

Advisory Committee on University Resource Management (ACURM) Meeting

Meeting Minutes for OPEN Virtual Meeting on January 30, 2024

Attendees

- **Present:** Kurt, Scott, Tessa, Sophie, Sara, Chris, Keenan, Michael, Daryl
- **Absent:** Erica, Melvin, Tiffany, Sam

Agenda

- Welcome
- [Presentation](#) on “Disassociate Now” Petition (*Sunrise Brown*)
 - [Presentation Reference Guide](#)
- Q&A
- ACURM discussion of next steps

Notes

- Kurt, ACURM Faculty Chair: Goal of today’s presentation is to learn more details and get clarification from Sunrise Brown. Following, there will be a Q&A and discussion of next steps. There will be no deliberation on the petition today.
- Ava, Caitlyn, Ethan, Garrett from Sunrise Brown present on “[Disassociate Now](#)”:
 - Context of “Disassociate Now” and Sunrise Brown
 - Fossil free research and donations
 - Fossil free careers
 - Model policy proposals
- Q&A:
 - ACURM: Is there additional data not included in the report that ACURM could review?
 - Sunrise: All relevant data should be accessible via the report and the petition reference guide.
 - ACURM: Do you have access to the grant documents for funding from fossil fuel companies, to understand obligations for researchers pursuing these grants?
 - Sunrise: We’ve reviewed 990 forms and other publicly accessible data.
 - ACURM: Is there precedent for Brown CareerLAB/Center for Career Exploration (CCE) to exclude specific industries/types of entities?
 - Sunrise: Policies exist, though Sunrise does not have a full list of all companies excluded.
 - ACURM: Is there evidence of pressure put on researchers from fossil fuel-backed research studies? An internal report submitted to Brown, for example? Any reports from CCE on unethical or illegitimate behavior from companies that they decided to no longer invite? Do any of the researchers at Brown have agency to

reject funding from any source they are not comfortable with? (Is it an individual's decision, versus the university at large?)

- Sunrise: We've talked to researchers who have accepted funding, but we don't have access to grant proposals or any internal reports.
- Sunrise: Though we don't have specific documents, there is a large body of research (some of which is from Brown) about misinformation from fossil fuel companies - this is not in line with Brown's ethical values.
- Sunrise: [Comparison case study: tobacco funding for medical studies](#)
- ACURM: If a PI on a grant from a fossil fuel company employs fellows, graduate students, or co-PIs on the grant, all these people would be implicated in this decision for this funding. In principle, you can refuse this by quitting the lab (which would be an employment decision).
- ACURM: What is Sunrise's position about engaging with fossil fuel companies to help redirect them to become focused on de-carbonization/renewable energy?
 - Sunrise: These companies are still wholly invested in fossil fuels, despite any minor efforts to change. There's too much history of misinformation and harm. Once 51% of a company's energy comes from renewable sources, then its status could be reconsidered.
- ACURM: Can you elaborate on the distinction between "divesting" and "dissociating"?
 - Sunrise: Divestment has already happened at Brown, by divesting the endowment from fossil fuel companies. Dissociating is related to money and relationships coming into Brown.
- ACURM: How much does your proposal align with the Princeton petition?
 - Sunrise: [Princeton](#) issued a report from a faculty committee outlining processes. The committee identified criteria to identify companies. Brown Sunrise is requesting Brown use an existing list (larger scale) based on production models (**Urgewald's Global Oil and Gas Exit List** - most recent: [Nov. 2023 list](#)). Brown researchers have published about misinformation from fossil fuel companies as well.
- ACURM: [Carbon Underground 200](#) - what is included on this list used by CCE?
 - Sunrise: The list includes the top 100 publicly traded coal companies and top 100 publicly traded fossil fuel companies. The Urgewald list is much more comprehensive than Carbon Underground 200.
 - ACURM: The Urgewald list is widely used and accepted by other companies.
- ACURM: What would be the most material action item from your presentation?
 - Sunrise: These recommendations are a package, but what would likely be most material would be fossil free research.

- Sunrise: Research is not always focused on climate science; also focused on math, engineering
 - ACURM: One could argue that mathematical breakthroughs from research would outway financial gain of a fossil fuel company - but that might be a conversation for another time.
- ACURM: Can you speak to the shift from the original three-prong petition (fossil free research and gifts, fossil free careers, and fossil free retirement plan options) to focusing on just the first two items?
 - Sunrise: A fossil-free investment option has been added to one of Brown's retirement plans; though there could be greater communication about this option.
 - ACURM: This change doesn't fully disassociate - provides an option, but it's not full disassociation.
 - Sunrise: This might fall more under divestment; both proposals can exist (fossil free research, gifts, and careers; and fossil free option for retirement funds).
- Kurt thanks Sunrise Brown for their thorough, well-researched presentation and reiterates that while ACURM will determine next steps for reviewing Sunrise's petition and making recommendations to President Paxson, the actual implementation of changes should be decided by a separate committee.
- Kurt opens the floor for final questions from any meeting attendee.
- Kurt wraps up meeting, identifying the following next steps:
 - Sydney will follow up with the committee to share additional links from Sunrise Brown.
 - Kurt will follow up with Sunrise for names of Brown community members and key contacts at other schools to reach out to as part of ACURM's research.
 - Kurt will set an agenda for the ACURM meeting on February 8.
 - ACURM is hiring a student Research Assistant. The job posting can be found on Workday.