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For Immediate Release

<http://stopBP-Berkeley.org>  
Student Campaign to Stop BP at Berkeley

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## **UC Berkeley officially enters Faustian deal with oil giant BP “Our Generation’s Manhattan Project” is now reality; students, faculty, citizens outraged**

Berkeley, Calif.— As the San Francisco Bay Area reels from the worst oil spill in living memory, UC Berkeley and oil giant BP secretly signed a \$500 million deal despite public criticism and calls for transparency. The contract will create an “Energy Biosciences Institute” (EBI) to do research on genetically engineered agrofuels (also known as biofuels) and microbes for enhanced oil and coal production. The final agreement, released today, allows BP to conduct secret research in the publicly-funded EBI building, while reaping the benefits of the open research done by university scientists on the same project.

The deal has become infamous since its preliminary announcement on February 1, 2007, as a threat to public research at the world’s premier public university. Its signing has been fraught with controversy as Berkeley faculty charged administrators with bypassing standard processes of governance. UCB administrators, who said the deal was negotiated “at warp speed,” also disregarded an external review the University commissioned in the wake of the equally ill-received Novartis-Berkeley deal of 1998, which advised them to “avoid industry agreements that involve complete academic units or large groups of researchers.” The university’s student government passed a strong resolution calling for the deal to be delayed so its terms could be studied.

The BP/Berkeley research, and schemes for large-scale agrofuel production in general, are facing strong popular resistance around the world, for instance from farmers in Africa, peasants and consumers’ groups across South America, and environmentalists from Papua New Guinea to Denmark and Germany. The use of land for large-scale agrofuel farming would place the unconstrained energy “needs” of first-world consumers into direct competition with cash-poor countries’ food supplies and conservation of rare and important ecosystems. These conflicts are already reality, even in today’s tiny agrofuel market, as U.S. ethanol production has led to riots over skyrocketing corn prices in Mexico earlier this year, and palm-oil farming for export threatens to drive the orangutan to extinction in Indonesia and Malaysia.

BP scientists will be treated like tenured faculty at Berkeley, with privileges such as teaching classes, mentoring students, and conducting research in a building constructed with \$70 million of taxpayer funding.

The Institute’s researchers, including both Berkeley and BP scientists, will be housed in Berkeley’s Strawberry Canyon, a mere few hundred meters from the Hayward Fault, probably the most dangerous earthquake fault in Northern California. Untested genetically-modified organisms could easily be released in case of a serious earthquake.

This new development is a direct continuation of UC Berkeley’s past involvement in global devastation and inequality, from its participation in the devastation of native tribes and desecration of native remains to the development of nuclear weapons, all of which continue to this day. The research and technologies the EBI is designed to create are a direct threat to indigenous and traditional communities

around the world. They have the potential to create new global catastrophes beyond the climate crisis, ranging from predictable extinctions and financial crises resulting from excessive pressure on the global agricultural economy to ecological collapses brought on by escaped genetically modified organisms.

BP and Berkeley administrators have referred to this project as “our generation's moon shot” and compared it to the Manhattan project, the unprecedented large, fast and secret research project that created the Atomic Bomb. Like the Manhattan Project, the EBI is unprecedented in scale, is being initiated at Berkeley, and has been rushed into existence in secrecy. Democracy has no more place in this project than in its predecessor, and the damage it ultimately causes may be just as severe.

Resistance to the BP project, and any further violations of the UC's responsibility to California and the world, will continue undeterred by this latest disgrace committed by the university's administration. The Student Campaign to Stop BP at Berkeley (<http://StopBP-Berkeley.org>) has opposed the deal unequivocally since it was announced. Its recent international petition calling for transparency and a halt to negotiations quickly received nearly 1,000 signatures from people in over 50 countries.

For further information:

Student Campaign to Stop BP at Berkeley <http://StopBP-Berkeley.org>

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