

## Press Release:

Stop BP Berkeley  
[www.stopbp-berkeley.org](http://www.stopbp-berkeley.org)

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The UCB-BP deal: implications for the public university

A public forum on biofuels and the UCB-BP deal.

Last night, concerned students, faculty, and Berkeley residents gathered to discuss concern over the recent announcement the University of California, Berkeley it is signing a \$500M deal with the oil company BP, to establish a research center on bioenergy, in collaboration with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The main focus of this research center would be to develop biofuels, a technology that is presented as holding great promise for reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases. Yet, many scientists argue that biofuels may be far from carbon-neutral, and may actually exacerbate environmental problems (a topic discussed at our first teach-in on April 26, 2007). This deal is also the largest agreement ever between a university and a corporation, and could affect the role and functioning of UC Berkeley in important ways.

The forum lasted for three and a half hours, beginning with a great introduction by Jennifer Washburn (detailed below). She raised key faults with the deal, including the fact that there would be an academic and proprietary section to the EBI where BP employees would have access to all and faculty and students would be limited, which is fundamentally against the idea of free flow of ideas which is highly unusual and problematic. She also put the deal into a historical context of research funding, which shows that this deal is going to set a huge precedent for future funding and continue the course for universities to get in bed with private corporations, doing what the companies want to win their contracts. She highlighted the fact that if the companies were sincere in seeing energy research done they would not have spent millions of dollars to ensure that prop. 87 failed, which would have allocated \$ 4 billion from taxes of energy companies to schools with NO STRINGS ATTACHED. The deal also contradicts Berkeley's own publication policies because BP does not have to print their findings. There were many other fundamental problems that Washburn went into more detail about.

Next, Jean Lave talked about the findings from outside research that looked at the private contract with Novartis and UCB. There are many similarities drawn between the two deals but Novartis was a much smaller scale, \$25 million. They found that they: bypassed a democratic process, spread poisonous motives for researchers (commercial/ academic), styled the deal as urgent for students but in fact did not help any students, and the UC was inadequately prepared to go into the private relationship. They concluded that no such experiment with private funding should be tried again, there are serious conflicts of interest, intellectual property rights problems, transparency and autocratic issues, and that UCB should follow UCSD and adopt a blue ribbon panel and committee boards for oversight( which the faculty senate just stripped the power from). Her bottom line is that education not private interest should be the bottom line.

Professor Chapela explained that biology is not the same as physics. The GMO research being done is very scary because we do not have the precision, control, or predictions when manipulating DNA and is therefore much more complex than atoms. We are not only doing this research in the lab, but in the real world, where we do not yet know the implications. We are generating a new dimension of life, transgenics in large geographical areas around the world with monocultures that create huge amounts of human suffering. Our government also pushes for it, first it was bioengineering to solve the hunger crisis and now it's bioengineering to solve the energy crisis. BP comes to UCB to escape the liability tied to the research, get protection from the UC system, legitimize themselves, get good P.R. (greenwash), and get access to teacher training.

Professor Hayden spoke about the fact that UCB is touted as being one of five schools you can do business with. The school is said to gain from this relationship by getting "research stimulation" and doing "societal good". However, the research agenda is preset by BP and societal good is defined here by getting products to market. Additionally, UCB's model of privatization is not mainstream, but extreme. Also, this issue has polarized the faculty which is demoralizing and separated the teachers whose research is not marketable.

There was also amazing poetry read by Hillary Lehr and a stimulating hour of questions and answers.

Featuring:

\_Eddie Yuen, Master of Ceremonies

Professor of Media Studies MA program at New College of California.

\_Jennifer Washburn

Journalist, author of "University Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education," and recipient of the 2001 National Association of Science Writers' Science-in-Society Journalism Award.

\_Jean Lave

As Vice-Chair of the Committee on Research at the time of the Novartis Deal

Professor Lave was point person for COR in developing an RFP and initiating research on the Deal, and a member of the Novartis Oversight Committee that coordinated the Michigan State study.

\_Ignacio Chapela

Professor of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, U.C. Berkeley, and a person who believes that the people and the environment of California deserve better for the future than what BP would leave behind.

\_Cori Hayden

Professor of Anthropology, U.C. Berkeley, specializing in the anthropology of science, technology and medicine. Prof. Hayden conducts critical, ethnographic research on intellectual property regimes, ethics and other modes of governance in North and South America.

\_with poetry by Hillary Lehr

U.C. Berkeley student and slam poet

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