



FOSSIL FREE MAC

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# HANDBOOK

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Lessons from a Divestment Campaign

*Fossil Free Mac (FFM) was a student movement and a chartered student organization leading a fossil fuel divestment campaign at Macalester College from 2013 until 2019. In the following handbook, we seek to document the lessons that we learned in our years long campaign. We want to make our knowledge and experiences available to other student movements on campus.*

*We want to acknowledge that we were far from perfect. Our initial goal was full divestment from fossil fuels, meaning that our first campaign demanded an end to both private partnerships with oil and gas companies and fossil fuel investments as part of commingled assets. Early on, we realized that this is very challenging to achieve and we decided to shift to a more targeted approach, which we deemed more feasible. We drafted a proposal to place a moratorium on private partnerships, meaning that our campaign no longer targeted commingled assets. In that sense, our proposal differed from our original goal. Even when the Board of Trustees adopted a change to their investment policy in October 2019 in response to our campaign, they made amendments to our proposal. This process points to the fact that FFM chose to work with the administration, which not all movements and campaigns choose to do for various legitimate reasons.*

*We believe that there is value in documenting the ways in which FFM involved the entire Macalester community - students, staff, faculty, alumni, the Macalester College Student Government (MCSG), the President, and the Board of Trustees - on an issue that we care about. We also want to write down what worked well for us and what did not, especially in terms of sustaining a movement over a long period of time. We hope that this will be helpful to other movements on campus.*

*In solidarity,*

*Fossil Free Mac*

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# CAMPAIGN TIMELINE



Feb 2013 - Bill Mckibben visits campus

April 2013 - Fossil Free Mac starts as an informal student movement leading a full-divestment campaign (targeting both private partnerships and commingled funds)

May 2015 - The Social Responsibility Committee (SRC), a committee composed of staff, faculty, and students, decides not to recommend the full divestment proposal to the Board of Trustees

Nov 2016 - FFM learns of Macalester's private oil and gas partnerships in a meeting with Gary Martin, the Chief Investment Officer, ultimately leading to a shift in our campaign to directly target these partnerships

Jan 2017 - Fossil Free Mac launches proposal to divest from private oil and gas partnerships (hereinafter "the proposal")

April 2018 - The SRC unanimously endorses FFM's proposal

Dec 2018 - the Board of Trustees passes Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) Framework, a framework to guide them in evaluating Fossil Free Mac's proposal

Feb 2019 - the Board of Trustees officially discusses divestment for the first time ever

April 2019 - Fossil Free Mac Town Hall & the student referendum as part of the MCSG elections. 96% of voters vote in favor of the FFM proposal with 48% student turnout, representing a 110% participation increase over the previous year's election

May 2019 - Board of Trustees postpones the decision on FFM's proposal due to the presidential search

October 2019 - FFM organizes a peaceful sit-in during the Board meeting; the Board decides on the FFM proposal

# ORGANIZATION



# CORE VS. GENERAL

In structuring our meetings, relationships, and organization structure, we thought a lot about longevity and how to keep members engaged and involved over a long period of time. Instead of having a leadership structure with co-presidents at the top and other defined org positions below (e.g. secretary, op-ed writer, liaison to board, event planner), we formed a 'core' group of the most committed members to plan meetings and lead the org. Core members met once on the weekends in addition to the 'general' weekly Tuesday meetings. Members of the 'general' group could join core at any time, and the meetings were always open to anyone who wished to stop by. During core meetings, the whole group discussed long term strategies, planned upcoming events, and worked together to set the agenda of our next general meeting. During the Tuesday general meetings, we often split into "working groups" or "committees", as a way to divide work and allow members to focus on the tasks they are more interested in. Examples of working groups include op-ed writing, researching, event organizing, etc. The core group planned the agenda for the Tuesday meeting and ensured we are completing our tasks.



*FFM members at a regular weekly meeting*

We took notes using Google Docs during each core meeting and each general meeting. At the top of our notes, we would write the names of everyone in attendance while we did check-ins as a way to keep track of people's involvement. At a school like Macalester where everyone already seems to cram 30 hours of life into a 24 hour day, the competition for people's time, energy, and commitment is fierce. Taking this into consideration, we tried to make Fossil Free Mac a place of efficiency, community, and democracy. In other words, we planned meeting agendas in advance so that we could dive right in during weekly meetings, we scheduled in time for check-ins at the start of every meeting and tried to have relaxed community gatherings at least once a semester where we didn't do any work, and we often asked people to step out of their comfort zone, voice their opinion, lead a presentation or take on a task. This way everyone had a stake in our events and in Fossil Free Mac as a whole.

