

Koch Foundation Political Science Proposal Review and Recommendation

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Abstract

The Boston College political science department has been in the process of approving a research grant from the Koch Foundation; from the outset, the proposal has been surrounded by controversy. In this research paper, we hope to answer the question, is it ethical as defined by the Jesuit values of Boston College and concurrent with Boston College's conception of academic integrity for the Political Science department to accept funding from the Koch Institute? Through faculty survey data, case studies from schools that accepted research grants in the past, and faculty interviews, we gather data on the Boston College community's reactions to the proposal and how this specific grant is abnormal from others. Ultimately, we recommend that Boston College should not accept the grant and outline a more transparent procedure of adopting independently funded grants for future cases.

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Methods	7
Results	8
Discussion	17
References	20
Appendix	22

Introduction

The Koch Foundation

The Charles G. Koch Foundation is one of many organizations funded by the Koch brothers. David and Charles Koch earned their fortunes from Koch Industries, and have used their money to fund a series of conservative libertarian organizations to form a highly influential political network “in an ongoing effort to pull the Republican Party and agendas of U.S. politics sharply to the right” (Skocpol). The Koch-funded organizations range from The Cato Institute (the nation’s leading libertarian think tank) to the Charles G. Koch Foundation, “which disburses grants to college and university-based scholars and supports programs to encourage free-market ideas and policy proposals” (Skocpol).

Among the positions promoted by the Koch brothers are “fewer government regulations on business, lower taxes,” and, most importantly for this paper, “skepticism about the causes and impact of climate change” (Mayer). In 2008, the Koch-funded organization called Americans for Prosperity proposed the “No Climate Tax” pledge, a campaign to “prevent lawmakers from addressing climate change” (Mayer). Signed by all of the Republican leaders in the House, a third of the House itself, and a quarter of the Senate, the pledge directed signatories to “oppose any legislation relating to climate change that includes a net increase in government revenue” (Geman). Furthermore, Koch company scientists have made claims including “the conspiracy that elites invented a global-warming ‘hoax’ as a way to unite Americans against a common enemy after the Cold War” and “that the Earth had gotten cooler in the previous eighteen years” (Mayer). Business reporter Christopher Leonard and author of the 2019 book, *Kochland: The Secret History of Koch Industries and Corporate Power in America* sums up the issue: “you’d have a carbon tax, or something better, today, if not for the Kochs. They stopped anything from happening back when there was still time” (Mayer).

Koch Foundation and Higher Education History

Since 2000, the Koch Foundation has donated to American universities in the name of research. In the year 2017 alone, the Koch Foundation paid \$50 million to more than 300 colleges and universities (Beets). This comes at a time when higher education funding from the Government for universities has dropped more than 15 percent on average last decade (Beets); more institutions are looking for alternative sources of funding. Oftentimes, larger grants are for specific research that fits the Koch Foundation’s philosophical and financial interests.

Charles Koch has had his eye on education as an avenue for promoting conservative ideals for years. In 1974, he said, “There are basically four ways in which we can fight for free enterprise. Through education, through the media, by legal challenge, and by political action...I do maintain however that the educational route is the most vital and most neglected” (Beets). The Koch Foundation has created within it the “Structure of Social Change,” which is entirely dedicated to funding schools. Beets describes the Structure of Social Change as a pipeline of “ideologically-conservative centers...at universities staffed by like-minded tenure-track or tenured professors who agree to share Koch ideology with students and create policy position papers that may be used by Koch-supported lobbyists and politicians to influence legislation.” Many criticize the centers run by the Structure of Social Change grants as restricting academic freedom. By looking at what happened when other schools--like George Mason and Florida State University--accepted Koch Foundation grants, one can see the possible strings attached to this money.

The Current Boston College Proposal

In the fall, the political science department of Boston College and the Office of University Advancement announced that they were considering taking money from the Koch Foundation for a series of new research grants. It would not be the first time that the Koch Foundation has given money to Boston College: from 2015 to 2017, they donated \$5,000 for “general operating support” (Miller). However, this would be a completely new kind of partnership with Boston College: this money would fund an entire program within the political science department.

Last spring, a group of political science professors wrote up a two-page mission statement for the program. They first had to get approval from the administration before bringing it up with the political science department chair (Miller). Then, the debate started within the political science department that soon went public. The mission statement outlines the purpose of the center as “challenge received wisdoms” of foreign policy: “This faculty’s extensive scholarship reflects a common concern that policy debates and research on U.S. grand strategy have been too circumscribed by the established foreign policy consensus” (Miller). To facilitate this goal, the grant would cover speakers, undergraduate workshops and seminars, graduate fellowships, and a five-year joint hire for the International Studies program and the political science department (Miller). On October 4th, 2019, the proposal was brought up to the political science department and passed. Then, the proposal was sent to the Office of University Advancement to negotiate with the Koch Foundation on a budget for the proposal (Miller).

