

Press Release:

On Thursday, two UCLA students presented public comment at the UC Regents meeting in LA on behalf of concerned students at UC Berkeley who oppose the current \$500 million proposed agreement between UC Berkeley and British Petroleum.

The student organization Stop BP-Berkeley opposes the proposed contract on the grounds that the decision-making and negotiating process was undemocratic. The group is also wary of corporations setting the research agenda at a public institution for private profit instead of the public interest, given the controversial prospects of biofuels as a socially and environmentally sustainable alternative to fossil fuels.

UC Regents Public Comment:  
UC Berkeley- BP \$500 million Agreement  
Thursday March 15, 2007

On February 1, 2007, the Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, announced an agreement with BP (formerly British Petroleum) to establish an Energy Biosciences Institute on the U.C. Berkeley campus, in collaboration with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Funded with \$500 million over 10 years, this agreement would double the amount of corporate funding for research on campus, and change the direction of research here for years to come.

A coalition of students, staff, faculty, and community members is forming who are concerned that the agreement is deeply flawed, in terms of the process by which it was struck, and in its contents. The aim of the coalition is to oppose the approval of the agreement in order to ensure that:

- a democratic process is put in place for all decisions regarding large corporate funding deals
- research at the University serves the public interest, including sustainability goals
- corporations do not overly influence the research agendas and education in a public institution

A. Even though this is an agreement between the entire University and BP, the vast majority of students and faculty have not been included in negotiation of the deal between BP and top UCB administrators and researchers.

We believe students and faculty must be openly incorporated in all steps of the decision-making process.

B. The recommendations in the UC Berkeley commissioned **external review of the \$25 million Novartis deal** with UCB have been ignored. For example, the first recommendation

is “avoid industry agreements that involve complete academic units or large groups of researchers.”

C. The environmental and social impacts of the deal have not been openly reviewed, and research will scarcely be addressed in one lab out of 24 that will look at impacts and compensation after the fact. The biofuels research is already asserted to be “sustainable”, however a large body of evidence exists to the contrary, along with **significant scientific concern about the environmental and human impacts of biofuels.**

D. We believe that research on biofuels and other potentially sustainable technologies and solutions is essential, but needs to be done in a way that is in the public interest.

While corporations can certainly help lead the way towards a sustainable future, there are also some important conflicts between serving the corporate interest (i.e. creating wealth for shareholders) and serving the public interest. There can also be conflicts between the corporate interest and the freedom of the researcher. It is vital to identify such points of conflict, and put in place safeguards to ensure that the public interest takes priority in all funding deals.

Because the agreement represents **a dangerous precedent** for the future of the University of California of dependence on corporate funding set through undemocratic processes, we encourage the UC Regents not to support the UC Berkeley-BP contract, or the construction of the EBI, and help work to democratically develop due policy and procedures for large corporate funding on UC campuses.