# SUSTAINING THE MOVEMENT

Long-term planning and ongoing recruitment and engagement is crucial to any college campus campaign, because most students are only on campus for four years. College administrations often use this to their advantage. They will try to prolong processes, postponing major decisions or actions until after org leaders graduate, momentum dies down, and the memory of the campaign fades away. Since many campus movements rely on the passion, commitment, and energy of a handful of individual leaders, this administration tactic of 'waiting it out' often works and student-led campaigns peter out as students graduate and move on to other things. This was one of the reasons we used the open 'core' structure of leadership to share not only the work, but also the knowledge, experience, and history of Fossil Free Mac, among members from different class years. Our beginning of the semester retreats were also structured in a way to allow everyone to share their vision for change at Macalester/the world and within Fossil Free Mac, so we could do long-term planning and encourage people to have a stake in our campaign.

The first step is getting people in the door. While we kept up low-level recruiting efforts throughout our entire campaign and tried to make people feel comfortable joining at any time, there were times when we amped things up. As with most student orgs, we kicked recruitment into high gear during the start of each semester (and year) through the org fair, Mac Daily posts, table tents, and by wearing our FFM t-shirts around campus the first week of classes. We typically dedicated our first and/or second general meeting to a "teach-in" to get new members up to speed on all things Fossil Free Mac. (However, the core leadership group which is open to anyone would meet at least once, usually twice, before we began general meetings).

If new members joined in the middle of the semester, we would have one experienced/knowledgeable core member give them a mini teach-in to catch them up and answer any questions they might have about the org before diving into working groups.

One key element to sustaining members' long-term involvement in Fossil Free Mac was having many different opportunities for people to participate and get involved. We tried to share the work in a way that made everyone feel like they had a stake in the process, but they weren't overwhelmed and quickly burnt out. Sometimes we were successful at this, and other times we were not. We tried to make sure everyone was participating in a way that was scaled to their level of comfort, experience, and involvement. For example, when we were doing a lot of outreach to the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff members, alumni, and students we asked all our members to participate. If it was someone's first meeting, we asked that they talk to their friends or family members about Fossil Free Mac just to practice talking about the subject. People who had a little more experience talked to other students in their classes or with their professors about Fossil Free Mac. Core members and other people who knew the ins-and-outs of our campaign talked with Board of Trustee members and reached out to alumni networks. In this way, even if someone only came to 2 or 3 meetings, they likely actively participated in FFM's campaign by spreading the word, assisting in writing an Op-Ed, planning a teach-in, or tabling over the lunch hour. We tried to get people fully involved (or as involved as they wanted to be) as soon as they walked in the door.



*FFM table at the Student Org Fair*



*FFM member wearing a Fossil Free Mac t-shirt*



# COMMUNICATION

Fossil Free Mac used different communication tools and online platforms. In our Google Drive, we kept all of our meeting notes, event planning documents, tabling sign-up spreadsheets, and research documents organized both by semester and theme. We initially had a shared folder, but later transitioned to a shared drive. In a shared drive, documents are owned by the team, rather than an individual. Since students' accounts get deactivated when they graduate, using a shared drive ensures that no documents get lost over time. For communication between the members, we used various platforms. As other student organizations, we had a mailing list, which we used to remind students of our meetings and to share any other updates regarding our campaign. For core members, we used a Facebook Messenger group chat, until the entire organization moved to Slack. Slack is a messaging platform that many organizers use. It allowed us to create different "channels", which function as different groups. We had a core channel as well as a general channel. Certain working groups that we formed during our regular meetings, such as faculty engagement working group, had their own channel too. This helped us ensure that only those who are interested in receiving messages about a given topic would receive them, while our communication was still centralized within a single app (which is also accessible via a computer). It is also important to consider the best platform for communicating about important topics. For example, when planning escalatory actions or discussing new strategies, it may be best to use a distinct channel in Slack with only the most involved and trusted members. We often worked on tasks during the winter and summer breaks. In those instances we used Zoom, a communications software that allows video conferencing. We enjoyed this platform because it allows one to pre-schedule a video meeting and share the online link or a phone number that the attendees can use to access the meeting at the set time.

## 1-1S

One-on-ones (1:1s) are an organizing tactic that FFM employed at different times throughout our campaign to further student engagement and build stronger relationships among our members and with other organizing groups on campus. One-on-ones are intentional conversations between 2 people: 1 person who is already heavily involved in the organization (likely in a leadership position) and another person who is just getting started in organizing or may be looking for more ways to get involved. When we did one-on-ones, our main goals were: to get to know the person; to answer any questions they had about FFM, student organizing, or anything else; to better understand why they are interested in FFM, what they are interested in doing, what they see as their role in FFM, and what they want to get out of being involved in FFM. One-on-ones are structured to build relationships and learn more about fellow organization members outside of large group meetings.

We primarily did one-on-ones with existing members of FFM who we wanted to involve more deeply, but they can also be used to build connections with leaders of partner organizations or other people who may have a stake in the issue you're organizing around. Many of our relationships with Board of Trustee members, faculty, and staff were developed through face-to-face conversations. These don't exactly fall under the same category as one-on-ones, but they were based upon the same principle that building strong relationships and getting to know each other is at the core of organizing and creating change. When setting up one-on-ones, we tried to match up core members (FFM leaders) with other existing FFM members based on common interests, skills, or pre-existing bonds. For example, if a core member had a class with another FFM member who was interested in getting more involved, we would match those two together to do a one-on-one, because their conversation would have an easy starting point.

