



RUSA Bill F20 - 03

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Sponsors: University Affairs

Co-Sponsors: Rutgers Student for Environmental Awareness

Guaranteeing Responsible and Environmentally Efficient Norms Act (G.R.E.E.N. Act)

Whereas, climate change is an existential threat, both to our local Rutgers--New Brunswick community and globally in every area;

Whereas, RUSA in its prior capacity conducted several measures to increase environmentally sustainable practices, including: being the first group at Rutgers to publish a comprehensive report of sustainability on-campus in 2016 ¹; helping ban Styrofoam cups from campus and investing instead in reusable bottle through the Cupanion program in 2017 ²; banning plastic bags for University Dining and investing in reusable bags in 2018 ³; bringing more sustainable micro-mobility providers to campus in the form of VeoRide in 2019 ⁴; and helping craft and having President LaBelle sign a student led carbon-tax-dividend proposal⁵ based off a white paper gathered by 27 Nobel laureates in economics⁶;

Whereas, Rutgers University's previous president, Robert Barchi, created the President's Task Force on Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience in September 2019, in response partly from the student body's call for action by the university,⁷ yet Rutgers University has yet to establish an

¹ RUSA Chulak et. al. [Sustainability Task Force Report](#)

² RUSA Bill S17-02 [Bill to Support Cupanion Reusable Bottle Initiative](#)

³ RUSA Bill S19-01 [Bill to Support the Ban the Bag Initiative](#)

⁴ RUSA Resolution S20-04 [Resolution to Endorse VeoRide and Approve Contract Negotiations](#)

⁵ Students for Carbon Dividends [Statement from 350+ Student Body Presidents](#)

⁶ Climate Leadership Council [Economists Statement on Carbon Dividends](#)

⁷ *Rutgers University- New Brunswick, Office of the President*
[President's Task Force on Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience](#)

Office of Sustainability, establishing it as one of only four schools in the Big Ten to not have one;

Whereas, the City of New Brunswick in June 2019 defaulted all households' energy supply onto the renewableNB plan, a service that procures 50% of electrical energy from renewable sources, and made available a plan that procures 100% of electrical energy from renewable sources, both at rates substantially cheaper than the standard PSE&G Basic Generation Service (BGS);

Whereas, aeroponic food systems have been helpful in combating hunger in a sustainable fashion, with aeroponic systems reducing water usage by 98%, fertilizer usage by 60%, and pesticide usage by 100%⁸;

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP) offers a matching grant for projects that reduce hunger⁹; in Spring 2020 the Assembly attempted to apply for said grant but could not due to lack of a University sponsor;

Whereas, the University of California, being one of the largest educational institutions in the country, has entirely divested “more than \$1 billion worth of fossil fuel investments and invested another \$1 billion into clean energy projects”.¹⁰ Divesting from public fossil fuel companies was a goal aimed for 5 years and divesting from private fossil fuel companies was a goal aimed for 10 years;

Whereas, the University of Maryland divested from coal, oil, and natural gas companies in 2016.¹¹ UMD ‘s endowment funds (\$70 million) is similar to Rutgers University’s endowment (\$60 million)¹². At the end of this previous fiscal year, as of June 30th, 2019, the portfolio return was about 6.8%, implying that UMD is recovering well¹³;

⁸ NASA *Spinoff Magazine* "[Progressive Plant Growing is a Booming Business](#)" 2006

⁹ USDA [Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program \(CFPCGP\)](#)

¹⁰ CNN [The University of California has fully divested from fossil fuels](#) May 20, 2020

¹¹ **University of Maryland**

https://www.intentionalendowments.org/university_system_of_maryland

¹² **The Baltimore Sun**

University of Maryland directs its divest away from Fossil Fuels

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-usmf-divestment-20160628-story.html>

¹³ **USM Foundation: 2019 Annual Report**

Pages 7-10

https://www.usmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/usmf_annual_report_fy19_web.pdf

Whereas, universities worldwide have successfully enacted policies in regards to sustainable efforts, effectively establishing their associated offices of sustainability in order to carry out and oversee current and future sustainable efforts;

Be it hereby resolved that, the Assembly advocates for a University Office of Sustainability to be created with the mandate in part to mitigate Rutgers' environmental impact through inter-departmental coordination of existing and novel sustainability efforts with the following recommendations:

1. The hiring of two full time employees to work on allocating funding and creating opportunities for student research and involvement regarding sustainability.
2. Tasking the Office to furnish a long-term strategic set of initiatives while simultaneously acting to address the immediate implementation of any climate action plans.
3. Acknowledging the University's current financial situation, the financing of the Office of Sustainability to be undertaken by alumni donations for the first three years, during which a permanent budgeting solution will be decided upon.

Be it hereby enacted that the RUSA Allocations Board is charged with creating an incentive for clubs that follow the Environmental Integrity Guideline (EIG), whereby:

1. The Environmental Integrity Guideline will entail the following requirements to be fulfilled where eligible:
 - a. Use of sustainably sourced, biodegradable and/or compostable materials,
 - b. Net neutrality of resources or low-environmental impact i.e. water and electricity,
 - c. And the compost of all compostable materials;

Be it hereby enacted that the Environmental Integrity Guideline program is to be established with the following initial provisions:

1. A club/organization at the end of each spring semester can choose to submit their claim for successfully following the EIG for the prior two semesters. This would be done by submitting what initiatives they pursued throughout the year and the evidence that they were done through the required sustainable practices and the vendors' green certification.
2. If a club/organization meets all eligible requirements on the environmental integrity guideline, as approved by the Allocations Board, they will receive a financial reward as determined in future legislation.
3. If the Allocations Board decides there is not sufficient evidence, guideline standards unmet, or any form of fabrication, they can deny the request of the club. This would not result in any monetary penalty towards that club.
4. If a club disagrees with the denial of their request, they can utilize the current Allocations process for appeals.

