

For Immediate Release: November 14, 2012  
Contact: Kevin Connor, [718-916-0925](tel:718-916-0925), [kevin@public-accountability.org](mailto:kevin@public-accountability.org)

## **Watchdog Report: University at Buffalo Withheld Critical Information Surrounding Shale Institute from SUNY Trustees**

*UB Administration Failed to Disclose Fundraising Events, Share Fundraising Documents in Report to SUNY Trustees on Fracking Research Arm*

**Buffalo** – University at Buffalo administrative officials failed to disclose critical information surrounding the formation of a controversial fracking research institute to their higher-ups at SUNY, according to a new report from the Public Accountability Initiative (PAI).

SUNY trustees had requested that UB “fully report” on the circumstances surrounding the formation of the Shale Resources and Society Institute (SRSI) and the publication of its first report on fracking. SRSI has become a lightning rod for controversy on campus and beyond because of the industry-friendly bias of its first report, as well as a lack of transparency around its founding and funding.

PAI’s latest report details extensive gaps in UB’s report to trustees, which was signed by President Satish Tripathi. The PAI report includes a list of relevant documents obtained through document requests, such as fundraising pitches soliciting corporate contributions, that UB did not make available to the trustees. PAI distributed the report to SUNY trustees.

The PAI report also includes a timeline of events surrounding SRSI’s formation that were not disclosed to trustees, including fundraising trips to Houston, headquarters of many oil and gas companies. It also reviews the most serious error in the SRSI report: the claim that the rate of major fracking-related environmental accidents is decreasing in the Marcellus Shale, when data in the report shows the exact opposite.

“UB administrators have not been transparent with the public or with the UB community throughout this ordeal, and now they are not being transparent with SUNY trustees,” said Kevin Connor, PAI’s director. “Their obstructionism is only fueling public distrust of the university and concern that it has been corrupted by its ties to the gas industry.”

PAI published a critical analysis of SRSI’s first report in May, highlighting conflicts of interest, serious errors, and other evidence of bias that threw the report’s industry-friendly claims into question. The SRSI controversy is part of a national trend. This summer, PAI highlighted a major, undisclosed conflict of interest at the University of Texas, where a professor who authored an influential report on fracking failed to disclose his seat on the board of a gas exploration company. At Penn State, faculty recently refused to sign on to a report that had been funded by gas industry interests.

PAI’s report follows on the heels of another report prepared for SUNY trustees by UB CLEAR, a coalition of UB faculty, staff, students, and alumni advocating transparency at SRSI. SUNY trustees are scheduled to meet in early December.

The report is available online at <http://www.public-accountability.org/2012/11/investigation-obstructed>

\*\*\*

*About the Public Accountability Initiative*

The Public Accountability Initiative (PAI) is a non-profit, non-partisan research and educational organization focused on corporate and government accountability. PAI specializes in

investigative, public interest research on power and corruption at the intersection of business and government. PAI's research has been covered in major media outlets such as the LA Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post.

###