

Dear President Mandel,

We were surprised and disheartened to hear you announce at the October 20 faculty meeting that Williams would not be making a public commitment to fossil fuel divestment, although it plans to eliminate indirect investments in fossil fuels over the next several years. As COP26 concludes and the implementation of strategic planning at Williams begins, we believe divestment must be one of Williams's public commitments to sustainability.

The Williams College administration has repeatedly resisted taking what it has derided as a merely symbolic action. But divestment does more than signal to industries and investors that the public wants to stop funding the climate crisis. It also signals to our students—current, former, and future—that we care about the world they will inhabit. Climate change is a monumental collective action problem, and divestment is a collective action solution. What is more, history shows that collective and symbolic actions do drive historical change; indeed, divestment has had tangible effects, as Bill McKibben recently [noted](#) in the New York Times.

Six years ago Williams might have been a leader in the divestment movement, when our students, supported by hundreds of alumni and over half of the College's faculty, overwhelmingly voted for fossil fuel divestment. Since then, the harmful effects of anthropogenic climate change have become ever more apparent and the need to move away from fossil fuels only more compelling.

The undersigned faculty and staff stand in solidarity with the alumni and students calling for divestment, as many did in the divestment campaigns of 2013 and 2015. It is past time that Williams join the many other institutions, including [Amherst](#), [Dartmouth](#), and [Harvard](#), who have already committed to divest.