On October 18th, after the political science vote, an informal group of faculty called “Faculty for Justice” at Boston College convened. From that point on, students and some faculty members against the deal organized together in opposition. A petition against accepting grant money from the Koch Foundation gathered was delivered to the Boston College administration with over 1,000 signatures of current students and alumni (Baker). On November 15th, there was a protest where students and faculty spoke out together (Romance). They expressed an outrage that climate change was not mentioned in the proposal as an avenue of research: Professor Parthasarathi told *The Heights* that it was a form of “self-censorship” (Romance).

In November, an advisory board was proposed to overwatch any potential program. This would consist of faculty of the political science department, the international studies department, and potentially others (Fahy). This board would have the power to monitor and report any breaks from academic freedom. However, in December, the international studies department voted and announced that they would not participate in the program or any advisory board (Speer). In their statement, they stated their main concern as “the funding source, not the content of the proposal; there was strong support for the proposed program in security studies, and in particular for our colleagues who work in this area” (Speer). The next update came in March when the proposal was relabeled as a “project” instead of a “program” (Baker). This is a critical differentiation: a “project” does not need a faculty vote to move forward, and there would be no possibility for an advisory board. The proposal now stands as a “project” and the status is still in progress.

Literature Review

We utilized a number of primary and secondary source documents to complete our research. Since Koch Foundation gifts to universities often received a lot of media attention, many of our sources are newspaper and magazine articles published in reaction to deals between the Koch Foundation and various universities. We used five articles published in Boston College’s *The Heights* which describe the political science department’s decision-making process in response to the grant offer. We found articles in *The New York Times* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that detail the deal between the Koch Foundation and George Mason University. To perform our case study on Florida State University, we used a series of primary source documents, including the initial contract between the Koch Foundation and the Florida State University Board of Trustees, the subsequent Faculty Senate Committee Review Report, and finally, FSU President Thrasher’s official comments on the Koch Foundation gift published on the Florida State

University website. The original contract gave us an understanding of the specific language that the Koch Foundation used to exert influence over the university, and the Senate Committee Review Report and President Thrasher's comments gave insight into FSU's attempt to reestablish control over its academic procedures. In order to get more general background information on the Koch brothers, we used academic journals including the *Journal of Academic Ethics*, which includes an article by S.D. Beets titled, "The Charles Koch Foundation and Contracted Universities: Evidence from Disclosed Agreements." This secondary source gave us context for the primary source documents we used for the FSU case study, and allowed us to gain a general understanding of the contractual agreements between the Koch Foundation and higher-ed institutions. We also used a study published in the *Cambridge University Press* titled "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism" in order to get a better understanding of the Koch brothers' general political agenda. We used a series of articles published in *The New Yorker* and *The Hill* to learn more about the Koch brothers' role in climate-change denial. Finally, we used Willis Jenkins' article "Should the University of Virginia Divest from Fossil Fuels" as a model for writing an ethical environmental studies paper.

Research Question

Drawing on data obtained from case studies on other universities, interviews, and a survey at Boston College, would we recommend that Boston College accept the Koch Foundation grant proposal? Furthermore, is it ethical as defined by the Jesuit values of Boston College and concurrent with Boston College's conception of academic integrity for the Political Science department to accept funding from the Koch Institute?

Methods

In a series of email and Zoom interviews, we gathered first-hand information on the reactions to the proposal from within the Political Science Department and beyond. Additionally, we analyzed a series of case studies from George Mason University and Florida State University. By looking at what happened when these two schools accepted large Koch Foundation grants, we hope to have a recommendation that can draw upon the experience of other schools. Finally, we crafted a Google Form (Appendix A) that was sent out to all department heads in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, and a few departments in the Carroll School of Management and the Lynch School of Education. Professors from all departments were able to fill out the form anonymously. In the survey, a series of questions prompted faculty to indicate their general opinions of the deal, as well as their thoughts about receiving research grants from private foundations in general. The form link is attached in the Appendix section.

Results

Survey

In order to gain a better understanding of the Boston College faculty's reactions to the Koch Foundation grant proposal, we sent a survey to professors in as many departments as possible. From the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, we received responses from the physics, Slavic and Eastern languages and literatures, sociology, history, earth and environmental sciences, political science, theology, economics, and English departments. From the Carroll School of Management, we received responses from the information systems department. From the Lynch School of Education, we received responses from the counseling, developmental, and educational psychology department.

