



# DORES DIVEST NEWSLETTER

*Handsome Ron's highlights from the 2020-2021 academic year*



*Image courtesy The Hustler*

## ABOUT DORES DIVEST

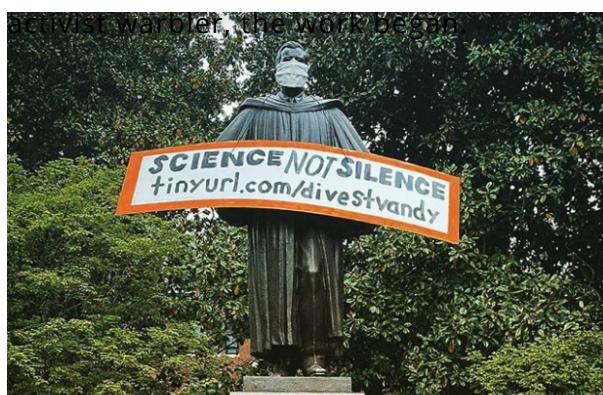
Dores Divest is Vanderbilt's preeminent climate activism group. Through high profile protests and saucy memes, we will inspire Vanderbilt into canceling its tens of millions of dollars in fossil fuel investments. Through regular meetings and social events, we will build a community of environmentally conscious scholars. To protect the identities of our student leaders, all events are coordinated through a single, brave bird person, Handsome Ron.



## HANDSOME RON: YEAR IN REVIEW

Handsome Ron had himself a very busy year! It's hard to believe that a single orange bird with barely enough head strength to support the weight of his signature pink hat could've pulled off all the things he has in the past 12 months. After numerous failed attempts to paint a cardboard sign with the word "Divest" on it, little Ronny decided it was time to outsource his work to some people with opposable thumbs, and that's made all the difference. A simple Google form was all it took to find some mischievous, interested people to aid Handsome Ron in his devious plans to save the planet. Once he assembled a team of strong young men and women willing to obey an

activist warbler, the work began.



*Image courtesy The Hustler*

Just as painting and hanging signs was growing monotonous, the university's plant ops team was becoming increasingly ready to take them down and deliver them to the Chancellor's rumored "Activist dungeon," where he already kept the confiscated protest signs from the graduate students at UChicago's attempts to unionize. After conferring with some of his Robin friends protesting at schools



*Image courtesy Handsome Ron*

with more successful football programs, Ron realized there's nothing students at an SEC school love more than a game day photo-op, and what better place to do it than at the V-Star mural on West End Ave? Luckily, the only way to get up high enough and place the letter "D, I, E, S, T" around the very conveniently located "V" was by flying. Aha! Ron finally had an advantage over his ground-bound henchmen. Ron's assumption about gameday tendencies proved correct, and his early-morning shenanigan proved useful in spreading the good word. Throughout all of this, Handsome Ron's other buddies with wings flew around campus, dropping his signature orange "divest" stickers wherever they could. Unfortunately, this was taken extremely seriously by Vanderbilt, for everyone knows stickers are permanent and dangerous to the campus community. As a result, Ron's bird friends were targeted like waterfowl in Eastern Tennessee.

As autumn turned to winter and other birds flew south, Ron decided it was time to be a little more giving and festive. After such a long semester, what better way to send good tidings than through a personalized message from a celebrity!



Brian Baumgartner, who played Kevin Malone on the hit TV show *The Office*, knows better than anyone what it's like to act totally oblivious to the feelings of those around him, so Ron thought he might want to pass along some wisdom to the Chancellor. After consoling Diermeier for his unprecedented losses on the endowment in 2020, Kevin instructed the 15,000+ viewers of his message to save the date, saying, "on February 23, Ron is coming to Nashville." Once Ron understood that the phrase "Save the Date" did not entail keeping a sweet raisin-like fruit to nosh on, the little bird got right to work planning the February 23 protest at Kirkland Hall. One particular issue with organizing a mass demonstration was the COVID pandemic. As much as the team wanted supporters to show up for the cause, we may have been the first protest-organizers in activism history to turn people away, doing our best Kamala Harris impressions

by saying, "Do not come." As the team began painting signs, investigating marching routes, brainstorming chants, and writing speeches, Ronny realized he couldn't do it all alone. He set off into fantasy-land to find another creature to help. Although he only wanted a friend to help carry the load of saving the world, headlines like "Dores Divest plan Feb. 23 protest, will reportedly include '14-foot mystical creature'" sent administrators into a frenzy, with one organizing a meeting specifically to ask if the creature would be living and/or dangerous to the campus community. Once our team reassured them that safety was a top priority and we would not be re-enacting *Jurassic Park* on alumni lawn, Danny the Unicorn was introduced to the world. Despite the fact that those who report to Chancellor Diermeier were in an abject panic preparing for the protest, the chancellor himself had different feelings, saying he wasn't worried at all, not even a



*Images courtesy The Hustler*





little bit. In an interview with The Hustler, he warned that if the protest drew more than 32 people, he would lay down the law on COVID guidelines, despite the fact that distancing and masks would be present. "It's important for students to make their voices heard and that includes being advocates for specific issues and to be protesting. It's always important, particularly in the time of Covid-19, that they are coordinated with us to make sure that everything is done safely and in a manner that doesn't disrupt university operations."