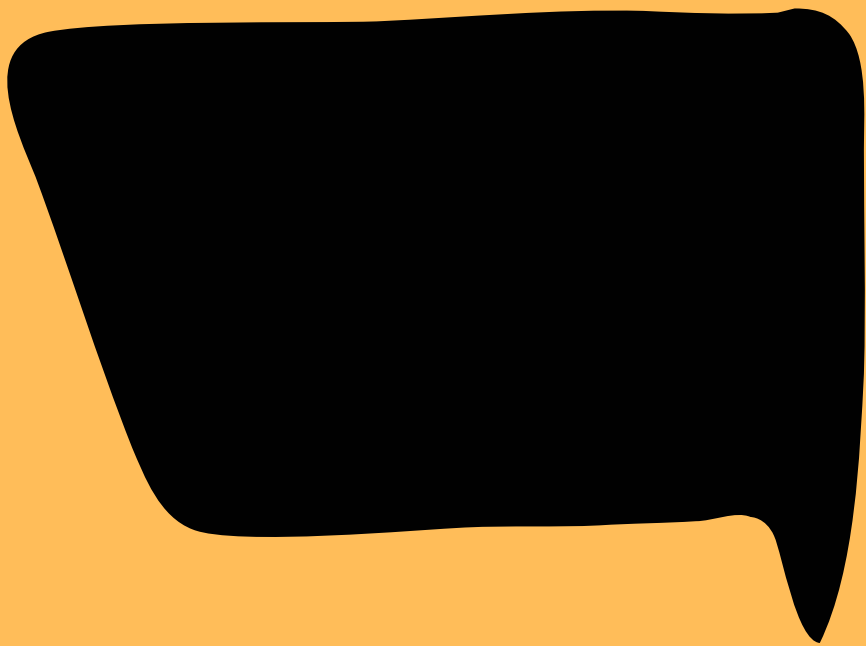
# RETREAT

At the beginning of many semesters, FFM organized a retreat. This was a 3-4 hr weekend morning event for current FFM members and anyone interested in joining the organization. The retreat included team building activities as well as visioning and planning sessions looking ahead to the semester and beyond. The visioning aspect of the retreat helped ground us in the shared commitment to climate justice, while planning involved writing down the concrete steps that we need to take that semester to move us closer to our goal. In the moments when the course of our campaign was dependent on a response from an outside body, such as the Board, it was challenging to develop a clear course of action; nevertheless, such retreats helped us create a space where our members can express their ideas regarding the future of the movement. In terms of sustaining the movement over a long period of time, we feel as though the retreats played an important role in building community around a shared vision while also developing a concrete strategy for the time ahead.



*Fossil Free Mac retreat*

# HOW-TO COMMUNICATION



# THE BOARD

There are different ways for student organizers to engage with the Board of Trustees. Their meetings take place twice a year on campus, in October and May, with an additional winter meeting held off campus. While Fossil Free Mac members were not able to attend any of these meetings, we found ways to represent our voice in those meetings. Ahead of the Board of Trustee meetings, the President's secretary uploads all the documents relevant for the meeting on an online portal. In order to make use of this portal, we emailed the secretary the documents we wanted the Board to have access too. These included: our proposal, an addendum to our proposal (including answers to commonly asked questions), and a summary of the faculty/staff and alumni endorsements (see below). In addition to having these documents on the portal, we emailed them to the trustees when reaching out to them individually; however, it seemed as though the Trustees were reading all of the documents from the portal anyways. Another avenue that student organizers can use is collaboration with the Student Liaison to the Board of Trustees. We made sure that the liaison is knowledgeable about our campaign in order to represent us well. They were also helpful by sharing with us the information from the meetings (that was not confidential), as well as by inviting us to other opportunities for students to get to know the Board.

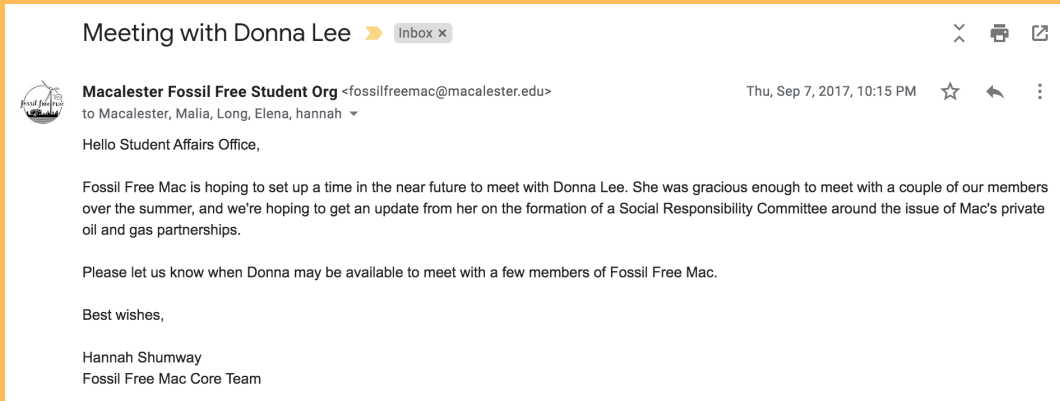
When the Board is on campus for their meeting, they organize "mixers" with students. We made use of this opportunity to get to know Board members and tell them about our campaign in person. In addition, because we were open and persistent in our interest in connecting with Board members, our group or representatives from Fossil Free Mac were often directly invited to these "mixers" by the organizers. During the times when the Board was on campus, we also worked to increase our visibility on campus by wearing our t-shirts, putting up signs, painting the rock, tabling etc.



