Resolution on THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION RELEASE AND CAMPUS DIALOGUE REGARDING DUKE ENERGY CHP PLANT PROPOSAL

Whereas Duke University and Duke Energy announced in May a proposal to build a new 21-megawatt natural gas-powered Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant on Duke University's West Campus, to be operated and run by Duke Energy;

Whereas Duke University has claimed this new plant will effect an alleged 24% reduction in the institution's total current energy-related carbon footprint, cost savings, and backup generation power for the hospital and campus;

Whereas this proposal would require a $7 million investment by Duke University to integrate the new plant into the campus electrical grid as well as the issuance of a long-term land lease for the facility;

Whereas the proposed plant represents a significant investment by the university in natural gas, with serious implications for the university's environmental footprint, operations, and its relationship with Duke Energy;

Whereas students, faculty, alumni, and community organizations have raised concerns regarding the potential social and environmental costs of natural gas extraction and consumption, including climate impacts, methane leaks, seismic instability, surface water pollution, groundwater contamination, and air pollution, which disproportionately affect socioeconomically vulnerable communities across the United States;

Whereas the university has historically demonstrated its prioritization of environmental stewardship, its leadership in earth and environmental science research, and its forward-thinking commitment to sustainability through its Climate Action Plan and Environmental Policy Statement;
Taking into further consideration concerns voiced within the Duke community regarding the following:

a) Lack of transparency throughout the plant negotiation process, with all negotiation prior to the May announcement occurring under a non-disclosure agreement and without informing students, faculty, or key campus committees such as the Campus Sustainability Committee that such a negotiation was ongoing.

b) Uncertainty regarding the methods used to assess the plant’s environmental and social impact, namely with regards to the climate and human health consequences of natural gas exploration and extraction.

c) The absence of significant efforts by the university to consult faculty or students throughout the CHP plant negotiation process to date despite the relevance of the proposal to student and faculty interests.

Resolved, that the Graduate and Professional Student Council makes the following recommendations to the Duke University Administration:

1. We recommend a full and immediate release of information regarding the proposed contracts, cost analyses, and impact assessment of the proposed CHP plant.

2. We further recommend the prompt implementation of a fully transparent process for review of the CHP plant proposal that:

   a. consists of one-third faculty and one-third student members working in collaboration with Duke Facilities

   b. explores renewable energy and energy efficiency-based alternatives to the CHP plant

   c. receives biweekly, ongoing updates about negotiations and changes to the plant proposal from Duke Facilities

   d. convenes by November 18 and meets at least twice before the end of fall semester.
3. We propose that Duke University immediately halt any further movement on the plant finalization process until the aforementioned review process is completed. We further ask that Duke University administration support the convening of a North Carolina Utilities Commission public hearing on this proposed power plant on Duke University's campus in the month of January 2017.

Signed,

Marcus Benning
President, Graduate and Professional Student Council

Movant: Seaver Wang
General Assembly Representative for Duke University Earth and Ocean Sciences Program

Second: Jacqueline Robinson-Hamm
General Assembly Representative for Duke University Biomedical Engineering Ph.D

Date approved by the Council:
October 18th, 2016