We received a total of forty-three responses. Of these responses, thirty-one responded "No" to the question, "Do you support Boston College accepting money from the Koch Foundation?" Six of the remaining respondents selected "Yes," and six selected "Unsure/Ambivalent." Of the thirty-one who responded "No," eighteen identified as male and seventeen as female. Of those who were Unsure/Ambivalent, three identified as male and three as female. Of those who selected "Yes," two identified as male, one as female, and three selected "Prefer not to say." There is no significant difference in responses among male and female -- in fact, it is almost perfectly equal. However, it is interesting that only those who selected "Yes" to the deal also selected "Prefer not to say" in response to the question about their gender. This could potentially indicate the pressure that those who support the deal feel to stay anonymous.

As displayed in Figure 1 below, of the thirty-one respondents who selected "No," fifteen cited concerns about the Koch Foundation's political or ethical ideals, eight cited concerns about the Koch Foundation's anti-science views (with seven of the eight using the term "climate change denial" specifically), seven cited concerns about the potential limits on Boston College faculty's academic freedom, and five cited concerns about the incompatibility with Boston College's academic mission (with only one respondent using the word "Jesuit" and one using the word "Catholic"). The remaining reasons cited concerns about the BC's public image, the legitimization of the Koch Foundation, and knowledge of negative impacts at other schools. The number of reasons cited for saying "No" is greater than the number of respondents who said "No" because some respondents listed multiple reasons for their answer.

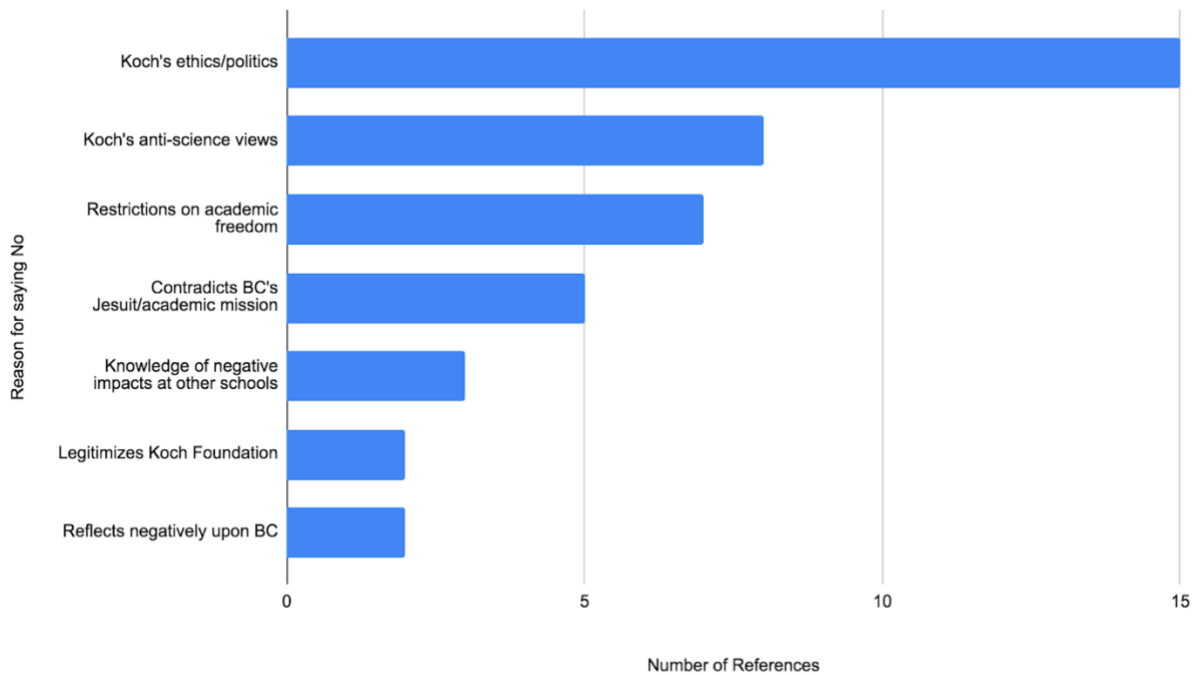


Figure 1. Reasons Cited for Opposing Koch Funding

We also asked the faculty for their opinions on the relationship between the funding source of the research and the research itself. We asked faculty to compare the funding source and research (is the funding source more important than the research; are the two equally important; is the research more important than the funding source?). As demonstrated in Figures 2, those who originally selected “No” to the deal were more likely to believe that the funding source was either equally or more important than the research itself. Reasons given for these answers included concerns about the perception of the research being corrupted by perceptions of the funding source (“Good results supported by questionable sources will be questioned”), concerns about censorship (“The funding source has the power to censor/eliminate the research”), and indirect influence (“The funding source will shape the hiring and retention of faculty members and therefore shape the research”).