*Divest Now! Rock*

Later on in our campaign, we found ways to engage with the Board beyond these scheduled activities. Using the MacDirect directory, we found contact information for all of the trustees and reached out with updates and requests to meet, with varying levels of success. Over time, we developed closer relationships with some trustees. This was very helpful because they could tell us what elements of our strategy we could strengthen to be more persuasive. This feedback, together with the continuous conversations we were having with as many trustees as we could led us to write an addendum to our proposal, answering frequently asked questions and concerns. One "universal" lesson that we learned is that the Board is very interested in what our peer institutions are doing and how they have acted or not acted in similar situations and on similar issues.

The MacDirect directory was also useful for us during the Spring 2019 Trustee meeting when we rallied students, faculty, and alumni to email the then Board President Jerry Crawford in support of our campaign. He received over 100 emails and got the message loud and clear. That said, we also respected Jerry and his time a great deal and informed him ahead of time that he could expect some communications from our supporters. We repeated the same action during their October 2019 meeting when they decided on our proposal.



*Example email for setting up a meeting with members of the administration*

# THE PRESIDENT

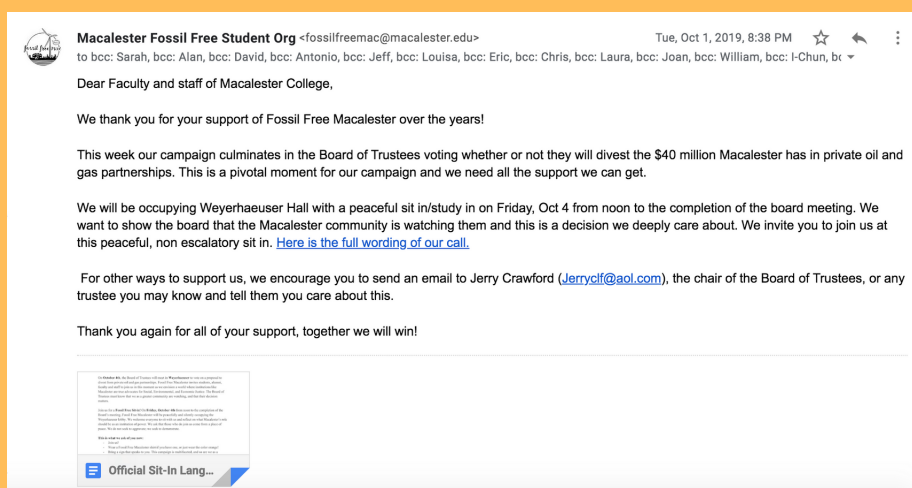
Throughout our campaign we maintained contact with President Rosenberg. At least once a semester we would schedule an appointment with him and discuss any updates we had with our campaign. While this may change with a new school president arriving soon, we were able to schedule appointments with President Rosenberg by emailing one of his secretaries (Cynthia Hendricks and Tara Darst) and CC'ing President Rosenberg. We then received different times and days that would work to meet. At certain points in our campaign we were able to go to President Rosenberg with questions as well. Although we don't believe he ever fully came around to supporting divestment, he did support student activism to a certain degree. President Rosenberg attended Board meetings and frequently talked with trustees so we were sometimes able to get a better idea of how a discussion of divestment went, what different concerns were, and how certain actions or tactics might be perceived by the Board. After the Board had their 2019 January retreat, it wasn't until we met with President Rosenberg that we learned the Board had passed the Guidelines for Investor Responsibility framework that allowed them to discuss our divestment proposal. When planning our sit in for the Board's vote on our proposal, we worked with President Rosenberg to ensure that it was respectful but impactful and were able to hold a very successful demonstration as a result. Talking with President Rosenberg also allowed us to craft documents like our addendum to focus on specific arguments that the trustees felt were lacking.

# FACULTY AND STAFF

The main way in which FFM engaged with staff and faculty on campus was through our Faculty/Staff FFM Proposal Endorsement. We made sure that the form description included the specific wording that the staff and faculty would sign by adding their name to the form, and that we made all relevant information, such as our proposal and the Social Responsibility Committee's report, available to them to read over prior to signing the form. We also provided an optional space for staff and faculty to provide comments in addition to their signature. We have found this to be very beneficial for our campaign, because we had quotes that we could use to show the support behind our movement.

