



Grant Acceptance Policy Disappearing Task Force
Quarterly Report
Summer 2024

September 23, 2024

To: Geoduck Student Union, Faculty Agenda Committee, and Executive Leadership Team

From: Grant Acceptance Policy Disappearing Task Force

Subject: End of Summer Quarter 2024 Grant Acceptance Policy DTF Quarterly Report

Overview

As outlined in the Task Force charge derived from the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed between the Evergreen State College and the Evergreen Gaza Solidarity Encampment on April 30, 2024, we are charged with recommending:

...a policy that would provide criteria for accepting or refusing grant funding based on the purposes of the grant. Criteria would include such considerations as whether grants facilitate illegal occupations abroad, limit free speech, or support oppression of minorities. (Memorandum of Understanding, 2024)

Along with this responsibility, members of the Grant Acceptance Policy Disappearing Task Force (GAP DTF) must develop a workplan that includes providing “quarterly progress reports to the Geoduck Student Union, the Faculty Agenda Committee, and the Executive Leadership Team.” We submit the progress report below in the spirit of community transparency, even as we recognize that our work is still in process and requires further consultation with the Evergreen community.

After the first meeting on June 15, the Task Force developed a schedule to meet bi-weekly on Mondays from 2-4 PM. Members are also engaged in significant work and research outside of meeting time. As we near the upcoming Fall Quarter, new schedules mean these meeting plans are subject to change; however, commitment and attendance thus far

have stayed the course since day one. Meetings have been consistently well attended, with 100% attendance by students, faculty, and most staff as summer vacations have allowed.

Throughout the summer our work has included, but not been limited to:

- Review and clarification of Task Force scope as outlined in the President’s charge.
- Development of a community agreement establishing group norms and a guide for decision-making.
- Creation of a Teams workspace for easily accessible Task Force business.
- Development and approval of a work plan to ensure the completion of Task Force responsibilities within the allotted time frame. The work plan structure is derived from the charge and broken into three periods: research, consultation, and recommendations. Summer has constituted most of our research period, and our work will soon transition to consultation after drafting preliminary findings to shape policy.

Charge Review & Community Agreements

Charge Review

In review of the charge, the DTF asked if we can expand the MOU to include other considerations for grant acceptance, such as environmental justice. President Carmichael responded that he saw the scope of the MOU as the *minimum* considerations and they could be expanded, but he cautioned against broadening the scope in ways that make it difficult to accomplish the charge on time.

We also inquired about if we can consider the nature of the funding organization in grant acceptance, but President Carmichael reinforced that we must focus on “the purposes of the grant” rather than funding organizations (although we did find complicating examples in our research).

Community Agreement

In addition to agreements about respectful communication, learning, and inclusive decision-making, the group also agreed to the following considerations:

Evergreen’s grants represent relationships between the College and various granting agencies—federal, state, tribal, corporate, and non-profits. We will prioritize associations that align with our college mission, and grants whose purposes meet our mission, values, and concerns raised in the MOU. When relevant, we will coordinate with the Investment Policy DTF on socially responsible associations.

In the spirit of equity, we recognize that Evergreen's public service centers are run primarily or substantially on grants and should not be significantly disadvantaged by the new grant acceptance policy.

Committees & Summer Research

The GAP DTF established several subcommittees to lead work and research in specific areas, including for summer: Work plan development, Academic freedom research, Ethical philanthropy and other institutional policies research, College-wide consultation plan development, and Summer Quarter progress report.

Collectively, we began with a complete review of Evergreen's own grants list, policy and agreements before we began to research other institutional policies. These included:

- Evergreen's [Fundraising policy](#), within which the college's grant policy is housed.
- Grant Pre-approval Questionnaire
- Current grants to the College and Foundation as of June 2024.
- A variety of both former and recent award agreements between the College and Foundation to ensure Task Force comprehension of what constitutes a grant agreement.
- Evergreen's [Social Contract](#)
- The Academic Freedom section within the [Collective Bargaining Agreement by and Between the Evergreen State College and the United Faculty of Evergreen](#) (CBA)

While research and accumulation of reference materials will not stop as we transition into our drafting and consultation phase, much of our research has been completed over the summer months. We feel that it is imperative to our charge and commitment to transparency that we provide a comprehensive, yet not exhaustive summary of research and reference materials. The following were compiled by the various subcommittee members and have been presented and discussed in the larger meeting.