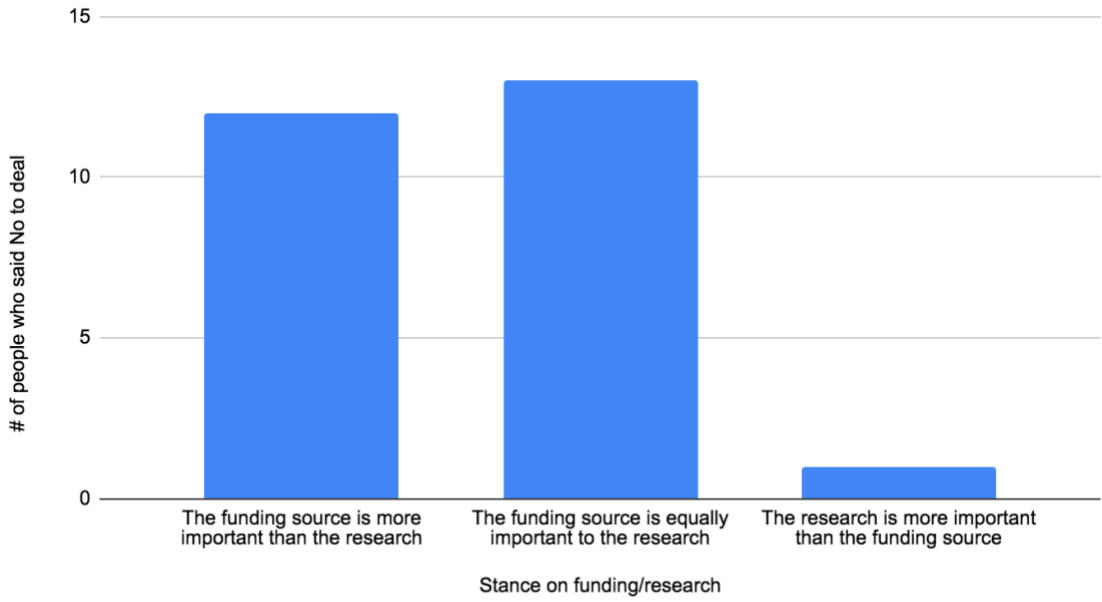


Figure 2. Stance on funding/research among those who said No to deal

As we can see in Figure 3, those who selected “Yes” to the deal were more inclined to believe that the research itself was equally or more important than the funding source. Reasons given for these answers included assertions that the research should be able to function independently from the funding source.

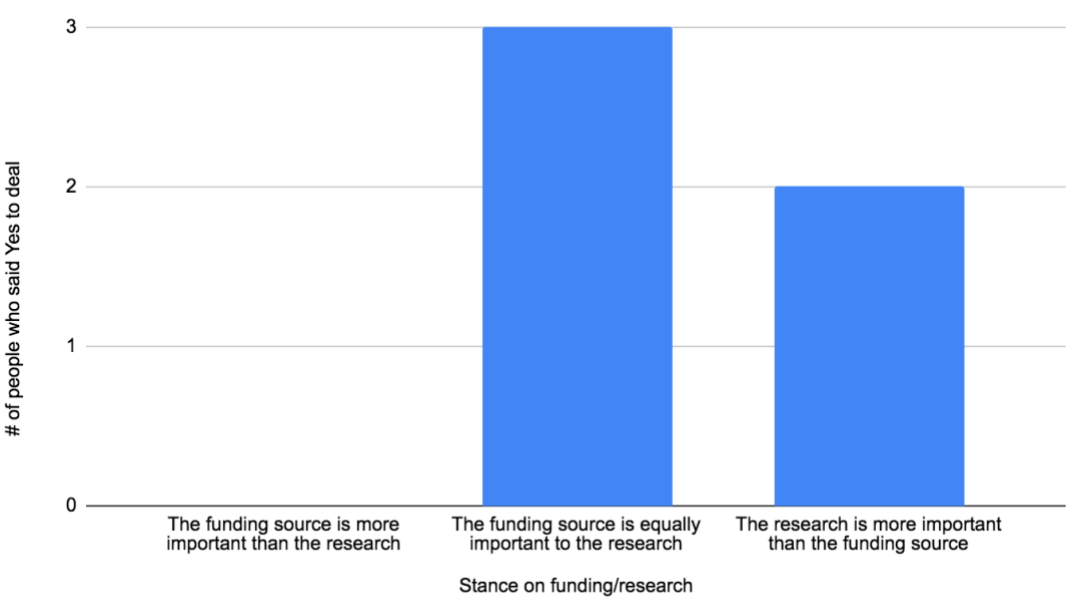


Figure 3. Stance on funding/research among those who said Yes to deal

We also asked respondents to indicate their perception of the risk posed by climate change. We asked respondents, “How much of a threat does climate change pose to American security?”, and asked them to select 1-5, one being extremely low (no threat at all) and five being extremely threatening. Of those who oppose the deal, the average perception of the threat of climate change is a 4.84. Of those who support the deal, the average perception of the threat of climate change is a 3.83.