To collect staff and faculty signatures, we mostly acted in person. FFM members would approach staff and faculty members that they are close to, for example during office hours, to tell them about Fossil Free Mac's proposal and ask them if they would be willing to sign the endorsement. Then, we would send them the form via email and encourage them to share it with their colleagues. The fact that FFM members came from various academic departments and held different work study positions on campus helped us have a wide outreach.

Since the form asked for the email addresses of the signatories, we effectively created a mailing list of our staff and faculty supporters. We used this list to share updates about our campaign and other ways in which they can support us. These included showing up for our sit-in or sending emails to the Board of Trustees members ahead of their meetings urging them to adopt our proposal. Over time, some staff and faculty members became our advisors. We reached out to different departments and professors for advice and resources related to their areas of expertise. Economics professors helped us out with questions related to investments and other financial terms. Others gave advice on the appropriate next steps for our campaign, held workshops for student organizers, and supported us in other ways.



*Example email for staff and faculty*

# ALUMNI

There were a few different ways in which we engaged with Macalester alumni on the issue of divestment, including a petition, advice, and advocacy, among others. As many alumni lead busy lives, we created a quick petition that could be signed in seconds to show support for divestment as an alumni. We spread this throughout Facebook groups, personal contacts, and word of mouth and ended up with over 400 signatures. Although the majority were from alumni who had graduated in the last decade, we were still able to get signatures from even those who graduated in the '60s.

Another really helpful way of engaging with alumni was to keep in contact with those who had previously been involved with our campaign before graduating. Many were able to continue supporting us and when the time came for the Board of Trustees to vote on our proposal, an alum who had recently graduated organized over 100 other alumni to email the chair of the board about divestment. We also were able to draw on alumni as a resource to help us better understand and communicate the complexities of divestment. We stayed in touch with alumni who had previously been involved with FFM and were able to get a lot of help understanding and presenting the economic arguments for divestment.

We also considered connecting with other alumni who had more experience in socially responsible investing. There is a lot of potential to work with experienced alumni on complicated issues, especially since student activists can sometimes be brushed off just for still being students. The best way we found to connect with alumni besides personal connections was to use Mac Direct, an alumni network that Macalester has put in place. By going to search alumni and logging in you can choose different filters to find what you're looking for, such as searching by location, career, major, job title, etc. You can't always find what you're looking for but most of the time you can find a list of people that fit your filters and by checking their profile you can often find an email to contact them with.

# ENGAGING THE STUDENT BODY





# EVENTS

Most of the events that Fossil Free Mac organized were related to our divestment campaign. About once a semester, we would organize a "Teach-In". This event, normally held in the Harmon Room or Old Main 4, was an introduction to our campaign for interested community members. During these events, we went over the history of the divestment movement and our history on campus. We also provided any updates on our campaign and shared ways to support us. Often we made this session interactive, by providing reflection questions about Macalester investments' relationship to climate justice, or sought input from the attendees about the future course of action for our movement. By holding an interactive event every semester, we wanted to maintain contact with our community and show our openness to new members or supporters.



*Fossil Free Town Hall  
Event Poster*

During key moments of our campaign, we organized additional events. For example, prior to the MCSG referendum regarding our proposal, we held a Town Hall. We wanted to make sure that the student body is well informed about the proposal that they were about to vote on. We also wanted to create a space where we can engage in critical conversations regarding our campaign, as a great learning opportunity for us, but also to address any potential misconceptions about our proposal. Similarly, following the Board's decision in response to our proposal, we held an event to share with our community the diverse interpretations of the Board's decision, supported by the information we found out from the Board members, the Student Liaison to the Board, and the President.

At times we organized events not related to our divestment campaign, such as a panel discussion regarding the Line 3 pipeline. This stemmed from our broader commitment to climate justice. Closer to the end of our movement, we refrained from organizing any such events as we wanted to dedicate all of our time and efforts to the divestment campaign.

# TABLING

One of the tactics that we utilized the most to reach out to the student body was tabling. Tabling, or manning a table in or outside of the Campus Center (depending on weather) with signs and literature is an excellent way to raise awareness and excitement for an upcoming event or simply to maintain visibility as a campus org. Fossil Free Mac, as some may remember, tabled often. We usually set up a table for two or three days a week before any events such as town halls, actions such as the referendum, or to remind the student body generally of what we were doing and why it was important.



