicly-traded oil, coal, and gas companies. The group's campaign, "Tufts Divest for Our Future," [formed in January](#). It is one of many similar campaigns that have sprung up at campuses across the globe in recent years as part of a movement spearheaded by the climate change advocacy group [350.org](#).

"We're very excited to take the results of this vote back to the board to show them how much support at Tufts there is for this campaign," said a statement from sophomore Luke Sherman, who helped push for the vote to be held. The results show "that Tufts students value a just and sustainable future and a university that lives up to its mission statement."

[In May](#), the university established the Presidential Working Group on Socially Responsible Investment and Climate Change to explore the impacts of divestment and to consider other efforts Tufts could take to support the battle against global warming.

Other universities have been pressured by students, including through [votes](#) showing overwhelming support on campus, to divest from fossil fuel companies. In response, [some schools](#) have established working groups or committees to research the idea.

Last fall, Unity College in Maine, an environmental science-specialty school, became the first college in the country to divest its endowment from fossil fuel industries. And a handful of other schools, all of which have relatively small endowments and most of which are based in New England, including Hampshire College in Amherst, have since committed to some form of divestment.

Colleges and universities with wealthier endowments have either rejected the idea of fossil fuel divestment or have not yet announced a decision. Harvard University, which has the largest endowment of any school in the world, [announced](#) this month it will not

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divest.

At Tufts, the [pro-divestment student campaign](#) said it has also held petition drives in recent months and has collected more than 1,500 signatures from students along with hundreds of other signatures from alumni and faculty who support their cause.

Leaders of the campaign said they have met with the university's president, the trustee board's investment committee and other administrators to discuss divestment and expect to meet with administrators again later this month.

"We know that we still have a lot of work to do before the board commits to anything, but the results of this vote have given us a lot of hope moving forward," said a statement from working group member Lila Kohrman-Glaser, a junior. "This campaign is giving Tufts an opportunity to position itself as a visionary leader on the issue of climate change, and we believe that our administration will make the right choice."

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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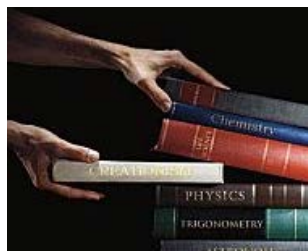
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