Be it hereby enacted that, the University Affairs Committee and the Allocations Board are required to furnish a report delineating qualifications regarding the Environmental Integrity Guidelines, in addition to the implementation of the program and all incentives before the Assembly's winter recess;

Be it hereby enacted that the Renewable Energy Credit¹⁴ program, as drafted by the COVID-19 Task Force, is created with the following parameters:

1. The Department of COVID-19 Response, as created and managed by the the President, shall manage the fund to provide economic relief and improve off-campus sustainability by subsidizing 2 months of off-campus residences' electricity bills for switching their current electricity service to renewableNB Premium Green, which procures 100% of electrical energy from renewable sources.
2. Each household approved for the Renewable Energy Credit Program disbursement shall receive a monthly standard subsidy of \$82.62 for two months (totaling \$165.40), which represents 691 kWh/month, the average energy consumption of a New Brunswick, NJ, household, multiplied by renewableNB Premium Green's rate of \$0.11956/kWh.
3. In order to be eligible, applicants must be Rutgers-New Brunswick undergraduates living in an off-campus residence in New Brunswick and currently be enrolled in either Direct Energy's renewableNB product or PSE&G's BGS product.
4. Applications will be run through the Department.
5. The Department of COVID-19 Response shall furnish a pilot program evaluation report upon the disbursement of the final dollar of the initial \$5,000 allocation;

Be it hereby enacted that the Assembly sets the goal to transition all off-campus housing to 100% renewable energy within the next four years;

Be it hereby further enacted that the aforementioned program is allocated an initial total of \$5,000 from the Assembly budget;

Be it hereby enacted that the University Affairs Committee is charged with the "No More Hungry Knights" Aeroponics Initiative consisting of:

1. Working with various Rutgers faculty to begin the implementation of aeroponics systems at Rutgers for the intersectional purposes of fighting food insecurity in an environmentally sustainable manner.
2. The University Affairs Committee is required to furnish a report on the development of aeroponics at Rutgers by the Assembly's winter recess.

¹⁴ Rutgers University Student Assembly
[COVID-19 Renewable Energy Credit](#)

3. Charges the University Affairs Committee to furnish a proposal for the Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program and find an application sponsor by March 2021.

Be it hereby further enacted that the aforementioned program is allocated an initial total of \$5,000 from the Assembly budget;

Be it hereby resolved, the Assembly urges Rutgers University to follow the five-year timeline to divest from public companies and the ten-year timeline to divest from private companies¹⁵ in order to take a step toward fully divesting from fossil fuel companies and instead adopting an investment strategy backed by a strengthened environmental social government policy aligned with the UN's sustainable development goals, as laid out by the Rockefeller's Brothers Fund.¹⁶ (i.e. clean energy programs);

Therefore, be it resolved by two-thirds of the Assembly that a student referendum shall be held during the Fall 2020 elections in accordance with all applicable procedures under the Constitution and the Standing Rules¹⁷, where —

- I. The Assembly hereby approves of the following question being posed to the undergraduate student body during the Fall 2020 elections:
 - A. "Should Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, have its endowment funds divest from fossil fuel companies and invest in clean energy by 2030?"
- II. Each eligible voter shall be able to answer "YES" or "NO" to the above stated question, or they may not vote for the question.
- III. The following explanatory text shall be placed on the ballot stating:
 - A. "Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, currently holds over \$60,000,000 of real assets (defined as "extraction and/or exploration of fossil fuels) invested in the Endowment. This amount is held in nineteen separate investment funds, with three of these nineteen being new investments as of 2016. As of July 2020, those managing the Endowment announced that the funds would be expected to run off slowly over time with managers selling. Several other universities have already pledged to fully divest from fossil fuels and reinvest into clean energy through avenues such as venture capital investing in renewable energy. Georgetown has committed to divest by 2030 via selling all public assets

¹⁵ The University of California [Sustainability impacts Investing](#)

¹⁶ Rockefeller's Brothers Fund [2017 - 2018 Metrics Review](#)

¹⁷ The Constitution, in Article IX Section 1, requires that this bill pass by a two-thirds majority. This requirement shall be met by the passage of this bill. The Standing Rules, in Article VIII Section 3, requires that this bill be "processed" by the Internal Affairs Committee. This requirement was met on 12 September 2020 through the transmission of this bill to the Internal Affairs Committee and its subsequent debate.

in the next five years and all private assets in the next ten. By voting yes on this question, you express support for Rutgers to divest from all financial assets held based in fossil fuels by 2030. By voting no, you express opposition to divesting from fossil fuels by 2030.”

- IV. The ballot shall contain a link to the Rutgers Endowment¹⁸, as well as the explanatory texts and this legislation.
- V. If a majority of students voting cast their ballots in the affirmative and at least one tenth of the undergraduate students vote on the referendum question, then the Assembly will formally adopt the advocacy for divestment from all fossil fuels by 2030 and take necessary actions to fulfill that outcome.
- VI. The Elections Committee shall be charged with furnishing a copy of the referendum question on the ballot to the Internal Affairs Committee for approval. The Internal Affairs Committee shall certify the results of the referendum, as required by Article IX of the RUSA Constitution.

¹⁸ Rutgers Endowment [Long Term Investments, Market Value as of 12/31/2019](#)