*FFM members tabling*

Tabling usually required two people at a time that would cycle out in one hour shifts during the lunch hour, when most people are going in and out of the campus center. We found it helpful to have banners and signs, and to wear Fossil Free Mac shirts, anything to catch the eye and maintain a recognizable brand. Small fliers, posters, stickers, zines, or anything else that we could hand out to people were effective in spreading the message we intended for the day, whether that was to vote on a referendum or attending a sit in. It is generally a good idea to have a hook prepared that could draw people in once they made eye contact. A classic "did you know Macalester has 40 million dollars invested in private oil and gas partnerships" usually did the trick. It can also work to use shock value and say something like, "your tuition funds Line 3!" Any way to engage people as they are walking by, for instance taking pictures with an "I support divestment because...." whiteboard, will help to capture attention and build visibility. Tabling is also a good way to collect signatures, emails or any other manner of amassing support on paper. To reserve tables in front of the CC student organizations need to contact Reservations. For instructions on printing posters and flyers, check out the Publicity page on Macalester's website.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

Fossil Free Mac mainly used Facebook and Instagram. We created a Snapchat profile as well, but it was not as popular. We made sure to keep up a regular social media presence to show to our community that our movement is still going on, to share updates with them, and promote events that we are organizing. The use of social media platforms is well known to most Macalester students, so we chose to only talk about the most effective strategies that we used.

Ahead of the referendum organized through the student government (see below), we created a Facebook profile picture frame which stated "I will vote yes for divestment". More than 250 Macalester students applied this filter to their profile picture, which helped us spread the word about the upcoming referendum and increase the participation rate by 100%, resulting in a 96% support rate for our proposal.



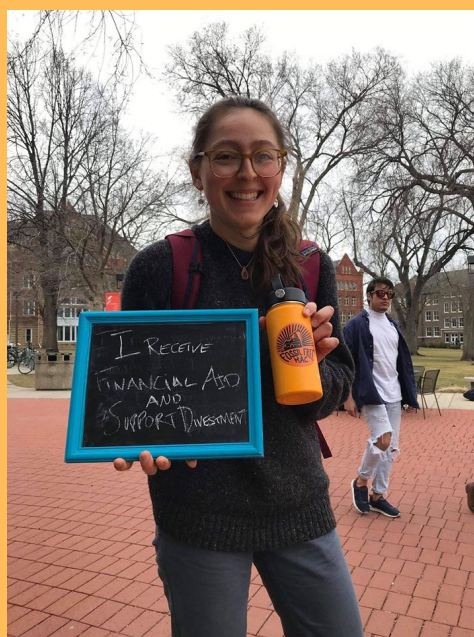
*Macalester student profile photos with the "I will vote yes for divestment" profile picture frame*

One benefit of social media pages is that they open up a range of new ways to communicate a message and an opportunity to engage a different, often larger, group of people. For example, in spring 2019 leading up to the student referendum, we started making and posting memes about Macalester's investments in fossil fuels. By putting Fossil Free Mac messages into familiar meme formats, we were able to connect our campaign to other movements for justice (or just daily frustrations and jokes) that have been represented in the same meme formats.



*One of the FFM most popular divestment memes*

In our posts, we often included students who are supportive of our movement even if they are not members of the organization. Ahead of the referendum, a big challenge for us was the misconception that fossil fuel divestment would harm student financial aid and that Fossil Free Mac organizers are not concerned about that because they do not rely on financial aid - which was not true. We wrote a larger op-ed for the Mac Weekly addressing this misconception, but we also started a Facebook and Instagram campaign with photos of our supporters holding a sign "I receive financial aid and support divestment". We received feedback that seeing images of peers was encouraging for those who were concerned about the impact of



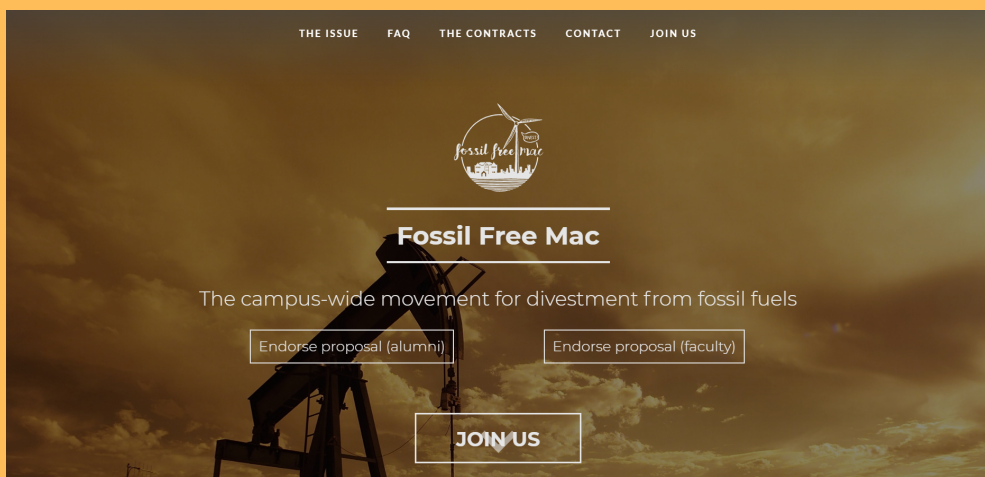
*An example photo from the financial aid photo campaign*

