A Resolution to Establish a Committee to Investigate OSU’s Investments in Companies Complicit in Human Rights Violations

Savannah Sockwell (for herself, Curtis Pierson, Salma Shire, Nate Smith, Halima Mohamed, Emma Meersman, Kinza Sami, Alexis McKenzie, Anthony Long, Shukri Ahmed, Paige Bennett, and Safiyo Mohamud) introduced the following resolution to the Steering Committee, where it passed.

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Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University, and

Whereas the Office of Investments at The Ohio State University manages $4.2 billion in endowment funds and $7.1 billion in University assets,¹ and

Whereas 14.1% of University assets is contributed by student tuition and fees,¹ and

Whereas OSU invests these endowment funds, including student tuition, in numerous entities to maximize financial returns to support the educational and research goals of the university,² and

Whereas information about Ohio State’s specific investments is claimed to be exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act on the basis of Ohio’s Uniform Trade Secrets Act,³ and

Whereas all students should have the right, as tuition-paying members of the Buckeye community, to critically review and examine the ethics of the University’s financial investments, and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government unanimously passed a resolution in 2016 recognizing its constituents’ call for deeper transparency in the financial investments of The Ohio State University,⁴ and

¹ The Ohio State University - Statistical Summary (Autumn 2017)
² Investment, 590 University Policy
³ State ex rel. Besser v. Ohio State Univ., 87 Ohio St.3d 535 (“Besser I”) and 89 Ohio St.3d 396 (“Besser II”)
⁴ A Resolution to Support Increased Transparency of Investments at The Ohio State University
Whereas students are still concerned that OSU may be invested in the following companies: the GEO group, CCA/CoreCivic, HP Enterprise, and

Whereas the aforementioned companies contradict the University’s values of integrity and accountability by engaging in practices that violate human rights both domestically and internationally, and

Whereas the United Nations defines “Human Rights” as “the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more,” and

Whereas these rights are to be afforded to all human beings regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or sex, and

Whereas Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) / CoreCivic and GEO Group profit from the growth private prisons and mass incarcerations in the United States, and

Whereas the prison industrial complex benefits at the expense of black and brown lives with an average of 1 in 3 black men and 1 in 6 Latino men spending time behind bars during their life compared to 1 in 17 white men and black men spending an average of 29 percent longer behind bars than their white peers for the same crimes, and

Whereas the number of women in prison has grown by over 800% in the past three decades and two-thirds of incarcerated women in the U.S. are women of color, and

Whereas mass incarceration and the Prison Industrial Complex are entities that thrive on and perpetuate racism and injustice, and

Whereas persistent violations of detention standards in private prisons, including abuses against women, children, and inmates with mental disabilities, have been documented by Human Rights Watch and other organizations, and

5 OSU Mission, Values, and Core Goals
6 UN- Human Rights
7 Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity & Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy 1.10
8 Why For-Profit Prisons House More Inmates Of Color
9 Focus Brief: Women in Prison
10 Racism and Reflections On Prison Industrial Complex
11 US Justice Department Ends Use of Private Prisons
12 The Shame of America’s Family Detention Camps
13 Use of Force against Inmates with Mental Disabilities in US Jails and Prisons
Whereas unsafe and unsanitary conditions, including lack of immediate access to running water for hydration, showers or the use of a toilet, were documented at one of CCA’s privately-run prisons in Ohio, and

Whereas CCA / CoreCivic and GEO Group have emerged as the main corporate beneficiaries of immigrant detention policies and operate nine out of ten of the largest Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers, and

Whereas HP Enterprise also profits from global mass incarceration by providing the essential infrastructure for state and private prisons as well as the technology to track prisoner data which is used to discriminate against formerly incarcerated persons years after their release, and

Whereas HP Enterprise profits from mass deportation by providing technology for ICE to track, raid, detain, and deport undocumented immigrants, including students, separating them from their livelihoods and families, and

Whereas companies profiting from devastation are complicit in the perpetration of human suffering, and

