**AAUP Resolution Supporting the United Nations Climate Accord and Campus Divestment**

At the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, over 190 nations negotiated an agreement (not yet legally binding) to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius—and to pursue efforts to stay below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Achievement of this ambitious goal will require a resolute collective global effort. All organizations and institutions, large and small, must take all feasible steps, consistent with their resources and missions, to help achieve a rapid decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and a transition to renewable energies. Failure to do so will cause major disruptions to political and economic institutions and threaten not only the well-being but also the very survival of future generations.

Prominent among current measures to reduce heat-trapping emissions is a growing divestment movement. It began in 2011 as students at several U.S. colleges petitioned administrators to divest their endowments of fossil-fuel stocks and bonds. Five years later, this movement includes not only colleges and universities but also pension funds, foundations, faith-based groups, governmental organizations, and individual investors who have, in total, divested over $3.4 trillion in assets.

The AAUP recognizes that the campaign to divest from fossil fuels is presently controversial, but it is, nevertheless, the AAUP’s considered judgment that there are compelling economic and moral reasons to support divestment.

Financial analysts increasingly speak of a “carbon bubble” soon likely to burst. This is because much of the value of carbon-fuel companies consists of underground reserves, most of which (65-80%) must remain there as “stranded assets” if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change. These companies are vulnerable to several possible developments: government regulations and /or judicial decisions that would limit the use of carbon fuels, the accelerating development of alternative energy sources, and the growing political opposition to fossil fuels.

The ethical argument—the moral imperative to respect the rights of future generations—is even more compelling. Given that its mission statement includes a commitment to “promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals . . . and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education” as well as a commitment to “ensure higher education’s contribution to the common good,” the AAUP recognizes its responsibility to participate in current efforts to preserve our planet. As Sharan Burrow of the International Trade Union Confederation aptly cautions, “There are no jobs on a dead planet.” Nor, it might be added, will there be any universities to promote the public good.

It is expected of institutions of higher education that they will provide intellectual and ethical leadership. Accordingly, the AAUP deems it appropriate and necessary to now add its voice to the call for divestment.

While the AAUP appreciates the many steps already taken by American colleges and universities to address climate change, it also recognizes the urgent need for an immediate intensification and extension of these efforts.

In particular, the AAUP calls upon members of the academic community to take the following actions:

1. Administrators should oversee further reductions in campus greenhouse gas emissions;
2. Faculty should create additional courses and co-curricular programming to teach the skills and values needed to create a sustainable society;
3. University scientists should devote more attention to researching energy conservation and renewable energies;
4. Governing Boards should begin a process, taking no longer than five years, to purge endowments and retirement funds of fossil-fuel holdings and to reinvest these monies into businesses that promote conservation and green energies.

We urgently ask all of our colleagues to promote these measures on their campuses.