# THE MAC WEEKLY

Coverage in the Mac Weekly is a centralized and accessible way for other students to learn about projects and campaigns happening on campus. People got Fossil Free Mac updates both through articles written about our work by the Mac Weekly staff and occasion op-ed's we would author as a group. In order to have a Mac Weekly staff person write a story about a movement/event, one can email the Mac Weekly and inform them of the event taking place and express interest in news coverage. Once our movement gained large support on campus, Mac Weekly writers would show up for our events/actions even without our prior invitation. When we wanted our op-eds published in the Mac Weekly, we would email it to them. Keep in mind that the Mac Weekly reserves the right to edit op-eds. Since we have had many developments in the recent years, and since there is a large turnover in the student body, we attempted to have at least one op-ed per semester.

# FFM WEBSITE

Fossil Free Mac made use of a website to help us more easily bring our message to the Macalester community and beyond. It served as a centralized point for people to easily access updates concerning the movement, as well as provide context for our actions and long term vision. The website was also used to organize actions such as signatures collected from both students and faculty, and provide information about how activists could support the goals of divestment in their own community. Having a website made it easier for us to introduce the organization and its goals to the public, and greatly improved visibility by enabling interested people to find us through a simple Google search.



Fossil Free Mac Website

# MCSG

There were a few ways we worked with MCSG to bolster our campaign. MCSG established twice that eliminating fossil fuel investments is a necessary action to address the real threat of climate change and is consistent with Macalester's values. The 2017 resolution updated the student government to specifically advocate for a moratorium on private oil and gas partnerships, as well as call for institutional leadership in the absence of action from the federal government.

We also worked with MCSG to hold a student body referendum on the issue of divestment. We were inspired by the divestment campaign at Middlebury College, where they held a very successful referendum on divestment. By holding the referendum we were able to show the incredibly overwhelming support of fossil fuel divestment in the student body (96% in favor). In order to make this happen we worked with MCSG to get our referendum question added to the Spring 2019 MCSG election. This included working with Andrew Wells, the faculty advisor of MSCG, to navigate the process of getting our question on the ballot. We needed to give a presentation to MCSG about FFM, why we were requesting a referendum to be held, and the exact wording we would be using in the referendum. Once we had figured out the best wording, the ballot went forward including our question. After this, we worked to drastically increase voter turnout and get as many people as possible to vote in favor of divestment.



*MCSG members voting on the FFM resolution*

# LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCES



# GRADUATION

Scores of graduating members of the class of 2019 decorated their caps with orange Xs to show their support for FFM and the global fossil fuel divestment movement. Participating students included FFM members as well as many supporters who had not been previously involved with the campaign. All things considered, we found this to be a highly effective method of communication. The large number of orange Xs on the senior class's caps was a great image demonstrating widespread support for divestment of the endowment as well as continued commitment to the campaign beyond graduation. As each person was called onstage to receive their degree, it was powerful to have the entire college's focus on student after student visually denouncing the college's irresponsible and hypocritical use of the endowment. Because of the large audience, it was an ideal time to raise awareness of the issue for the entire Macalester community. Prompted by communication with Becca Krasky (a Fossil Free Mac core member), the Xs on graduation caps, and the urgent need for action on the issue, James Forman Jr, the 2019 commencement speaker, stressed the importance of divestment at this time of climate crisis. One drawback to this type of demonstration was how it was used by the Macalester media through photos and publications to promote the institution of Macalester College as a center for progressive action and activism without demonstrating any effort to meet our ask or make any changes whatsoever.



*Divestment signs on graduation caps*



# PEACEFUL SIT-IN

On October 4, 2019, FFM held a nonviolent sit-in in Weyerhaeuser Hall outside of the boardroom while the Board of Trustees gathered and voted on our proposal. The purpose of our action was to demonstrate our massive support without disrupting the voting process in order to pressure the Board to vote in support of our proposal. We promoted the event as a peaceful sit-in/study-in where people could come and study, read their favorite climate justice book, meditate or spend their time however they liked in a non-disruptive manner. We gathered shortly before the Board met and as our numbers grew, we marked paths on the ground with tape so the Board members could pass between us. In all, over 200 students, alumni, faculty and staff attended the sit-in. Upon hearing of our plans for the sit-in, many board members were afraid of what would happen and wanted to know what we were going to do. Others reacted positively, saying they were proud of us and even bought pizza ahead of time for the protesters. Once the meeting was in session we did our best to orient everyone as they entered the building and to keep the crowd at a low volume.

Before the vote was announced publicly, five members of FFM met upstairs with student liaison to the Board, Ximena Silva-Avila, reporters from the Mac Weekly, and two board members, including Jerry Crawford, the chair of the Board, who revealed and attempted to explain the Board's decision. Jerry Crawford was unable to offer much information about how this decision would impact the endowment and we were left with many unanswered questions. After the meeting, members of FFM announced the result of the vote to the protestors present. Although we stressed to the crowd that they did not pass our proposal and were very far from full divestment the general reaction was victorious.