We also asked respondents the level to which their research would be affected by the Koch Foundation funding on a scale of 1-5 (one being not at all affected, five being extremely affected). Of those who oppose the deal, the vast majority (thirteen respondents) selected “one,” and the average ranking was a 1.71. This response is extremely similar to those who support the deal. Of those who support the deal, the vast majority (five respondents) selected “one,” and the average ranking was a 1.42.

Similarly, we asked respondents to indicate whether they believed their academic freedom would be restricted by accepting the deal. We again asked them to select 1-5, one being extremely low (no restrictions on academic freedom) and five being extremely restrictive. Again, the responses among the supporters and opponents of the deal were very similar. Of those who oppose the deal, the vast majority (sixteen respondents) selected “one,” and the average ranking was a 1.96. Of those who support the deal, every respondent selected “one.” These results and the results in the preceding paragraph demonstrate that there is no correlation between support or opposition of the deal and perceived personal impact resulting from the deal. Respondents’ answers to “do you support the deal” were not influenced by the level to which they believed they would be personally affected.

Finally, we asked respondents to indicate any additional concerns they might have if Boston College accepted the deal with “no strings attached” (i.e. no stipulations by the Koch Foundation that gives it any control over Boston College’s hiring process, curriculum, or research aims). As demonstrated in Figure 4, most respondents who oppose the deal cite additional concerns. Of the twenty-four respondents who cited additional concerns, reasons include concerns regarding any sort of association between Boston College and the Koch Foundation, concerns about public perception, and concerns about endorsing the Koch brothers. However, of the twenty-four respondents who cited additional concerns and the four respondents who selected “Unsure/Ambivalent” to the deal and also cited additional concerns, nine respondents indicated

that they did not believe it would be possible for a donor to give a grant to a university truly without any strings attached. All six of the respondents who support the deal indicated no additional concerns with the grant if Boston College could ensure that the donation was given without strings attached.

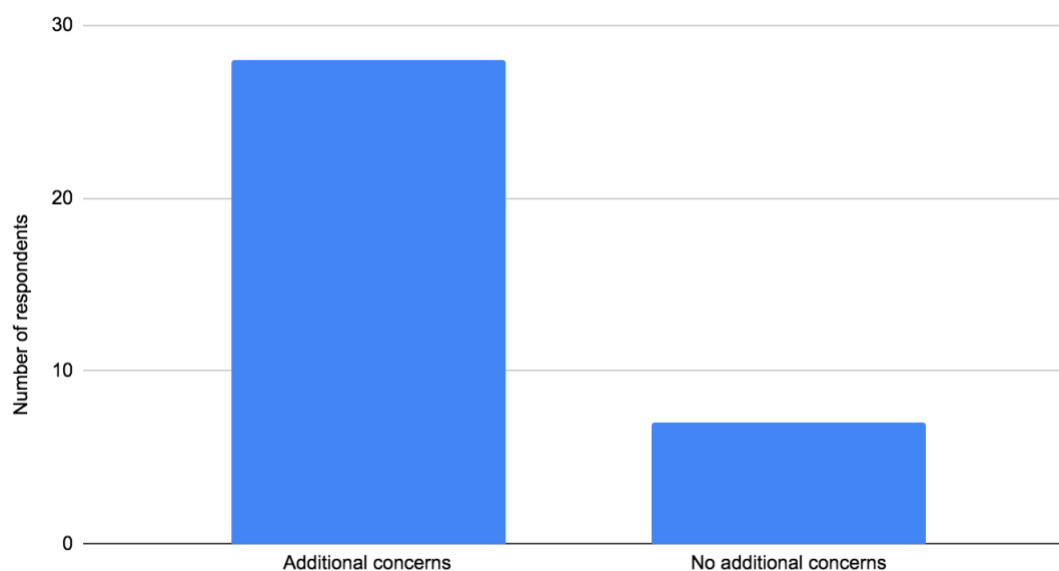


Figure 4. Additional concerns among those who voted "No"

