



**Students for a
Fossil Free Future**

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PRESS RELEASE: Student coalition publishes report recommending universities to reconsider partnerships with the fossil fuel industry

17 January, 2022 (Singapore) – Students from NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, and Yale-NUS, as a coalition named Students for a Fossil Free Future (S4F), have published a report titled *Fossil-Fuelled Universities*, detailing extensive links between Singapore’s universities and the fossil fuel industry. The coalition is also launching their two-week campaign today, recommending these universities to take a more active and forward-thinking approach to evaluate the current responsibilities they have in the climate crisis, and take bold steps to address them through institutional action and curricula development.

This comes at the heels of other recent youth-led climate and environmental activism, including the collective statement “An urgent call from Singaporean youths on the environmental crisis” released during COP26 last year, and the 2021 SG Climate Rally titled “The People in Crisis.” During both efforts, fossil fuel divestment was cited as an urgent and necessary climate action.

S4F’s report is a ground-up, independent research effort by over 60 individuals that include current students, alumni, academics, civil society members, and lawyers. This extensive work “is the culmination of three years of effort, and testifies to the urgency and severity all of us across generations feel towards the climate crisis and transitioning away from fossil fuels,” says Mr Shawn Ang, a member of the S4F team.

Key linkages highlighted by the report include the areas of finances, management, academia, professional development and the co-optation of campus spaces.

For example, NUS and NTU’s endowment investments both have indirect exposure to fossil fuels. While NUS has a “low single digit” percentage of fossil fuel exposure, which equates to at least \$59 million, NTU has not revealed its fossil fuel exposure. The report also identified that NTU has two members in the Board of Trustees who were senior leaders in fossil fuel companies, while NUS, SMU, SUTD, Yale-NUS have one member each. SIM has one Board member who is currently a senior leader in a fossil fuel company.



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By allowing fossil fuel companies to gain social acceptance and approval as partners in developing Singapore's educational and economic landscape, these linkages potentially hurt the institutions' academic freedom, raise concerns over conflicts of interest in management, and send students into a declining industry.

Fossil fuel companies and their activities are amongst the greatest drivers of anthropogenic climate change, with their core business model premised upon burning fossil fuels and generating carbon emissions. The industry continues to show inadequate commitment to tackling the climate crisis today. S4F thus builds upon the Singaporean youths' COP26 statement, which noted that all fossil fuel activities "would need to cease in order to keep to a 1.5 degree target," and that "what is needed are clear directives prohibiting the channelling of finance to high-polluting and environmentally destructive activities".

"The data is clear: divesting from fossil fuels is critical to achieving necessary and equitable climate action," explained Assistant Professor Angel Hsu, who researches the intersection of science and policy at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and is also the Founder/Director of the Data-Driven EnviroPolicy Lab. "In this decisive decade, we must pressure both state and non-state actors, including universities in Singapore and beyond, to move towards a renewable future and make climate change action a top priority at their institutions."

The considerable presence of the fossil fuel industry "is deeply troubling as we attempt to educate a new generation of young people to help us slow climate change and adapt to a turbulent and challenging future," said Associate Professor Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, an interdisciplinary environmental studies scholar at Yale-NUS College. "Should those who have profited off of the climate crisis—off of widespread suffering, death, injustice, and mass extinction—play any role in decisions about education?"

Hence, S4F strongly recommends that Singapore's universities divest from fossil fuels, seek sustainable alternatives to replace existing partnerships, sponsorships, and funding from the fossil fuel industry, as well as to implement climate crisis education, over the short, medium, and long term.

S4F recognises that Singapore's universities are well-positioned in society to catalyse transformative climate action. As renowned public institutions of higher education, they can guide individual and institutional responses to climate change by developing future-ready Singaporeans, fostering social norms and setting necessary precedents to meet the urgent and colossal challenges of climate change. S4F believes that these are opportunities for the universities to be forward-looking and visionary, to set themselves ahead of the curve and lead Singapore's and the region's just transition to a low-carbon economy.



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The report launch kicks off a two-week campaign from 17-28 January, with the aim of engaging in wider discussions online and across local campuses about the report's findings and recommendations. The S4F team invites students, professionals, members of the public, and university leaders to be a part of these conversations.

“As students, we’re constantly worried about backlash, censorship, and reprisal from publicly questioning the status quo,” admitted Mr Ang. “Yet, we press on and dedicate countless hours, weekends, and months of our lives to this, knowing that our short window of time to act to ensure our planet remains habitable is almost gone. We cannot rest without doing everything we can.”

S4F’s full report, *Fossil Fueled Universities*, a report summary, as well as an FAQ about issues brought up in the report, can be found at:

<https://www.studentsforafossilfreefuture.org/>

About Students for a Fossil Free Future

Students for a Fossil Free Future is a Singaporean inter-university coalition of students campaigning for Singapore’s universities to transition away from its current linkages and partnerships with the fossil fuel industry to ensure a just and liveable future for all.

To find out more, please visit www.studentsforafossilfreefuture.org, Instagram [@s4f.fossilfree](https://www.instagram.com/s4f.fossilfree), Facebook at [Students for a Fossil Free Future](https://www.facebook.com/StudentsforaFossilFreeFuture) or LinkedIn at [Students for a Fossil Free Future \(S4F\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/StudentsforaFossilFreeFuture).

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