

[SIX YEARS AFTER THEY DIVESTED TOBACCO STOCKS:]

Why do the University of California Regents still cash checks from tobacco racketeers?

LAST AUGUST, A FEDERAL COURT found the U.S. tobacco industry responsible for violating the RICO statute and perpetrating a massive fraud on the American public.

Among the Court's findings: the tobacco industry secretly and systematically used its external research programs to "undermine independent research, to fund research designed and controlled to generate industry favorable results, and to suppress adverse research results."

The Court found that the tobacco industry's racketeering enterprise was continuing. It named the Philip Morris External Research Program, which funds current projects at the University of California, as part of that racketeering enterprise.

To make vivid how Big Tobacco co-opted world-class research institutions for its disinformation and legal defense strategies, the Court cited the misuse of American Cancer Society data by a non-faculty researcher at UCLA, which got \$525,000 from the tobacco industry.

The U.C. administration is dismissive of the federal court's concerns, so U.C.'s Regents are now obliged to intervene and rescue the University's reputation.

As at other institutions around the world, the University of California scholars most familiar with tobacco industry operations have been briefing their colleagues on Big Tobacco's efforts to manipulate and abuse the research process. Several years ago, U.C. faculty units began to approve their own policies to refuse tobacco industry money.

Since then, however, U.C.'s faculty senate and its administration have insisted that only the U.C. Regents decide if units of the University can refuse Big Tobacco.

Is there debate? Of course; this is academia. The U.C. administration opposes any limitations on grants, no matter the source. And some U.C. faculty

believe that accepting tobacco industry grants is an exercise in academic freedom, no matter what purpose that grant-making serves—even though no one is proposing any limits on research topics, publication or speech.

But the variety of interests and opinions within U.C. should

not distract anyone from the question at the core of the Regents' deliberations:

Can a university that fails to draw an ethical line hope to preserve its integrity?

Few if any in the U.C. community are likely to be sympathetic to the tobacco industry. Its products, used as directed, killed 100 million people in the 20th Century and, if present trends continue, they will kill another billion human beings in the 21st Century.

Are giving cover to Big Tobacco's deceptive strategies and catering to its need for public credibility—enabling it to forestall life-saving regulation, spin legal defenses and create alibis for its political allies—compatible with a university's mission?

Can a university keep its integrity if it embraces a racketeering enterprise that has deliberately designed its grant programs to manufacture controversy, confuse the public, and suppress results offending its commercial self-interest?

Is the University of California, whose funding challenges are known to all, so desperate that it will abdicate its capacity for basic ethical judgment? And for what? Taking tobacco money can only alienate support from the public



"Let there be light" is the University's official motto.



But "Gimme a light" has been the attitude toward money from the tobacco industry. Will U.C. Regents finally draw the line?

and state legislature, and from private benefactors, who will see no benefit or prestige in supporting an institution with no standards.

Big Tobacco's investment in UCLA bought it the chance to argue falsely, using UCLA's name, that the science on secondhand smoke was inconclusive, to battle public health measures. Whatever the tobacco industry gains from the University, the University loses. The public loses, too.

The tobacco industry's checks are made payable to the "Regents of the University of California," not individual researchers. The buck, literally, stops with the Regents.

What will the tobacco industry get for the \$15.8 million it has invested in U.C. today? If it is funding legitimate research topics, then legitimate grant-making bodies are also interested in funding them, with no trade-offs. (If only Big Tobacco is interested, what does that say about the project?)

Refusing future tobacco industry money will not stop research. But it will help to still the deeply corrosive doubt among public and peers: *If the University of California takes tobacco money, how else is the University compromising its mission? Refusing tobacco money is not a tough call, after all.*

This decision is about something irreplaceable but all too easy to lose. The University of California's hard-earned reputation is at risk. The Regents can safeguard that reputation and best serve the public interest by demonstrating genuine leadership and loyalty to the University's mission. As the federal court made clear, Big Tobacco will not stop its assault on academic integrity. Only the Regents can do that.

THE UNDERSIGNED ARE AMONG THOSE WHO SUPPORT ACTION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA REGENTS TO REFUSE ALL FUTURE TOBACCO INDUSTRY FUNDING:

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CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOBACCO FUNDING ISSUE AT U.C., PLEASE VISIT WWW.ACADEMIC-INTEGRITY.COM