Faculty interviews

Two political science faculty were able to provide brief interviews, answering questions over email. Professor Purnell talked about the history of the political science department accepting private grants as a whole and Professor Deese spoke about the process. According to Professor Purnell, “Individual and programming grants are quite normal and routine,” with grants coming in from institutions like the Bradley Foundation and the Olin Foundation in the past. However, Professor Deese elaborates on how the contentious nature of the Koch Foundation’s past higher education deals influenced the backlash around this deal. He corroborates that the status of the proposal is currently as a “project” that does not need department approval: “they pulled a trick-- they changed the entire proposal from a ‘program’ to a faculty research project in order to avoid needing dept [sic.] votes and approval, and in order to pull back completely from the faculty governance board.” Other departments have joined the international studies department in condemning the deal, including the African and African Diaspora Studies Program Board. Ultimately, he says it is now in the hands of the University Board on whether to accept the money.

Two professors from other departments chose to share why they were personally against the deal: Professor Moorman from Sociology and Professor Gray from English. Like Professor Deese, Professor Moorman takes offense to the unconventional procedures this grant has taken to pass: “Usually, the process is that a foundation has a public call for proposals, and then research teams from multiple universities write and submit proposals by a deadline, and the foundation chooses which, if any, among them they will fund”. Instead, the Koch Foundation singled out Boston College and offered them money: the research proposal came after the funding was already offered. Additionally, Professor Moorman was concerned about the lack of transparency from Boston College during foundation grant approval as a whole: “The administration really doesn't solicit the opinions of faculty or students, which very much leaves at least the impression that the governing principle is not a Jesuit one but rather that more money is always good for BC, regardless of its source.” Professor Gray was also concerned with the implications of accepting this grant from the Koch Foundation: “My reasoning is simple: the Kochs are massive financial backers of climate change denial...the scientific consensus for human-caused climate change is overwhelming. Thus denying climate change means denying science and, more precisely, denying the...work of scientists”. As an institution devoted to seeking the truth, the denial of science is a threat; accepting money from a large source of the denial is counter to the mission of Boston College.

One interviewee presented with a different opinion of the Koch Foundation grant. We interviewed a member of the philosophy department who is also a priest in the Jesuit order, referred to in the paper as “Fr. X.” We asked him a series of questions, hoping to gain insight into the way that Boston College, as a Jesuit institution, has a unique relationship to its students and academic mission. Fr. X was asked to (a) to describe how the Jesuit tradition affected his mission as a teacher and (b) if there was anything in the Jesuit tradition that could potentially support or oppose the acceptance of money from the Koch Foundation. Fr. X stated that the Jesuit tradition demands that we “see the best in whatever people are saying, even if you don't agree with them.” To that end, he argued, the Jesuit tradition would support the acceptance of the Koch Foundation grant on the premise of inclusivity. Fr. X disparaged the idea of discriminating against a donor based on political ideology, and cited a concern that the conservative voice was being suppressed on many liberal college campuses. Finally, Fr. X asserted that, as a professor, he felt that the school would

infringe upon the academic freedom of its faculty if it restricted potential research funding on the grounds of political or ideological difference.

Case studies

The Koch Foundation's relationship with George Mason University started in 1980, when they helped to fund the Mercatus Center, stating their mission as "the world's premier university source for market-oriented ideas" (Stripling). This center operates independently from the university itself, being entirely funded from donations. Charles Koch was on the board of the center since its inception. This center attracted some of the most conservative and controversial economists, like Walter E. Williams (Stripling). In 2016, George Mason staff members started to speak out about the Mercatus Center. A history professor described it as "a lobbying group disguised as a disinterested academic program," (Stripling) with it providing decades of studies to justify the Koch Foundation's corporate interests. Carrie A. Meyer, an associate professor of economics, described firsthand about how she was limited in her research topics: "I carefully chose my research so it wouldn't be objectionable to them" (Stripling). She confesses that she would tell some of her colleagues to move to another university if they wanted to "get a broader education" (Stripling). In 2018, Students and faculty banded together to pressure George Mason to make public the details of their yearly grants (Harris). It was only because of a lawsuit that they ended up releasing the documents (Green). They showed that from 2003 to 2011, The Koch Foundation had the right to be involved in the hiring process of faculty at the Mercatus Center (Cabrera). George Mason University President Cabrera admitted that the Koch Foundation's hand in faculty selection fell short of the academic independence that is expected of a university, but justified it by saying that the university had the final say in all hiring practices (Cabrera). Currently, the administration is conducting an investigation on the past hiring of professors and is assuring the public that the findings of the investigation will be as transparent as possible (Cabrera).

