

Press Release

StopBP-Berkeley
<http://stopBP-Berkeley.edu>

Contact: Lee Worden, 510-643-6236
worden@berkeley.edu

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[Related story: The UC Berkeley Graduate Assembly has passed a resolution strongly critical of the proposed BP-Berkeley deal. See <http://StopBP-Berkeley.org> for more information.]

UC BERKELEY RELEASES MISSING SECTION OF BP PROPOSAL UNDER PRESSURE FROM STUDENT CAMPAIGN

In response to a formal request from the student campaign Stop BP-Berkeley, on April 5, 2007, the office of the UC Berkeley Vice Chancellor for Research released the appendices to the proposal for the \$500 million research deal that is currently under negotiation with oil giant BP Amoco PLC. Previously, the university had released an abridged version of the proposal, hiding the fact that 115 pages of appendices had been omitted.

The proposal for a new institute to study biofuels, oil extraction, and other genetic engineering and energy technologies, was submitted to BP by Berkeley last November. The text of the proposal was made public on a university-run website on March 1 of this year, in response to public outcry about the lack of transparency and accountability in the development of the project, which University Chancellor Robert Birgeneau has hailed as “reinventing the research university”.

In a public forum hosted by a local chapter of the Sierra Club on March 22, College of Natural Resources Dean Paul Ludden claimed that BP deal proponents had made “the entire proposal” public. When challenged, he claimed that only the names had been removed. Careful comparison of the published proposal with a paper copy of the proposal (which mentions but does not include the appendices) revealed that all references to the missing appendices had also been removed from the published document. Student activists submitted a formal Public Records Act request asking for the missing appendices on March 28, and the university added the appendices to its website on April 5.

The appendices to the proposal are now available on the website created by the university to promote the deal, www.ebiweb.org. While individuals' names are still absent from the main proposal text, they are listed at length in the published appendices, which include not only resumes of proposed researchers and staff, but also a long “inventory of expertise”, which appears to be simply a laundry list of faculty who might be potential resources for the BP project. Included on that list are at least four UC Berkeley professors who are currently publicly opposed to the deal. Civil and Environmental Engineering

Professor Tadeusz W. Patzek, for example, an outspoken critic of the deal who is named in this appendix, when informed he is included in the proposal said, “No, I’m not going to be engaged with that under any circumstances. At least they could have told me or asked me. My work on the proposal would not have been possible. I would have been asking much larger questions,” like whether biofuels can ever be a sustainable energy source.

One appendix reprints an article from *Inc.* magazine naming Berkeley as number one of “Five Universities You Can Do Business With.” Critics say Berkeley’s zeal to “do business” has reached such an extreme scale with this proposed deal that the deal, if signed, will destroy the independence required of a public university. Other appendices include letters of support from California Senator Dianne Feinstein and others, and texts of past public-private agreements that may serve as models for the proposed BP-Berkeley deal.

Despite administration claims to the contrary, the process by which this deal is being struck has been consistently marred by a lack of official transparency and willingness to answer to the concerns of students, faculty, and citizens affected by the proposed research. Berkeley’s Chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau recently wrote, in a letter to critics of this process (<http://www.consumerwatchdog.org/resources/UCBerkeleyEBILetter>), “Our proposal was developed in an open, not a secretive, way,” and that the EBI will “tackle one of the planet’s greatest threats” “in a manner entirely consistent with the values of a public university.” The way the university has selectively revealed the content of its proposal, attempting to conceal the existence of 115 pages of the document, directly contradicts these claims.

Stop BP-Berkeley is a UC Berkeley-based student campaign formed to oppose the formation of the proposed joint BP-Berkeley research institute. This campaign insists that UC Berkeley must commit itself to responsible, accountable research in the interest of social justice and sustainability. There are three major problems with the proposal: the undemocratic process by which it has been struck; the social and environmental consequences of research in biofuels, genetic modification, and fossil fuel extraction; and the dangers of unchecked corporate privatization of the public university. Stop BP-Berkeley is involved in making information available about the BP-Berkeley proposal, calling demonstrations, and hosting public forums about the proposal. It is sponsoring a petition calling on the university not to sign the deal without major modifications to the terms and the process. Upcoming events include a campus appearance by Nigerian anti-oil-company activist Omoyele Sowore, picturesque street theater, and several public forums. For more information see <http://stopBP-Berkeley.org>.

Media Advisory

Who: Stop BP-Berkeley, Global Exchange

What: “The Impact of Oil Corporations on the Environment, Communities and Universities”, Omoyele Sowore and Professor Michael Watts

Where: 2320 Tolman Hall, UC Berkeley

When: Thursday, April 12, 2007, 7:00 PM

Why: To reveal the violence and militarization that oil companies have brought to Nigeria, and draw connections to the proposed BP-Berkeley deal.

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