

Chancellor Gallagher:

On February 21st, 2020, after almost six years of engaging with you and other members of University administration, we, the members of the Fossil Free Pitt Coalition, began our occupation of the Cathedral of Learning. Our objective was simple: to reiterate our demand that the Board of Trustees votes to divest Pitt's endowment from the fossil fuel industry on February 28th.

For the past 12 days, we have created a vibrant, radically creative, and educational space. We have engaged with thousands of people, opened up conversations about environmental justice, encouraged divestment as an effective strategy to delegitimize the fossil fuel industry, and envisioned a just world beyond fossil fuels.

We have expanded our community and interacted with other activists and organizers from both on and off-campus groups. To show solidarity with FFPC's actions, professors have held classes, TAs have held office hours, and dozens of campus groups have held their meetings in the Cathedral Commons. Doves of students, faculty and community members have occupied the Cathedral with us to learn and grow. It is clear that divestment is a pressing issue for the wider Pitt community.

In spite of this community power, administration officials such as Dean Bonner, Linda Williams-Moore, and Summer Rothrock have harangued us with petty and hollow administrative directives to remove our signs, study materials, and basic overnight supplies. This reveals a deep disconnection between your administration and the community at large. We hope that you learn from this occupation and take the time to reevaluate your relationship with those that are affected by your inaction.

On Friday, Feb 28th, 2020, the Board of Trustees did not meet our demand to vote on divestment. Instead, it announced its decision to go Carbon Neutral by 2037, and its plans to enact a Socially Responsible Investing process. While important, this process was designed with no timeline for divestment, a critical and time-sensitive issue. These are embarrassing responses from a university that claims to be a leader in sustainability. The administration, under the direction of the board, has become blind to the reality of the climate crisis. They have neglected their fiduciary responsibility to the University. If we do not meet this crisis with the mobilization and urgency it deserves, the livability of the Earth's ecosystems is in jeopardy. Already, vulnerable populations in the global south, low-income communities, and communities of color are disproportionately facing the dire consequences of a crisis exacerbated by reckless fossil fuel usage. The climate crisis is here now.

We acknowledge the attempts that the University has made to become more sustainable. Even limited progress is a step in the right direction. The University of Pittsburgh has the ability to stand as a strong example that Southwestern Pennsylvania is not beholden to the power of the fossil fuel industry. We know that substantial progress can be made if you are willing to listen and act on the demands set forth by us and backed by the community. We understand that you have

good intentions for the University, but intentions alone won't prevent the climate crisis from inflicting damage to Southwestern PA. Actions that are commensurate with the urgency of the climate crisis need to be taken before it is too late. We do not have the time for you to recognize the error of your ways.

Throughout our campaign, but especially during our occupation of the Cathedral, we have been appalled by the lack of transparency in decision-making processes, the hollowness of 'shared governance' that Pitt likes to tout, and the culture of surveillance in University spaces. Each protest and action has been met with heavy campus security and police presence, with petty directives and sanctions used to intimidate student activists who are doing nothing to endanger the safety and well-being of the people on campus. The authoritarian response, looming specter of arbitrary punishment, and attempted curtailment of our fundamental rights of free assembly and speech are redolent of an institution more interested in saving face than the type of engagement with vital issues that is the hallmark of great American universities.

We have sacrificed our time and energy in order to make our voices heard and enact change. In the years to come, the climate crisis will only worsen and institutions like the University of Pittsburgh will surely look increasingly foolish for taking half-measures and non-measures when bold action is required. As the person that represents students to the Board of Trustees, you have *failed* to convey both the urgency of the climate crisis and the consensus of the student body that the University of Pittsburgh has a clear duty to respond with expediency and conviction.

Today, on March 4th, 2020, 12 days after we began, we are choosing to leave this space, knowing that we have immeasurably impacted the course of our institution. While our occupation is officially concluding, we want to make it clear that we're still here. Our campaign is stronger than ever and we will continue to fight until Pitt divests and recognizes its role as an educational institution rather than just being a corporate behemoth. Joining us in our endeavor is a freshly energized group of undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and alumni that have been inspired by our actions.

This action has taught us a great deal about our power as student activists. We will continue to use that power to fight for the world we want to live in and ensure that Pitt answers to its primary stakeholders: its students. This is OUR university - and we refuse to let its legacy be shaped by a small group of out-of-touch administrators. We won't rest until you divest.

Fossil Free Pitt Coalition