In 2008, the Koch Foundation pledged nearly \$6.6 million to the Florida State University economics department, with an initial grant of \$1.5 million "to hire staff and fund fellowships and new undergraduate programs" (Miller). The FSU Board of Trustees and the Koch Foundation drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to "set forth the intent, structure, recruitment, and funding procedures to support... the Professorship Positions, Teaching Specialist Position and the Undergraduate Program" (Fink). In this MOU, the Koch Foundation establishes influence over the hiring process of the faculty funded by the grant and the undergraduate program. The MOU

sets out instructions for the creation of an Advisory Board composed of three members chosen by the Koch Foundation. The Advisory Board has the power to “consult... regarding the qualifications of candidates for any Professorship Position..., report back to the CGK Foundation about any hired professors..., and ensure compliance” (Fink). The Koch Foundation also requests “reasonable access during regular business hours to files, reports, accounts, or personnel that are associated with this Agreement, the Professorship Positions for the purposes of making such financial reviews, verifications, or evaluations as CGK Foundation deems necessary or appropriate” (Fink).

In response to the media storm generated by the deal in 2011, FSU President Barron charged the Faculty Senate with “examin[ing] the issues surrounding the Koch Foundation agreement and its implementation to ensure that the integrity of Florida State University was protected” (Standley). The Faculty Senate assembled a committee, which ultimately concluded that “the donor MOU... contains several phrases that could open the possibility of undue outside influence in the hiring process” (Standley). The Faculty Senate Committee (FSC) cited concerns over the Advisory Board; the MOU did not in any place “specify that the Advisory Board must have any faculty members -- or indeed any university representation at all.” Since the Advisory Board as defined in the MOU “has the potential to exercise decision-making power in faculty hiring for positions funded by the agreement,” it is of singular importance to the integrity of FSU that FSU interests be represented on the hiring committee. The MOU also indicates the Koch Foundation’s interest in the department chair selection procedures, which the FSC describes as “contrary to long-standing university governance policies” (Standley). Finally, the FSC expressed concern regarding the design of the Undergraduate Program. As cited in the previous paragraph, the MOU states that the committee assembled to design the Undergraduate Program would be composed of members agreeable to and chosen by the Koch Foundation. This Undergraduate Program Committee would therefore be allowed to “include course proposals.” The FSC had concerns about the undue influence of the Koch Foundation over the undergraduate curriculum. In regards to this issue specifically, the FSC cited FSU’s history with a different donor, in which the donor stipulated that a course must be created in the economics department that included works by Ayn Rand as part of the curriculum. The FSC states, “This new course moved through the approval process without a clear indication that it was donor-prescribed with donor-prescribed

content. These faculty committees need the opportunity to determine whether such prescriptions constitute undue outside influence, as part of their evaluation of the proposed course” (Standley).

The FSC offered a number of recommendations. First, “that the university not enter into any future donor agreements which specify outside donor evaluations in annual evaluation files of faculty... [or] which offer department chair selection criteria” (Standley). The FSC also recommended that the University suspend its approval of the course proposed in the MOU, and should “resubmit the proposal for reconsideration, clearly indicating its relationship to a donor agreement” (Standley). After the FSC proposal in 2011, changes were made to the MOU, and in 2013, new FSU President Thrasher released a statement, claiming that “both the Faculty Senate Steering Committee and the administration are satisfied that there are no provisions in the current MOU that restrict academic freedom or interfere with faculty governance on this campus” (Thrasher).

Discussion

Key Findings

As we can see in the background information on the Koch brothers in the introduction and the results of the case studies on George Mason and FSU, the main problems that schools funded by the Koch Foundation experience are (a) a lack of transparency throughout the funding process, and (b) a restriction on the schools' academic freedom. At George Mason and FSU, it is clearly indicated that the Koch Foundation made efforts to influence both the curriculum and the hiring process. The faculty interview with Professors Moorman and Deese raised similar concerns. Moorman cited concerns regarding transparency, and Deese criticized Boston College's role in removing faculty from the decision-making process.

Interestingly, however, the Boston College faculty survey does not reflect the same results. Most faculty do not believe that their personal academic freedom will be at all restricted if Boston College takes the grant, and instead cite concerns over the Koch Foundation's dubious morality instead as a cause to oppose the deal. In fact, the majority of survey respondents cited a reason that falls into the category "concerns about Koch ethics/politics" as the main reason for opposing the deal. Phrases like "evil," "contrary to the good of society," and "immorality" populate the responses. Similarly, though the most concerning issue presented in the case studies at George Mason and Florida State is that of limiting academic freedom, most Boston College faculty respondents still said they felt concerned about the deal even if it were to theoretically proceed with "no strings attached." This reveals that Boston College faculty still have an issue with receiving money from the Koch Foundation even if they could be assured that there were no strings attached. This finding is consistent with the responses that indicate that perceived limits on academic freedom had no correlation to supporting or opposing the deal. This assertion provides a rather shaky foundation on which to build a case against accepting a grant proposal; as stated by Fr. X, a university should not discriminate against donors based on political or ideological differences alone.

