



Student Guide



Welcome!

What is the Mentorship Network?

The Talk Divest: Fossil Free Mentorship Project connects your campaign with a financial professional who can provide support as you work through the financial arguments for divestment. Professionals volunteer to work with student campaigns can help answer financial questions, assist you in understanding technical investment concepts and practices, show you how to analyze the structure and holdings of your campaign target's endowment, review and provide feedback on your presentations to administrators, help you prepare for meetings with key decisionmakers, and help develop methods for addressing difficult financial questions posed by administrators. The scope of the interaction will vary depending on the need of the student group and the availability of the mentor.

Given the grassroots nature of the fossil fuel divestment movement, and the diversity in specific campaigns across the nation, mentors will need to learn a lot about how you have defined your campaign in order to support you. We at As You Sow, 350.org, CSSC and Responsible Endowments Coalition have done our best to “set the tone” so that mentors know that they are supportive, non-controlling actors who volunteer time and research to help you be well equipped, informed campaigners.

This guide is a tool to ready you to work with mentors, who want to support you and accelerate the success of the divestment movement.

When should we meet with a mentor?

In order to use the mentorship in the most optimal way please consider the following.

- Bring a Talk Divest mentor in when your campaign has engaged with or is about to engage in talks with your institutional target.
- Learn as much as you can on your own; the more research you can do before you meet with an advisor, the deeper and more efficient your interactions with them can be. Please refer to the material on Fossil Free for terminology, research on risk and return, reinvestment options, etc.
- Build consensus within your group about strategy.
 - How will you define divestment? Will you use the suggested 200 list or build more extensive criteria?



- How much of your presentation will be couched in the moral, scientific, or financial sides of the argument?
- Will you develop a reinvestment side to your “ask”? What will that look like?

What should I expect from working with Talk Divest?

Don't feel pressure to become financial experts; these meetings are crash courses and financial argument strategy sessions. The ideological camps, complex investment structures, and market dynamics found in finance represent vast arenas of information. Instead, stay focused on your message and get more support for it from your mentor. Here are some ideas for how to use your mentor's skills:

- Prepare questions and an agenda, and send them to your mentor ahead of time.
- Example questions: *Will divestment hurt our returns? Can we still have a safe, diversified portfolio without the energy sector? How long will divestment take?* Then, work through answers and supporting data with your mentor.
- Another option is to report questions and comments that the campaign has received from the administration to your mentor, and prepare responses which you will discuss with your mentor.
- Your mentors can also help review reports and prepare data for presentations.
- Some of the mentors may be working with several divestment groups. Please be appreciative of their time so they are energized for the next group.
- Please give back to the network by sharing your campaign deliverables on the group drive linked on the Talk Divest webpage. In this way, your campaign can help the network can grow exponentially and prevent campaigns from “reinventing the wheel”.

Do mentors commit to any rules ahead of time?

There are a few red flags you should look out for in your engagement with mentors.

1. *Don't let your mentor talk you out of divestment.* Shareholder engagement sometimes suggested as an alternative to divestment. It is an important tool and a historically important shareholder responsibility. In the case of fossil fuel divestment, shareholder engagement is a time and progress eddy – a mechanism to delay the inevitable conclusion that fossil fuel companies cannot be talked out of burning fossil fuels.

Mentors are required to support divestment to be admitted to participate in Talk Divest. If yours doesn't, raise it with them, but if an understanding is not found, contact Talk Divest for a new mentor assignment.

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2. *No selling.* Don't let your mentor talk to you extensively or specifically about their firm's products. Although your mentor might have a helpful investment strategy or fund which your endowment or pension could utilize, it is inappropriate for them to push services through your campaign, or to use your campaign to gain access to your campaign's target institution for selling. Please report such behavior through the Talk Divest website so that we can take steps to address the problem.

How can I best plan mentor meetings?

In the pilot program for Talk Divest, we learned that it is important to give your team plenty of time to arrange a meeting date with your mentor. *Please don't wait to schedule a meeting until you have only a week before a presentation or meeting.* Not only are campaign members often very busy and hard to schedule, but the professionals who have volunteered as mentors are also commonly booked several weeks out. For this reason, try to schedule meetings at least 2 to 3 weeks in advance and be sensitive to the fact a last minute meeting may not be possible, or may not be possible in-person.

Also, be aware that your mentor might have to go through a screening process with their firm before a meeting can be arranged. This is not always an issue, but bigger firms may want to screen your campaign's questions and approve your mentor's participation in Talk Divest beforehand. This process, in which a financial firm's legal team approves various aspects of the activities of the firm's employees is called "compliance" and is very common in finance, which is a risk averse area of business. Please consult with your mentor on this issue and build in extra time if the compliance process is slow-going. If you are uncomfortable sharing campaign information with your mentor's firm, seek reassignment to a mentor not faced with compliance restrictions.

Who should go to mentor meetings?

While you may have lots of people in your group and only a few interested in the finance, it's really important that you bring more than one person to your meeting with a mentor. Why? So that more than one person is getting the information that your group needs. This is critical to maximize the value of your mentor sessions, so that you have more people to answer questions, who are prepared to present in meetings, and who are ready to speak to the press. 3 people is ideal (more could overwhelm your mentor, just check with them if more than 3 are interested.) Try to bring people from different class years and ideally at least one person who has not been one of your finance people so that you can develop new leaders.

Thank you and good luck! Keep in touch with Talk Divest as to how things are going, we are happy to help navigate campaign/ mentor relationships, answer questions and provide resources.