Whereas investment in such companies engaged in violence against others is harmful to the OSU community, particularly minority students who come from, or have family in regions which have experienced military occupation, systematic discrimination, death, injury, and other forms of human rights violations, and

Whereas the core goals of President Drake’s 2020 Vision is for Ohio State to “be a national model of inclusiveness and diversity” and to be a “leading light along the arc toward greater inclusion,” and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government continually expresses its commitment to “support, protect, and advocate for the safety and success of all students, with a strong emphasis on marginalized groups,” and

Whereas as long as a portion of the University’s endowment fund is invested in companies that violate human rights, Arab, Black and Latino students, as minority groups

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14 Auditors uncover problems at private prisons in Ohio
15 Payoff: How Congress Ensures Private Prison Profit with an Immigrant Detention Quota
16 Hewlett Packard Enterprise
17 Hewlett-Packard’s Role in Oppression, from South Africa to Palestine to Massachusetts
18 2020 Vision
19 Diversity & Inclusion Role and Mission
on campus do not receive the University’s full support, nor the benefits of its
commitment to foster a more inclusive campus, and

Whereas the sponsors of this resolution are committed to promoting dignity and respect
for all people, and emphasize that the request contained herein is not an attack on any
particular identity or a sweeping criticism of any nation but rather is meant as an
acknowledgement of concerns marginalized students on campus have regarding
university investments in unethical corporate practices abroad, and

Whereas undergraduate student governments all across the nation, including but not
limited to, Columbia University,20 Hampshire College,21 University of California-Davis,
University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, University of
California-San Diego, University of California-Santa Cruz, University of California-
Irvine, University of California-Riverside,22 Stanford University,23 DePaul University,24
Oberlin College,25 University of Toledo26 and Northwestern University27 — have passed
resolutions calling for the divestment from companies engaged in human rights
violations, and

Whereas fellow Big Ten school University of Michigan recently passed a similar
resolution calling to establish an ad hoc committee to investigate divestment from
companies that are complicit in human rights violations,28 and

Whereas OSU students have previously sought to promote the withdrawal of University
funds from corporations engaged in unethical business practices which demonstrate a
lack of accountability, ethicality, and respect for the rights and dignity of others, most
notably from companies doing business with apartheid South Africa29 and Sudan,30 and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government has set a precedent for pursuing
socially responsible investments with the passage of resolution 50-R-24 to divest from
the top 200 Fossil Fuel Companies and Energy Transfer Partners;31

20 Columbia University Divests From Prisons
21 Hampshire Amends Investment Policy, Excluding Private Prison Industry
22 ASUCD Divestment Bill Passes through Senate
23 Senate Reverses Divestment Vote, Passes Resolution
24 DePaul Students Vote for Divestment
25 Oberlin College Passes Divestment Resolution
26 University of Toledo Passes Divestment Resolution By A Landslide
27 Northwestern University Passes Divestment
28 UMDivest resolution passes for first time in U-M Ann Arbor campus history
29 Colleges Moving to Divest South African Investments
30 Cutting Ties With Darfur
31 A Resolution to Remove Investments from Top 200 Fossil Fuel Corporations, Energy Transfer Partners,
and Duke Energy
Therefore, Let it Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government calls for the formation of an ad hoc committee, consisting of faculty, students and staff within the University Senate, to investigate the ethical and moral implications of investments including the aforementioned companies which are involved in human rights violations both within the U.S. and abroad, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government supports appropriate action as deemed fit by the established committee, if deemed appropriate by the ad hoc committee following a thorough investigation, from the aforementioned companies and including any other companies involved in human rights violations, as soon as divestment may be accomplished, but not later than one year after the date of engagement, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that the ad hoc committee, in conjunction with divestment find suitable investments in companies deemed socially responsible by said committee, and

Let it Further Be Resolved that upon of this resolution, the request presented herein shall embody OSU’s commitment to social justice and equality for all people, and affirms that no people are exempt from this commitment.

Floor Vote: Passed

Andrew Jackson
President

Sophie Chang
Vice President

Date Adopted: January 24, 2018

Date Terminated: ____________