

# Cornell University Assembly

## UA Resolution # 16 Carbon Neutrality and Divestment

1 **Sponsored by: James Blair, Employee; Chair of the Assembly**  
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3 **Whereas**, in December 2013, the Faculty Senate passed Resolution 10-13, “Cornell  
4 Investment and Divestment Strategies for a Sustainable Future”; and  
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6 **Whereas**, Resolution 10-13 called for a reduction in the use of fossil fuels by the  
7 University in order to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality by 2035; and  
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9 **Whereas**, Resolution 10-13 also called for the University to reduce Cornell’s  
10 investments in companies producing fossil fuels consistent with Cornell’s progress  
11 towards carbon neutrality so as to reach full divestment by 2035; and  
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13 **Whereas**, the Faculty Senate forwarded a copy of Resolution 10-13 to the University  
14 Assembly (the Assembly) requesting the Assembly pass a Resolution of Support; and  
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16 **Whereas**, at a meeting of the Assembly held on April 8, 2014, the Assembly received  
17 presentations and testimony from experts that showed both the merits of and concerns  
18 with Faculty Senate’s Resolution 10-13;  
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20 **Be it therefore resolved** that the University Assembly declares its support for  
21 achieving the goal of carbon neutrality by 2035;  
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23 **Be it further resolved**, however, that the University Assembly declares against  
24 divestment as proposed in Faculty Senate Resolution 10-13 because its positive effect  
25 would essentially be symbolic and, in of the opinion of the majority of the Assembly, as a  
26 symbolic act it does not rise to the level where a constraint should be levied on the  
27 investments contained in Cornell’s endowment. This is not a statement against the fact  
28 that divestment can be an effective method for driving social change, but rather a  
29 recognition that donors did not give those funds to the endowment with the  
30 understanding that they would be used for direct societal transformation, but rather to  
31 foster the University’s mission to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge. In the  
32 long run, educating students and conducting world-class research in the areas of carbon  
33 neutrality and sustainability will be far more beneficial to the inhabitants of planet  
34 Earth than the symbolic act of Cornell’s divestment from fossil fuel companies.  
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36 **Be it finally resolved** that the President of Cornell University forward this resolution  
37 to the University Trustees for their awareness and that the President’s Office submit an  
38 annual report to the Student Assembly, Graduate and Profession Student Assembly, the  
39 Employee Assembly, the University Assembly and the Faculty Senate that describes the  
40 University’s progress towards carbon neutrality and, to the extent it can be determined,  
41 discloses the amount of Cornell’s endowment invested in renewable energy and  
42 sustainability.

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44 **Respectfully Submitted,**

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46 James N. Blair

47 Chair, University Assembly