In order to not get Tax-Evasion-Charges-To-Take-Down-Al-Capone'd, our team made sure to follow all COVID guidelines so the protest broke no rules. When Chancellor Diermeier was pressed in a later interview by The Hustler on February 20 about whether he would address the student protesters, he said "I think we're just going to have a regular day." If a regular day involves a 14-foot unicorn delivered to the doorstep of your office, we'd love to find out what a crazy day is like. The protest went as well as Ron and our team could have hoped, with powerful speakers translating Ron's bird language into words the chancellor could understand (and, one hopes, hear, given the protest was right below his office). Although our guest of honor didn't follow through on his promise to show up, we understand, for there are rumors that Exxon-Mobil CEO Darren Woods was available for a meeting at the same time, giving the chancellor a difficult decision about who to appease: big oil or a cardboard cutout of Al Gore.

If we have learned one thing throughout this whole process, it's that money talks. We were told that "the purpose of the endowment is not to be an advocacy tool" and that it is only meant to financially support the goals of students, professors, and the university. Handsome Ron reached out to all his friends in charge of other great student organizations, such as DivestVU and the NAACP, and jointly called for a boycott of Giving Day on April 7, when members of the Vanderbilt community are invited to donate to the university. After all, it doesn't exactly seem right to donate to an institution investing hundreds of millions of dollars in the destruction of the earth and our futures. Since Vanderbilt would not divest from fossil fuels, Ron's supporters had to divest from Vanderbilt. On its last Giving Day in 2019, Vanderbilt raised over \$9 million, and through a combination of unified student activism and COVID, Giving Day resulted in just \$5 million raised from 600 fewer donors than before. As it turns out, ignoring the demands of your student body rubs some of them the wrong way!



*Image courtesy The Hustler*

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## FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

After successfully partnering with organizations such as DivestVU, Hidden Dores, Sunrise Vanderbilt, SPEAR, the Indigenous Student Organization, the Lambda Association and others, Ron settled on the idea of Fridays for Future. These weekly events served as an opportunity to discuss divestment with incentives provided by organizational partners like Vantea and the VU Community Garden. Beginning March 31, every Friday at 3 pm at the Harold Stirling Statue, dozens of passionate students took time out of their day to show support for divestment. This became a great way to build community, inspire future student activists, and have a good time.

Upon seeing the number of interested onlookers that passed by the Fridays for Future events each week, our team chose the highly-trafficked Harold statue as the perfect backdrop for the next demonstration. On Earth Day, Thursday April 22, students gathered to watch Handsome Ron's loyal followers conduct an oil spill. Students donned full-body suits and masks as fake "oil" was poured on them, while others held signs saying "Admin U Up?" and "Divest fossil fuels". The brave students willing to be publicly covered in a mixture of molasses, corn starch, and vegetable oil held signs that read "Our Future Not For Sale," referring to the Vanderbilt students whose futures will be drastically affected by climate change. Passionate demonstrators spoke to attendees about the divestment movement and the role the university plays in advancing the deadly effects of climate change.



Throughout Handsome Ron's ridiculous shenanigans to gather both campus-wide attention and a passionate force of student-activists, our team also engaged in hours of Zoom meetings to pressure the university. On October 28, Vanderbilt Student Government unanimously passed two bills supporting divestment. The first bill officially recognized the divestment

was off-the-record, it was refreshing to see the administration finally acknowledge the pesky bird that's been causing trouble to save the world. Unfortunately, despite the student body's strong support for divestment, our team learned that investment decisions are ultimately left to the Board of Trust and its leader, Chancellor Diermeier.



*Image courtesy Handsome Ron*

movement, making it easier to collaborate with official university institutions, and the second demanded the immediate divestment from fossil fuels. On November 15, the Graduate Student Council followed VSG in passing a resolution supporting divestment. Next up is the Faculty Senate, with whom Dores Divest will meet early this fall. Although classes stop for the summer, activism does not, and a group of Dores Divest, DivestVU and VSG members met with Anders Hall, the Vice-Chancellor for Investments and Chief Investment Officer, as well as Eric Kopstain, Vice-Chancellor for Administration. Although the meeting

No matter how busy of a year we had following around Handsome Ron and Danny the Unicorn, our university is still just as invested in fossil fuels, climate change, and the destruction of our planet. However, in the last year we have proved time and time again that divestment is a critical issue to students on our campus, and we have now gathered an impassioned coalition ready to continue the good fight. We have a funny feeling this ridiculous endeavor will end similarly to How The Grinch Stole Christmas, and the chancellor's heart will grow three sizes one day.