



Portland Community College recently adopted a policy to divest from companies or funds that harm the planet or people thanks to PCC students who sought the ban. Pictured (from left) are some of the individuals who participated in the effort, including student Alex Bell-Johnson (from left), PCC Sustainability Manager Brian Schoon, and students Kien Truong, Molly Walker and Sebastian Scholene.

Students for a Sustainable Economy

Effort brings new investment policy at PCC

Student leaders at Portland Community College were given credit when PCC recently adopted a new policy not to invest in companies or funds that harm the planet or people.

The PCC Board passed a resolution this summer to divest college money from fossil fuel-producing and socially irresponsible companies and investments.

“I believe deeply that passing this di-

vestment resolution was the right thing to do,” said Board Chair Kali Thorne-Ladd. “In its commitment to equity and sustainability, PCC must support operational practices that model the sustainable use of resources, as well as advance the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The movement to divest was started by student leaders like Alex Bell-Johnson in early 2016, and supported and facilitated by Briar Schoon, the college’s sustainability manager. They partnered with the climate action group 350pdx.org and PCC’s financial leaders to review the college’s current portfolio.

“We didn’t have to sell it to college leadership,” Bell-Johnson said. “PCC already didn’t have direct investments in fossil fuel companies. The policy serves more as assurance that this will be the standard process, now and in the future.”

The college’s current investment portfolio balance is about \$220 million. PCC Treasury Manager Dee Wilson said the college approaches its fiscal obligations responsibly, only investing “in very high quality instruments.”

“When Alex and Briar came to me to talk about divestment, I was intrigued,” Wilson said. “We were already careful about our investment

choices and favored those that supported the college’s sustainability goals, so their idea was a natural fit. Personally, it’s really rewarding to know that the values I hold close will be reflected in the college’s investment holdings long after I’m gone. It’s a good feeling.”

Also, buy-in for the policy was helped by PCC President Mark Mitsui’s service on the climate leadership steering committee of Second Nature, an organization whose member institutions work to lower the impact of their carbon footprint. It has pushed to have schools divest their portfolios of polluters.