However, as noted in the Results section, many of these responses include doubt that a donation with "no strings attached" is truly possible. Of the twenty-eight respondents who indicated that they would still take issue with the Koch grant even if there were no overt strings attached, nine respondents declared that they thought it impossible for the Koch Foundation to give a grant with no strings attached. Furthermore, though most faculty did not believe that their

personal academic freedom would be restricted, they cited restrictions on academic freedom as a general concern (in Figure 1, concerns about academic freedom rank third in reasons cited for opposing the deal). Since many faculty who took the survey were not in the Political Science department, they did not believe that their academic freedom would be restricted, but they believed the general academic integrity of Boston College's hiring process and curriculum could be compromised.

Recommendations

As we saw in our faculty survey, case, studies, and interviews, academic freedom is one of the top priorities for the faculty and students involved. From the unorthodox way this grant was sourced to the way it was relabeled as a "project," one can see why the faculty and students feel like their concerns are going unheard and are based in truth. In order to bring all concerns about the future and this current grant to light, there must be a change in Boston College's policies. Boston College needs to establish a universal donor acceptance policy so people can not accuse a singular department of rejecting the money for no other reason besides different political opinion.

There is no doubt that grants can be a huge asset for this institution. As Boston College continues to gain notoriety on the national level, more interest groups will look for Boston College research. There must be a process to evaluate all grants and receive input from all of the interest groups at Boston College: the students, the faculty, and the administration. Once a grant from a foundation is proposed, it must go through the department faculty, like this one did at first. All "projects" and "programs" alike must be approved by the faculty in the department to ensure that a loophole like what we saw here is never taken advantage of again. From there, the proposal must be available to the students and student press for a period of weeks as a notice and comment period: students would have an adequate amount of time to assess and write concerns or report on the proposal. This way, students have a voice in the process, and they will know the resources that will be available for them in the future. This would solve many concerns with transparency if grants were out in the open instead of behind closed department doors. Finally, the Boston College Administration must answer the student's comments from the notice and comment period and give adequate answers to the most commonly cited questions before looking at the proposal. Through this process, all interest groups would have a chance to express concerns in a democratic way, instead of the veil of secrecy that is currently used. If there is nothing to hide in a proposal, a department should have no worries of having it available for scrutiny from the students, press, and

other departments. The Koch grant proposal should therefore be resubmitted so that it can undergo a transparent evaluation process by the faculty and students.

Though this decision must ultimately be made democratically by Boston College, we would like to also make a recommendation based on our research. Based on Koch Foundation's history of intervention at universities and climate change denial, we recommend that Boston College should not accept the donation. Boston College's mission statement on the website begins: "It seeks to be the national leader in the liberal arts; to fulfill its Jesuit, Catholic mission of faith and service; to continue to develop model programs to support students in their formation" (Appendix B). Based on our survey results, interviews, and case studies, this grant would be counter to all three of those statements. In order to be a national leader in liberal arts, they must ensure that academic freedom is maintained. This foundation has been very publically influencing higher education institutions to run counter to principles of academic freedom through having a say in research topics, faculty choices, and more. From the very start, backers in the political science department used loopholes to negate the creation of an oversight committee and changed the proposal to a "project" when faced with criticism instead of fighting to compromise or change. If the beginning of this process was marred with scandal and secrecy, that does not bode well for the faculty and students that were worried about academic freedom.

Next is Boston College's Jesuit, Catholic mission. Climate change is real, and climate change is a Jesuit issue. Pope Francis has been one of the most vocal world leaders surrounding combating Climate Change, calling for divestment from foundations that promote fossil fuel use: "We live at a time when profits and losses seem to be more highly valued than lives and deaths, and when a company's net worth is given precedence over the infinite worth of our human family" (Arocho Esteves). Caring for our common home and ensuring a future for all is only possible if the current practices of profit over people is abandoned. The faculty survey echoes these concerns, with the Koch's anti-science views and their ethics around climate change denial as one of the top reasons cited for opposing the deal. Accepting a grant from the very foundation that has spun a web of political lies about the true nature of climate change runs counter to Pope Francis' message at the very core: Boston College would be putting a small profit over the future. What draws so many students to Boston College is the Jesuit mission: we must not abandon what makes us special and our academic freedom for money from the Koch Foundation.

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Appendix

- A. Link to the faculty survey on Google Forms: <https://forms.gle/FwkpkepQfsHiZhG7>
- B. Link to the Boston College mission statement: <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/about/mission.html>