Academic Freedom Research:

This research included several documents from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), who define academic freedom as follows:

Academic freedom is the freedom of a teacher or researcher in higher education to investigate and discuss the issues in his or her academic field, and to teach or publish findings without interference from political figures, boards of trustees, donors, or other entities. Academic freedom also protects the right of a faculty

member to speak freely when participating in institutional governance, as well as to speak freely as a citizen.

Below we have collected other theoretical and ethical arguments on Academic Freedom:

1. **AAUP article, “[Protecting Academic Freedom with Transparent Funding](#).”** This AAUP article discusses the importance of having robust funding policies that protect academic freedom and guard against conflicts of interests that may otherwise threaten the independence of institutions in exchange for funding. Detailed here is an organization called [UnKoch My Campus](#), a group dedicated to protecting the production of knowledge in higher education institutions from unethical donor influence, such as in the case of the Charles Koch Foundation, which has been proven to hold this influence over universities such as George Mason University. This organization has built [model policies](#) for other universities to construct policies that prevent undue private donor influence and ensure institutional, social, and economic progress for the public good.
2. **Academic Freedom Primer.** A comprehensive primer for understanding academic freedom, both strengths and weaknesses, provided and written by Ann Franke, former senior counsel and consultant at AAUP as well as reference to the [AAUP FAQs on Academic Freedom](#).
3. **American Association of University Professors (AAUP) “[Statement on Academic Boycotts](#),”** which rectifies former stances on academic boycotts and states that they are indeed “legitimate tactical responses to conditions that are fundamentally incompatible with the mission of higher education.”
4. **[Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Eligibility Requirements for Candidates for Accreditation and Accredited Higher Education Institutions](#).** Criteria listed includes maintaining a governing model in a non-discriminatory manner that actively responds to its constituencies, adhering to ethical standards in all operations, and maintains an atmosphere which “sustains, promotes, and supports” academic freedom and protects constituencies from internal/external influence.
5. Non-profit news organization, **The Conversation**, article “[Academic freedom is sacrosanct. But so is ethical responsibility](#).” Author Jimi Adesina tells the story of the 1990 Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa conference on academic freedom. Held in Kampala, Uganda, the conference’s attendees from all over the African continent were subject to violent harassment and repression due to the controversy of the issue, but the conference was successful in producing one of the strongest statements on academic freedom in

all of Africa, the [Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility](#), along with a similar sister document, [the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics](#). Adesina also touches on the historicity of the [Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education](#).

6. [“Resisting Structural Epistemic Injustice”](#) by Dr. Michael Doan. Article discussion of collective struggle to improve practices of knowledge production in institutions of which oppressive epistemic norms are the foundation. This article was part of a series of articles shared in meetings, along with others by Pavel Zgaga, Dina Zoe Belluigi, and Ben Cross & Louise Richardson-Self.

Taken together, the above articles on Academic Freedom complicate this concept as an absolute when it comes into tension with “issues incompatible with the mission of higher education,” ethical responsibilities, the use of funding to influence campus climate, or to reinforce “oppressive epistemic norms” that contribute to discriminatory practices.

We also recognize that national higher education is facing a crackdown on academic freedom and free speech, amidst a wider movement of censorship and repression. As [AAUP recently condemned](#), there is an alarming trend in university policies against free expression and peaceful protest. These efforts disproportionately target not only Palestine human rights advocates, but also scholars and students of feminist, LGBTQ+, ethnic and racial studies, political economy, and other critical theorists.

Ethical Philanthropy and Other Institutional Policies Research:

One source recommended to the Task Force for thinking about ethical philanthropy was the book, *Decolonizing Wealth* by Edgar Villanueva, an indigenous philanthropist who also serves on the board of the NDN Collective, an indigenous rights advocacy group.

Villanueva argues that “whether we’re getting or giving access to money... we need to put *all* our money where our values are” (5, 10).

Additionally, while most colleges and universities make a slight distinction between gifts and grants, they generally acknowledge that both are believed to “[benefit the university and its mission](#).” In the case of grants, they are specifically seen as an association between the grantor and the college, one in which the [college/university accepts sponsorship of the grant](#). The University of Washington, the flagship state public university, makes these relationships clear in its policies, linked above. While we have been tasked with focusing on the *purpose of grants* in determining policy, this model of partnership, collaboration, and monetary exchange also complicates the concept of academic freedom in the granting partnership process.

