

Date: March 7, 2007

STATEMENT FOR THE FACULY TOWN HALL MEETING ON EBI

- TO BE READ AT THE MEETING -

To My UC Berkeley Faculty Colleagues,

I apologize for missing this meeting. I was already scheduled to be in Oxford and London when it was called.

I am delighted that we, along with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, were able to secure the historic EBI grant from British Petroleum.

This grant offers tremendous opportunities as well as challenges.

On the one hand, biofuels in a diversity of forms offer a major opportunity to decarbonize both the liquid transport fuel and the stationary power sector (through direct biofuel combustion, or more promisingly, gasified biofuel mixes). California has become not only a national, but one of, if not *the*, global leader on an integrated, workable climate policy. The vehicle (AB1493) and economy-wide (AB32) greenhouse gas reduction bills, and the more recent Low Carbon Fuel Standard – all of which we at UC Berkeley helped to develop – are all vital to California and the world's efforts to manage and make deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. I have personally been involved in the science, engineering, and policy aspects of developing clean energy options. The Energy Biosciences Institute can be a piece in all these efforts.

At the same time, EBI represents tremendous challenges of vision, governance, and what it means to be not only a leading university worldwide, but *the* leading public institution. Our mandate is service first and foremost for the public good, not that of a small set of wealthy and powerful corporations.

Berkeley must find a way to strike that balance: to build a partnership to advance the laboratory and social science of clean fuels, markets, and opportunities **and** to structure the entire partnership so that our duty first and foremost is to improve the lives and opportunities of the global poor. This is far, far easier said than done. We have already seen the vast reach of petrochemical, agrochemical and other companies intrusively and destructively into the lives of poor and marginalized people around the world, and we would fail in our public mission and trust if we entered the BP arrangement without making this issue first and foremost in our minds. Thankfully, in addition to its tremendous strength in energy science and technology, Berkeley has by a great margin the world's most significant collection of social scientists and humanists engaged on environmental issues. That experience and expertise must be made central to the EBI process – from initial agreement to local implementation and impact.

The EBI agreement is this decade's chance to do far better what was tried during the 'Green Revolution'. Under that model affluent farmers largely profited, but the poor were made worse off by (at least initially) a well meaning agricultural research and extension effort. Some success did emerge from the Green Revolution, but the poor, and the environment paid a heavy price for those victories.

These issues are why it is critical that we undertake the EBI initiative, but at the same time to do something entirely new: **to direct the effort with the knowledge and goals that social sciences can bring to avoiding these problems of the past.**

The social goals of the project -- enhancing food, fuel, social and environmental security of the full global population -- must be as central as developing improved and more sustainable biofuels for the more affluent nations.

Socially determined objectives must thus lead and direct this effort, not become relegated to 'ambulance chasing'; following behind a series of technically compelling yet socially questionable discoveries, papers, or patents.

If we succeed in developing technically exciting advances in low carbon fuels without fundamentally addressing social needs in the world's poor regions -- including parts of our own -- we will have failed no matter how many Nobel Prizes EBI generates.

Thus, I recommend faculty support for EBI, but with the novel framework that our social and environmental mandate to increase global equity, quality of life, and environmental quality must be used to direct the natural and physical science components of the project.

To do this we will need to maintain from the outset an open and transparent process, to learn and be lead by social goals -- and not the latest exciting scientific breakthrough -- of which I hope and expect there will be many. We will need to listen to the lessons from the many past failings, and few limited successes, in efforts on this scale. We will need to engage student, community, and civil society leaders and groups from around the world, and we will need to be brave enough to alter our plans based on their input, not just listen, note objections, and move on.

The EBI opportunity comes at a critical time in the energy and environmental history of our planet. It represents one area -- one area among many -- where major innovations and advances are needed. There is no better -- and more challenging -- environment in which to do this project than the UC Berkeley community. Indeed, I would be most uncomfortable if any other institution were given this opportunity.

Thank you,

Dan Kammen