



The Conflict-Free Campus Initiative

Mapping Your Resolution

There are multiple routes that students can take in getting their university to take a powerful stand on conflict minerals. The Enough Project has outlined a range of three possible outcomes and their corresponding impact on ending the trade in conflict minerals – from shifting procurement policies to issuing a shareholder resolution to making a strong statement of support for the movement – all of which will go a long way in supporting the effort to remove the economic incentive fueling violence in eastern Congo.

For a step-by-step framework for mobilizing your campus, see STAND's [Conflict-Free Campus advocacy guide](#).

What is the value of a university taking action on conflict minerals?

As advocates on your campus, you can achieve the status of becoming one of a handful of leaders at universities pushing the movement to purchase electronics and other items conflict-free. The value of your contribution is enormous. Through reaching an agreement with your administration to make a statement or adopt a policy regarding conflict minerals, you ensure that the tuition funds of your entire student body are being used responsibly and not indirectly enabling or contributing to violence and conflict in eastern Congo. Further, continuing to advocate for this issue throughout the United States and around the globe is of critical importance. Putting this issue front and center on your campus not only contributes to the cause of responsible consumption on campus, but also raises awareness in your community off campus, hopefully spurring action by those outside the university.

How would this help end the conflict minerals trade from Congo?

Putting pressure on those parties responsible for perpetuating the supply chain of conflict minerals from end-product to mine extraction is the best way to get the market to stop buying conflict minerals. While multiple industries, including aerospace, automotive, medical equipment and banks also use conflict minerals in their products, students and universities have immense power to influence electronics companies because they are highly coveted individual and institutional consumers of computers, lab equipment, and other electronics products. By sending a clear signal to major electronics companies, you and your university will send shockwaves through the supply chain and create a financial incentive for companies to perform their due diligence to reach a market that is demanding in conflict-free products.

Why do we think trace-audit-certify is important?

Ending the conflict in eastern Congo is the best way to help the Congolese people recover from more than a decade of suffering and violence. A critical aspect of this effort is severing the link between the minerals trade and the armed groups committing atrocities in Congo. Transparency and accountability are crucial to make any progress toward a legitimate supply chain that is able to contribute to the positive development of the region. A framework that includes the concepts of trace, audit, and certify is the first step. By creating a system that will eliminate funding mechanisms for militia groups and armed factions, the United States is paving the way for legitimate and sustainable resource management that will benefit the Government of the DRC, the Congolese people, private sector stakeholders, and concerned consumers.

- **Trace:** Companies must determine the precise sources of their minerals. We should support efforts to develop rigorous means of ensuring that the origin and production volume of minerals are transparent.
- **Audit:** Companies should have detailed examinations of their mineral supply chains conducted to ensure that a) minerals are not sourced from conflict mines; and b) no illegal taxes/bribes are paid to armed groups in Congo. Credible third parties should conduct or verify these audits.
- **Certify:** For consumers to be able to purchase conflict-free electronics made with Congolese minerals, a certification scheme that builds upon the lessons of the Kimberley Process will be required. Donor governments and industry should provide financial and technical assistance to galvanize this process.

What actions could your campus take that would have an impact on conflict minerals?

1. **Best option:** A change in university policy for buying computers and electronics (procurement policy)

The most powerful step that a college can take is to pass a resolution regarding their intent to purchase conflict-free electronics or to change the procurement policy. Universities spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions, each year on computers, lab equipment, and other electronics. Electronics companies pay significant attention to the contracts they have with universities, which gives campuses substantial influence as companies compete with each other for their business.

By making a statement or passing a resolution expressing favorability for conflict-free products, you can help create a new standard for the companies to meet as well as a competitive atmosphere and financial incentives for policies to be enacted more quickly. Even if whether a product is conflict free is just one factor in procurement out of many, it will help move the companies in the right direction.

Some examples of possible resolutions or policies regarding procurement of conflict-free electronics products include:

- Committing to buying conflict-free when it is available
- Prioritizing companies that are doing more toward tracking their supply chains
- Making conflict-free a priority criteria when picking new electronics vendors

2. **Second best option:** Shareholder resolution

As the managers of large endowments and investment portfolios, colleges and universities can make powerful statements by passing resolutions or policies related to their financial practices.

In the spring of 2010, Stanford University became the first institution to adopt a policy on conflict minerals using the approach of proxy voting guidelines. Essentially, this committed that Stanford would vote their shares in favor of any shareholder resolution that was introduced on the issue with companies in which they hold stock.

In addition to proxy voting guidelines, a conflict-free campus campaign can also push for the college or university to actually take the lead and file a shareholder resolution on the issues with any electronics company they are invested in.

Whether the Board of Directors (or equivalent) of your college/university adopt a policy or make a statement, each of these shareholder options has a positive impact and will help move electronics companies in the right direction regarding conflict minerals. While a set of proxy voting guidelines like the one Stanford passed is a great first step, the ideal option in the investment track would be to draft and file a shareholder resolution on the issue. This will provide financial motivation for companies to adopt better policies regarding conflict minerals by demonstrating that there are financial rewards and punishments depending on their position.

3. Third option: General support statement

A general statement of support for conflict-free products could take a variety of different forms but is essentially a non-binding statement of support or recognition of the overall issue. While it falls short of mandating institutional responsibility, it is a great first step in a campaign to make your campus conflict-free and will be noticed by companies. Colleges represent a market for both institutional contracts as well as a highly coveted demographic of young adults for companies, and thus companies will pay attention to the statements of institutions with which they have business relationships. A statement would also demonstrate that the conflict-free campus movement is growing.

A general statement support might look like the following examples:

- GOOD: "XX College/University supports the movement for conflict-free electronics products."
- BETTER: "As an institution making significant annual investments in electronics products, XX College/University calls on electronics companies to perform due diligence and clean up their supply chains by working toward removing conflict minerals in their products."
- BEST: "XX College/University is aware and concerned about the crisis taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and recognizes the role of conflict minerals as one of the primary drivers for this unspeakable violence. As an institution that makes significant annual investments in electronics products that likely contain these minerals, we realize our own responsibility and indirect link to the situation. We call on all electronics companies with whom we do business to clean up their supply chains and will consider future policies that this institution can adopt to help combat the problem."

Divestment of companies is not encouraged at this time – though this could potentially be an effective tactic down the road once company policies and the conflict minerals trade become more transparent.

Given the status of universities and colleges as thought leaders, corporate account holders, investors and educators, an institution's voice acknowledging and publicly committing to the principle of conflict-free products will be powerful and influential. Regardless of where the resolution falls within these three possible outcomes, you and your university will be sending a strong signal to electronics companies that there is strong demand for conflict-free electronics and helping to remove economic incentive fueling violence in eastern Congo.