Acadia Students' Union

Acadia Students' Union Policy Position:

University Investments and Divestment

Purpose

The Acadia Students' Union believes that Acadia University has a responsibility to ensure that its investments reflect ethical, socially responsible, and environmentally sustainable values. It is not the role of a university to uphold such industries. Therefore, the Acadia Students' Union holds the official position that Acadia University should reaffirm its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) commitments by adopting a Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) approach to its endowment and investment practices.

Principles

Ethical Investment Responsibility: Consistent with the ASU's investment guidelines, the ASU recommends that investments within the university's endowment fund be reviewed and divested where companies fail to meet ethical, social, or environmental standards. In such cases, funds should be reallocated toward investments that align with responsible and sustainable practices.

Student Well-Being and Global Responsibility: In the interest of student well-being, global ethical responsibility, and the promotion of socially and environmentally responsible governance, the ASU supports divesting from investments that contribute to unethical, harmful, or exploitative practices.

Institutional Accountability: The ASU believes that universities, as public educational institutions, have a responsibility to ensure that their financial practices reflect their stated institutional values, including commitments to sustainability, human rights, and ethical governance.

Concerns

Misalignment Between Investments and Institutional Values: Acadia University's endowment fund currently includes investments in companies associated with fossil fuel extraction, weapons manufacturing, and corporations implicated in human rights violations. These investments contradict the university's stated ESG commitments and raise concerns among students about whether institutional financial practices align with the values promoted within the academic community.

Student Expectations of Ethical Leadership: Students increasingly expect universities to act as leaders in ethical governance and environmental responsibility. Continued investment in industries associated with environmental harm, military production, or human rights violations risks undermining trust between students and the institution.

Institutional Control Over Investment Mandates: The university has previously suggested that it does not have direct control over the investments made through its endowment fund. However, investment management firms operate according to the objectives and restrictions set by their clients. This suggests that ethical investment criteria could be implemented if the university chose to prioritize them.

Resolutions

(I) Adoption of a Socially Responsible Investing Framework

The ASU recommends that Acadia University adopt a Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) framework for its endowment fund, incorporating divestment criteria that exclude entities which:

- Derive profits from the extraction or production of fossil fuels,
- Produce weapons or weapons systems,
- Engage in practices that violate internationally recognized human rights or labor standards,
- Derive profits from mining or quarrying activities that cause environmental or social harm,
- Provide material, financial, or systemic support to the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression.
- all entities which directly profit from the exploitation of resources on sovereign Indigenous land without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Indigenous peoples with ancestral ties to that land, or that otherwise violate treaties between colonial governments and Indigenous peoples.

(II) Implementation Through Investment Mandate Changes

The ASU recommends that Acadia University implement these commitments by either:

- Adjusting its investment mandate with its current investment management firm to include these divestment criteria; or
- Selecting an alternative investment management firm capable of managing the endowment fund under Socially Responsible Investing principles.

Long-Term Vision

The Acadia Students’ Union envisions an investment strategy in which Acadia University’s endowment fund actively supports companies and initiatives that contribute to sustainable development, ethical governance, environmental responsibility, and the protection of human rights.

Through adopting a Socially Responsible Investing framework, Acadia University can ensure that its financial practices reflect the values it promotes through teaching, research, and community engagement, while positioning itself as a leader in responsible institutional investment.

The Acadia Students Union recommends the University Invest through local credit unions, for more local and community-oriented investments.

Conclusion

Adopting a Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) framework would allow Acadia University to ensure that its financial practices align with the values it promotes through teaching, research, and community engagement. Acadia's strategic vision emphasizes preparing students for a transforming world through a university experience grounded in environmental stewardship, community engagement, and responsible leadership. By integrating ethical investment principles into its endowment management, the university can demonstrate leadership in sustainability and accountability while reinforcing its commitment to responsible resource management and environmental responsibility. In doing so, Acadia can strengthen trust with students and the broader community while ensuring that its institutional practices reflect the same values that guide its academic mission. This is also necessary for aligning with the University's Strategic Direction 2, "Caring for our planet" as mentioned in Acadia 2025.

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