*Macalester community at the Peaceful Sit-in*



*Student protesters engaging with a Trustee*

Up to this point most of our energy had been focussed on building support and planning the event. This left us without a unified reaction or plans for next steps, especially since the vote neither rejected nor accepted our proposal. In the following days, we heard many opinions on the vote ranging from anger towards FFM for letting ourselves be duped by the Board, to students who thought that Macalester had divested its endowment from fossil fuels completely. Eventually, FFM members came to a general consensus that this was a partial but significant win in the fight for more just investments. One improvement to the sit-in would have been to continue the conversation about the Board's decision and the next steps of the campaign immediately after the results were announced, while everyone was still gathered in Weyerhaeuser. This would have helped dispel misinformation about the results of the vote and provided a space for conversation between community members as we decided what our next steps would be. Additionally, many FFM members who were not in the private post vote meeting felt excluded from shaping how this information was presented to the public. We could have demanded that more members of FFM be represented in the meeting or we could have held a second meeting with all FFM members to decide how we wanted to present the results before the announcement.

# TOWN HALL

While our campaign did have the support of the majority of the community, there were many who felt indifferent about the issue and a few who outright disagreed with us on divestment. We wanted to engage both those who were indifferent and those who disagreed with us in order to better understand their reasoning. In early April of 2019 we held a town hall in JBD lecture hall. Going in we had the intention of both informing more people about our campaign and creating an open space for criticism and questions about Fossil Free Mac and the issue of divestment. However we were largely disappointed when pretty much the only people who came were familiar with our campaign and already supported it. We still gave an overview of what we do and what divestment looks like at Macalester and we did receive some critical questions, but largely we did not come out of it feeling as though we had been able to engage those who oppose our campaign. In retrospect, although we advertised it as a place for people to come and express their views and criticisms, a large lecture hall with us on stage is not the ideal place to feel comfortable expressing those views. Rather, we have had more success simply engaging with these opinions when they arose through personal conversation.

# WORKING WITH THE ADMINISTRATION

As mentioned, Fossil Free Mac did not achieve the goal we originally set out to accomplish, of full divestment from fossil fuels. After the Social Responsibility Committee rejected our proposal for full divestment, we changed our ask to placing a moratorium on all private oil and gas partnerships, meaning Macalester would let the current partnerships expire and not make any new ones. Fossil Free Mac made this shift because until then, we had not known specifically about the \$40 million in private partnerships, and divestment from these partnerships felt like a very tangible goal. It is much less logistically difficult than full and immediate divestment, and would cause less upset to the endowment, which we believed would appeal to members of the board who were concerned about divestment's effect on the financial health of Macalester.

For years before the Board voted, Fossil Free Mac had been working closely within the administration to achieve our goal. We felt that we had several allies in the administration who consistently advised us well on how to gain an audience with the Board. Our goal was to have our proposal accepted and to have Macalester's investments align more with its values. For us, this meant conducting our campaign in a way that we thought it most likely that the Board would listen to us and take us seriously. If members of Fossil Free Mac felt in recent years that it would be more beneficial to work more outside of official channels, we decided against it because we did not want to sabotage the relationships that we had built that had become so beneficial in finally getting our proposal to a vote. By the time of the final vote in September of 2019, Fossil Free Mac was working closely with and communicating frequently with members of the Board and the administration in general that we knew supported our proposal.

The results of the 2019 vote came as a shock to us. Not only were we surprised that the board had actually voted to accept our proposal, but we were dismayed that the Board had altered our proposal without consulting us. The Board's official decision was that it would let all Macalester's private partnerships in oil and gas expire and not make any new ones unless that partnership resulted in a "net reduction in carbon emissions". For us, this vague caveat came out of the blue. When we pressed Chairman of the Board Jerry Crawford on what exactly this meant, he explained using an example of how in India, burning coal is very common, and if there was a partnership that was replacing coal plants in India with natural gas, that would still be an acceptable investment because replacing coal with natural gas, a "better" fossil fuel would result in a net decrease in carbon emissions. Among the members of Fossil Free Mac, we had many different reactions to this caveat. Some of us felt that it was likely just a provision that would not be used, and had to be added to get the support of certain members of the Board. From this perspective, the vote looked like a clear win for us. Others of us felt that we had been cheated into allowing the Board to pat themselves on the back for "divesting" when in reality what they did was not real divestment and had the potential to, in the case of the India example, export our fossil fuel investments in the Global South, which would not align with our values of climate justice.

Here is where Fossil Free Mac's decision to work within the administration to achieve divestment had some drawbacks. It forced us to narrow down our campaign goal in a way that is more appealing to the administration. When the Board made a decision that we would have liked to have pushed back on, we were not in a position to negotiate with them. Over the years, we had set a precedent of doing what the administration asked of us because we believed it was the fastest way to get the Board's attention and respect. This led to the board actually voting on our proposal, but also put us in a difficult place to challenge them.

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