

# Doc News and Views

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## DOC Efforts Spark Major Universities to Divest Tobacco Holdings

The tobacco divestment movement represents a dramatic new initiative to promote a smoke-free society. This effort originated in 1981 when DOC Founder Alan Blum, MD, was instrumental in persuading the American Medical Association (AMA) to eliminate several million dollars worth of tobacco stocks from its retirement fund. By 1986, the AMA was officially encouraging universities with medical schools to divest their tobacco holdings. In 1984, DOC created Project SNUFF (Stop Noxious University Funding Forever) which targeted Illinois universities with medical schools and succeeded in convincing the University of Illinois to drop its tobacco stocks.

In 1990, the Tobacco Divestment Project (TDP) was formally launched as

a new national campaign championing the proposition that it is unethical to profit from tobacco addiction. The TDP receives guidance from an advisory board of individuals who have distinguished

vices and materials to further the cause of divestment.

Last year while a student at the Harvard School of Public Health, DOC member Phil Huang, MD, MPH, created a radio advertisement in a course taught by media expert Tony Schwartz. The advertisement pointed out the hypocrisy of Harvard President Derek Bok's call for university leadership in demonstrating strong moral and civic values, while Harvard continued to invest in the tobacco industry. The advertisement was aired on the Harvard radio station and generated local media attention.

At the same time, Dr. Huang began working with a student representative to the University's Advisory Committee on Shareholder Responsibility (ACSR). The

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***Harvard's reason for divestment of its tobacco holdings was "a desire not to be associated as a shareholder with companies engaged in significant sales of products that create a substantial and unjustified risk of harm to other human beings."***

themselves in the struggle to bring tobacco use under control. Much of the work of the TDP is performed by pro-health advocates throughout the country, for whom TDP provides support ser-

## Philip Morris Promotes Bill of Rights, Discourages Free Speech

Philip Morris' Benson and Hedges Blues Festival began its five-city tour around the nation in Houston, and DOC created a print counter-advertising campaign to draw attention to the cigarette-sponsored blues festival.

DOC Founder and Chairman Alan Blum, MD, and Eric Solberg, DOC executive director, submitted the counter advertisements to the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Houston Post* and *Public News*, a Houston weekly newspaper. *Public News* printed DOC's advertisement, which featured the slogan "Don't them cancer pushers give ya The Blues?" on June 5. The same advertisement also appeared in the *Houston Post* on June 9. A different advertisement featuring the slogan "Benson and Stenches gives Houston The Blues" appeared in the *Hous-*

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***This bench was part of DOC's counter-advertising campaign against the Benson and Hedges Blues Festival in Houston.***

## DOC Efforts Spark Major Universities to Divest Tobacco Holdings (continued from page 1)

ACSR subsequently made a unanimous recommendation to the Harvard Corporation that it establish a policy prohibiting future purchase of tobacco stocks. A petition calling for Harvard's divestment was signed by over 300 students and faculty in the School of Public Health. These efforts led to the announcement in May 1990 that Harvard had divested almost \$60 million worth of tobacco stocks because of "a desire not to be associated as a shareholder with companies engaged in significant sales of products that create a substantial and unjustified risk of harm to other human beings." The university also formally adopted a policy "prohibiting future purchase of stock in companies producing significant quantities of cigarettes or other tobacco products."

That same month, the Board of Trustees of City University of New York (CUNY) voted to divest its \$3.5 million of Philip Morris stock after trustees and TDP board member Edith Everett noted that owning stock in a company "whose purpose is to addict as many young people as possible to a lethal drug, calls our educational leadership into question."

Since then, the City of Pittsburgh and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have divested their tobacco stocks, and resolutions calling for tobacco divestment have been introduced in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Oregon and Pennsylvania. The American Public Health Association (APHA) has adopted a policy statement calling for tobacco divestment and is developing a plan to actively promote the issue.

In October 1990, Dr. Blum addressed the subject of tobacco divestment by universities in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. "For a university to continue to hold a stake in a tobacco company shows contempt for the very knowledge that has been gained by university re-

searchers about tobacco during the past 50 years," Dr. Blum wrote. "The only defensible purpose in holding tobacco stock is to use it to vote to end the companies' cynical promotion of tobacco to new markets."

In January 1991, Dr. Kenneth Kizer, director of the California Health Department, received national acclaim after sending letters to universities throughout his state as well as to the State Teachers Retirement System and the Public Em-

movement was led by a graduate student in the school of Public Health, Dr. Carl Latkin. His efforts began by gaining the support of the deans of the schools of medicine and public health and were followed by his delivery of an address to the Board of Trustees. In spite of a personal appearance by the chairman of Philip Morris and the fact that a Johns Hopkins faculty member is on the Philip Morris Board of Directors, the trustees voted unanimously in favor of divestment.

DOC has played an active role in divestment efforts at Rice University. DOC funded the airing of another Tony Schwartz-produced radio advertisement which targeted Rice University President Dr. George Rupp, using excerpts from his 1990 commencement address to point out inconsistencies between his public statements and the university's decision not to divest its tobacco holdings.

At the University of Texas, senior student Ron Turk, aided by DOC, has successfully mobilized political support in Texas for the tobacco divestment movement. The State Board of Health, the Texas Medical Association and Texas Governor Ann Richards have publicly spoken out in favor of divestment. Although the Board of Regents narrowly

voted against divestment by the University of Texas System, (a 4-4 tie vote was decided by the dissenting chairman), the discussion led to passage of a resolution banning smoking from all University of Texas facilities.

DOC members are encouraged to get involved in this issue by determining the holdings in their state, medical school, hospital, etc. For further information or assistance, contact Dr. Phil Huang (Associate Director of the Tobacco Divestment Project) at (217) 785-1873. Also, if you are aware of other institutions not mentioned in this article that have divested their tobacco holdings, let DOC know so we can spotlight them as well.

## Tobacco Divestment Milestones

**1981:** American Medical Association eliminated several million dollars worth of tobacco stocks from its retirement fund.

**1984:** Project SNUFF (Stop Noxious University Funding Forever), created by DOC, succeeded in convincing University of Illinois to divest its tobacco stocks.

**1990:** Tobacco Divestment Project (TDP) formally launched as a national campaign. Harvard divested of almost \$60 million worth of tobacco holdings. The Board of Trustees of City University of New York voted to divest its \$3.5 million of Philip Morris stock. The City of Pittsburgh and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation divested their tobacco holdings. Resolutions calling for tobacco divestment were introduced in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Oregon and Pennsylvania. American Public Health Association adopted a policy statement calling for tobacco divestment. Divestment efforts underway in California, spearheaded by Dr. Kenneth Kizer, director of the California Health Department.

**1991:** Johns Hopkins University announced divestment of its tobacco holdings after Board of Trustees voted unanimously in favor of such action. The Texas State Board of Health, Texas Medical Association and Texas Governor Ann Richards publicly spoke out in favor of tobacco divestment. Divestment efforts underway at Rice University.

employees' Retirement System, strongly encouraging their elimination of tobacco-related holdings. He noted the irony that while his public agency is engaged in an extensive anti-smoking effort, other branches of government are investing in tobacco companies. Media attention to Dr. Kizer's stand has increased public awareness of the issue and generated added pressure on the institutions to divest. The student governing body representing all of the University of California schools is also discussing efforts to support Dr. Kizer's initiative.

In February 1991, Johns Hopkins University announced the divestment of its tobacco holdings. The Johns Hopkins