

To: President Vincent E. Price  
CC: Board of Trustees Chairman Jack Bovender  
Board of Trustees member & Facilities and Environment Committee Chair Michael Marsicano  
Board of Trustees member & Business and Finance Committee Chair Bill Hawkins  
Campus Sustainability Committee Co-Chairs Tallman Trask & Tim Profeta

Sent via email to: [president@duke.edu](mailto:president@duke.edu), [boardchair@duke.edu](mailto:boardchair@duke.edu), [t3@duke.edu](mailto:t3@duke.edu),  
[tim.profeta@duke.edu](mailto:tim.profeta@duke.edu)

*March 09, 2018*

**Community organizations and individuals ask you to create a full, transparent review process of Duke University's energy system before finalizing decisions on CHP and biogas.**

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, appreciate the opportunities Duke University has given for review of its proposed combined heat and power (CHP) plant. The CHP subcommittee of the Campus Sustainability Committee, which adjourned last April, laid out much-needed recommendations to address concerns about the plant's impact on climate, health, and communities. The subcommittee also recommended that the University engage in a new stakeholder process to continue to evaluate the plant, and the University committed to continue to engage stakeholders. While Duke University has retained Forge Communications to discuss and develop such a process, no action has yet been taken to engage external stakeholders or begin proceedings, despite a likely decision point for the CHP plant in May 2018.

We are concerned that the new proposed process will not address the fundamental question of Duke's energy needs and will not be able to be completed in time for a formal vote to be made on the CHP plant in May. President Price, will you delay any formal vote on the proposed CHP plant past May to allow for a thorough stakeholder process analyzing the university's energy needs?

As you know, the plant was the subject of extensive campus- and state-wide debate regarding its concerning impacts on climate, health, and the community since it was announced in May of 2016. In April of last year, the CHP subcommittee of the CSC came to several major conclusions. First, the subcommittee *did not* come to a consensus on whether or not the university should proceed with the CHP plant. Second, it recommended that the university not move forward with the plant if it could not guarantee biogas supply. Third, it recommended that the university pursue further stakeholder engagement to evaluate the motivations for CHP versus other energy options, assess impacts on ratepayers, and include other affected parties. In the following months, members of the CSC worked with Duke University to create a new stakeholder process facilitated by Forge Communications. Unfortunately, aside from a brief meeting with CSC members in December 2017, no further plans have been made to initiate this stakeholder process, external stakeholders have yet to be engaged in the process, and the scope of the process seems limited exclusively to biogas feasibility with an implicit assumption that the university will proceed with the CHP plant.

Given the University's ambitious target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2024, we urge you to consider the value in the CSC's recommendation to pursue further stakeholder

engagement. The CSC's recommendations do not conclude that if the university can secure biogas it should therefore proceed with CHP; rather, the CSC only recommended that *if* the university does decide CHP is the best option after comprehensive analysis of the university's energy system, then biogas should accompany it. CHP with biogas is still concerning for a number of reasons. First, while the University administration has suggested that biogas would be used as the sole fuel in the proposed CHP plant, all plans put forth by the CSC and the University's biogas consultants assume that swine-methane *credits* will be procured in equivalent volumes to natural gas burned in the plant – this is effectively an *offset*, not a direct fueling of the plant with biogas. If the University uses biogas to offset the natural gas burned by the new CHP plant, then that biogas cannot be used to offset other preexisting fossil fuel plants. Therefore, there is no net reduction in natural gas use.

Second, scaling up biogas-energy production faces major technical, environmental and equity challenges that will require substantial stakeholder and community engagement. Duke can and should lead in developing solutions to controlling methane emissions and environmental justice damages from swine farms, but the University should not link those efforts to the decision on the CHP plant. Biogas procurement and the CHP plant are two separate issues – it is in the best interest of the university and the climate to conduct a full, balanced analysis of each, in order to fully evaluate concerns with biogas and swine farms, as well as campus energy needs and solutions rather than trying to retroactively fit biogas or CHP into this picture. Additionally, it is imperative that representatives from the North Carolina community as well as Duke Energy and Duke Hospital be included in the process. We emphasize that a transparent stakeholder process should be a *precursor* to any energy plans the university makes, not a process that occurs as CHP and biogas plans develop or after the fact. In particular, Duke must ensure its biogas projects have a beneficial impact on local communities and ecosystems, rather than ignoring or reinforcing pollution that disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color.

In light of the importance of this issue to Duke's energy infrastructure and climate legacy, we hope to work with the administration to ensure that the university upholds its environmental leadership by adhering to values of transparency and thorough investigation on this proposed CHP plant. Since the university's initial approach to the CHP plant resulted in significant controversy from the campus and community, we urge the university to implement a thorough, representative stakeholder process to help cultivate trust and enhance the university's decision-making. A new stakeholder process that conducts a comprehensive analysis of Duke's energy system as a whole is necessary to fully understand university energy needs and to identify a process that will result in reducing—not increasing—on-campus emissions over time. Assets such as CHP may be part of this solution, but the best approach for Duke's campus and the climate cannot be determined without a careful, bottom-up review.

We commend Duke University for its leadership on environmental issues and look forward to partnering with the university to aid it in upholding its values of sustainability and transparency. It is important that Duke continue to foster a positive relationship with the Durham and broader North Carolina community, and part of this relationship will be determined by how the university proceeds with its energy decisions. Duke University is a research institution dedicated not just to environmental leadership, but to fair, thorough analysis and high ethical standards. President Price, for the many compelling reasons outlined herein, we call on you to

delay any formal vote on the proposed CHP plant to allow for a thorough stakeholder process analyzing the university's energy needs and options for meeting those needs.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

1. Karen Bearden, 350 Triangle
2. Steven Norris, APPPL (Alliance to Protect Our People and the Places We Live)
3. Amy Adams, Appalachian Voices
4. Avram Friedman, The Canary Coalition
5. Adam Colette, Dogwood Alliance
6. Ariyani Challapalli, Duke Climate Coalition
7. Dr. Brent Blackwelder, President Emeritus, Friends of the Earth
8. John Steelman, Natural Resources Defense Council
9. John Adams, Founding Director, Natural Resources Defense Council; The Nicholas School Board of Visitors
10. Jodi Lasseter, NC Climate Justice Summit
11. Harvard Ayers Co-ED, NC Climate Solutions Coalition
12. Jennifer Copeland, NC Council of Churches
13. Ayo Wilson, NC Environmental Justice Network
14. Susannah Tuttle, NC Interfaith Power and Light
15. Connie Leeper, NC WARN
16. Sara Terry, People's Alliance
17. Robert Musil, Rachel Carson Council
18. Dave Rogers, Sierra Club

Individuals:

19. Tom Clark, OWNDA homeowner
20. Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
21. Sally Kleberg, Duke Nicholas School of the Environment, BOV emeritus
22. John Schelp, Duke neighbor
23. William H. Schlesinger, James B. Duke Professor and Dean (Emeritus), the Nicholas School of the Environment
24. Brad Stanback
25. Fred Stanback
26. George M. Woodwell