

ExxonMobil Funding of “Climate Change Denial”

The Funding of Influential Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy

By [Steve Horn](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#)

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In a sentence buried at the very bottom of a story making [headlines nationwide](#), Politico [revealed for the first time one of the funders](#) of Columbia University’s influential [Center on Global Energy Policy \(CGEP\)](#).

The funder: ExxonMobil, the company [embroiled in a New York state Attorney General investigation](#) for its extensive [internal knowledge of the impacts of climate change](#) since the 1970s, followed by Exxon’s [funding of climate change denial](#) campaigns [to the tune of \\$31 million](#). Politico got its numbers from [ExxonMobil’s 2014 Worldwide Contributions and Community Investments report](#).



While Politico reported on Exxon’s grievances about the Los Angeles Times’ [two-part](#) investigation conducted by students and staff at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism that exposed what Exxon knew about climate change science and when it knew it, it also touched on what money currently flows into the University’s coffers via the [“private empire.”](#)

“Through its foundation, Exxon gave \$219,229 to Columbia in 2014 as part of a matching gift program for educational institutions, as well as \$9,000 in direct grants,” reads the article’s final paragraph. “The company also gave \$25,000 last year to the markets program at the university’s Center on Global Energy Policy.”

DeSmog has long sought to discover who funds CGEP and has sent multiple rounds of information requests to the Center, never receiving a response.

The watchdog group Checks and Balances Project, which contacted DeSmog months back about CGEP and its lack of disclosure regarding funding, has also written multiple rounds of letters to the Center and also received no response.

Checks and Balances Project wrote letters to CGEP, published here for the first time on DeSmog, asking for clarification about who butters its bread in both [September 2014](#) and [January 2015](#).

Academic Veneer, Advocacy Reality

As reported previously by DeSmog, CGEP has used the veneer of academia and traded on the Columbia University brand to serve as a [leading advocate for exporting oil](#) obtained via [hydraulic fracturing \(“fracking”\)](#) to the global market, as well as for [Mexico’s energy sector privatization](#) and [other energy issues](#).

“If you were looking for a success story in starting up a brand new group at your university and having it very quickly jump into a leading role in the national energy policy debate, Columbia’s CGEP represents the gold standard,” [wrote DeSmog’s Justin Mikulka back in October](#). “On the surface the formula is pretty simple, although perhaps not easily replicated without some deep-pocketed funders.”

The Center is [headed by Jason Bordoff](#), former special assistant to President Barack Obama and senior director for energy and climate change for the National Security Council. Bordoff has not responded to multiple requests for comment on CGEP’s funding stream sent by DeSmog.

With [22 fellows](#) and [19 faculty affiliates](#) staffed at CGEP — with backgrounds ranging from [Wall Street bank oil trading](#), a [U.S. ambassador](#), an [industry executive](#), [industry consultants](#), etc. — one can probably safely bet that the \$25,000 Exxon gave to the Center merely serves as pennies to the dollar in terms of overall industry bucks buttering CGEP’s bread. DeSmog will continue digging for answers.

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