We have begun to examine guidelines and examples at various colleges and universities that include the criteria and process for grant review and acceptance, as well as how these may be linked to socially responsible investment. Summary and links to a few examples are below.

1. [Grant Professionals Association Code of Ethics](#)
2. Council on Public Liberal Arts Colleges member schools (of which Evergreen is one):
 - [Georgia College and State University Grants and Sponsored Projects Policy](#), [Commonwealth University Fundraising Policy](#), [Sonoma State University Gifts to the University Policy](#), [Western Oregon University Gift Acceptance Policy](#), [Fort Lewis College Gift Acceptance Policy](#), [Ramapo College Fundraising, Gifts, and Grants Policy](#).
3. [London School of Economics and Political Science External Funding Acceptance Policy](#) – LSE’s policy entrusts all staff with diligently completing “appropriate ethical and reputational risk assessment[s]” of funders and funding, facilitated by following this procedure. Risk considerations include illegal misconduct, human rights abuses, sexual misconduct, “Terrorism or political engagement with controversial, anti-democratic, corrupt, or human rights abusing regimes or sanctioned regimes,” sustainability impact and damage, arms dealing and manufacturing, thermal coal mining, animal welfare/testing, imposed funder conditions running counter to standard academic practice, and activities or sources of funding “in conflict with the objectives and agreed policies of the school.”
4. Union Theological Seminary—in their [recent divestment statement](#), UTS makes clear that their policy includes socially responsible investment (SRI) screens, including “armaments, weapons, and defense manufacturers, as well as companies that participate in human rights violations.” They had also previously divested from fossil fuels. Their SRI policy may serve as a model for gifts, grants, and other Evergreen investments.

In summary, in our preliminary research on a range of other college grant acceptance policies, we have found repeated reference to 1) consistency with and benefits to the college mission, 2) college/university collaborations with grantors, 3) ethical, risk, and socially responsible considerations, 4) a review process that includes key stakeholders and/or those with expertise in the field (e.g. favorable peer or department review), 5) transparency in the review and decision-making process, 6) disclosure of any real or potential conflicts of interests to the apparent stakeholders, or any potential harm.

College-wide Consultation Plan Development:

The DTF has been considering how best to engage faculty, staff, and students through mechanisms such as faculty meetings, the Geoduck Student Union, and other college forums. Research on this topic has included a review of a report done by **PRO-Ethics**, a consortium of European universities, research funding organizations, technology research groups, and academic research groups. The report, titled “[Ethics Framework and Guidelines: A guide for research funding organizations implementing participatory activities](#),” lays out valuable models, principles, and ethical considerations for the development of an Evergreen community consultation plan that would ensure robust community response to our grant acceptance policy recommendations.

Another resource not mentioned is the **American Psychological Association’s “[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework](#),”** which is worth noting due to its language model, exhibiting some of the most advanced anti-discriminatory language and principles of its kind.

Conclusion

In our research and discussions thus far, we have cast a broad net in examining higher education grant acceptance policies, and the criteria, processes, and ethical considerations that guide them. Our aim is to develop a policy that can best serve Evergreen to maintain institutional integrity, while meeting the needs of our diverse students through multiple issues and future contexts.

Our work also exists within the context of the [MOU](#) and the student protests that produced this agreement with Evergreen’s Administration. While we work in committee to ensure that our college is not institutionally complicit, as stated by the MOU, in “*grants that facilitate [illegal occupations](#) abroad, limit free speech, or support oppression of minorities.*” It is important to also note what is [still happening](#) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; this violence along with repression of free speech on college campuses, prompted student demands embodied in the MOU.

We hope the care and consideration we are taking in this work is evident in this illustration of our collective commitment to research, ethics, academic freedom, and our Evergreen community. As we close out the Summer Quarter, the members of this Task Force are firmly confident we can provide a grant acceptance policy recommendation with criteria that both maximizes our commitment to social justice, minimizes harm to all people, and meets the charge of our task force - all by the agreed upon End of Fall Quarter deadline.