

Faculty Petition to Review Eudaimonia Institute

We, the undersigned faculty at Wake Forest University are calling on the Faculty Senate and the Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility to investigate the research and teaching independence, the extent of appropriate faculty governance, and the intellectual integrity of the newly formed Eudaimonia Institute. The petition is based on our concerns about the Eudaimonia Institute (EI), and its principal funding source, The Charles Koch Foundation (CKF).

Specifically, we are calling for an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee to be charged with the review and investigation, and for this committee to submit its report to the full senate at the senate's 2017 March meeting and to issue a response to the report to the entire university.

Additionally, we respectfully request that the Memorandum of Understanding and/or Donor Agreement with the CKF be made available to the Faculty Senate and the Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility for their immediate review.

The following document outlines the reasons for this petition.

1. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND TRANSPARENCY

The non-disclosure contract with the CKF raises essential questions about the terms of the donation. Because this document has not been made available to the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility or university faculty generally, we are left to assume that the contract resembles those recently formed by the CKF with other academic centers, and therefore potentially contains controversial restrictions that may resemble the following breaches of academic freedom:

- This month, at the University of Kentucky (UKY), the Faculty Senate found that a CKF donor agreement contained unusual provisions for revoking funding. The Koch donation to the UKY's "Institute for the Study of Free Enterprise" was to be doled out over five years, the same donation schedule attached to the gift made to the EI. The Faculty Senate at UKY found, however, that the release of these funds was tied to an annual review by the CKF, who reserved the right to rescind the donation at any point with a thirty days' notice. This would leave the university responsible for bearing the burden of funding, or more likely, ensure that if the institute was to remain financially viable, funds would have to be used in a way that garnered approval from the CKF.

- At other institutions, Koch donations have proven to have different “strings attached” that threaten both disinterested research and student rights. At Florida State University, donor agreements allowed the CKF influence over hiring and curriculum decisions, in addition to votes or approval oversight on postdoctoral appointments and other scholarships. At the College of Charleston, a donor agreement also allowed for the collection of student names and information to be passed along to the CKF, along with controlling influence over public relations stories and media outreach on their centers.

- At meetings sponsored by the Koch Brothers’ various foundations, their own speakers have explained that investments in higher education—attached to libertarian centers and faculty—can create a “talent pipeline” or “integrated network” that connects free enterprise scholarship with “state-based capabilities and election capabilities.” Because Koch charitable donations to academic centers are often framed as part of a larger political campaign with an economic mission, the Faculty Senate and Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility should be allowed to review the donor agreement to assess the EI’s academic independence.

2. GOVERNANCE

Comments by the Associate Provost for Research in the October 10, 2016 College Faculty Meeting indicate that the current Director’s term is for the life of the grant. So far as we can tell, there is no indication that the position will rotate and no plan for how future successors in the position of Director might be chosen. In addition, there appears to be no plan for oversight by WFU faculty outside of the current EI structure.

- It appears that the Director will have nearly total control over EI activities, including being listed as a member of the Director’s advisory board (EI website, accessed October 15th, 2016). While the EI’s “Declaration of Research Independence” circulated by the university ostensibly creates a safeguard against undue donor influence over scholarship, it also states that “the EI maintains sole control over the selection of researchers, the composition of research teams, or the research design, methodology, analysis, or findings of EI research projects, as well as the content of EI-sponsored educational programs” (EI website, accessed October 15th, 2016). Since the Faculty Advisory Board’s role is merely advisory, this stipulation suggests that the EI Director is granted “sole control.” As such, this safeguard in the Declaration of Research Independence creates a firewall against broader faculty input into and oversight of EI activities and decisions. At some universities, such as Ball State University, agreements with the CKF have included stipulations that the donor must be notified if the Institute Director changes.

- The affiliated Pope Center, in a “Renewal in the University” Report, offers a strategy for protecting donor intent from faculty influence or calls for academic freedom in ways that align closely with the EI’s constitution and rationale. This report states: “One method donors employ to beat the power grab [of faculty] is to avoid spelling out any perspective or course content in the terms of the donation, but to work through a specific professor whose views match the donors” (12). This is of concern due to the close historical association of the current EI Director with the CKF, including holding a recent position as the Charles G. Koch Senior Fellow at the Fund for American Studies.

- We have concerns about the composition and selection process of the Faculty Advisory Board. We also raise the question why the creation of an advisory board was preferred over instituting a faculty-elected governing board. It is unclear if the current Faculty Advisory Board was nominated solely by the Director or if it was formed in consultation with other members of the university administration or faculty who work in fields such as philosophy, psychology, literature and fine arts, theatre, and the sciences. At other institutions, there have been efforts to limit Director influence over the composition of advisory boards, with the intention of protecting ideological and disciplinary diversity. For example, Western Carolina University (WCU) has just recently reformed its Koch-funded center governance structure to ensure greater faculty oversight. Several positions on the board are now elected, rather than appointed by the Director. At WCU, a nominating committee, with the help of the Faculty Senate, is now involved in the selection of numerous board members.

3. EUDAIMONIA

The intellectual foundation of the EI requires greater clarity and transparency (EI website, accessed October 15th, 2016). We have repeatedly been told that the EI will be non-partisan, non-ideological, and cross-disciplinary, but it seems worth observing that other Koch-funded institutes explicitly devoted to the study of free enterprise have adopted a near identical language of “well-being” and “human flourishing” in their proposals.

- The proposal for the UKY’s “Institute for the Study of Free Enterprise,” for example, includes the following passage: “History shows that capitalism/free enterprise has been the source of unprecedented prosperity and human flourishing. It is important to discover and understand aspects of capitalism that promote the wellbeing of society. Understanding the role of governmental/legal/political institutions is important as well. The program will work toward these understandings in an intellectually rigorous way.” The CKF’s own website features a page devoted to the “Foundations of Well-being,” including links for applications to its funding. This language is in line with the current Eudaimonia Institute Director’s remarks at a June 2014 conference of Koch donors on the rhetorical appeals of framing free market theory as the promotion of well-being, as quoted by Jane Mayer in *Dark Money* (2016) and her January 2016 *New Yorker* article, “New Koch.”

- The Aristotelian concept of Eudaimonia has long been of interest to modern liberal economists (especially those influenced by Austrian and Chicago-School economics) and libertarians who approach the term as an inherently individualist social philosophy of human flourishing, rooting virtue in personal liberty. There is clear evidence that the intellectual foundation of the EI is not ideologically neutral. Consequently, the at first glance “unobjectionable” frame of Eudaimonia thus acts as an ideological gatekeeper against more communitarian, humanities-based, arts-based, state-oriented or scientific approaches to the study of well-being, flourishing, and happiness. Given the long-established history of the arts' essential role in creating "a life worth living," the omission of the creative arts as an alternative form of intellectual productivity alongside research is troubling.

- It must be noted in this context that the autonomous Research Advisory Council (RAC) rejected the EI proposal as having too narrow a focus. The 2016-2017 RAC consists of ten members and represents the five college divisions, the four graduate schools, and the library.

4. ACADEMIC RESPECTABILITY AND REPUTATION

By some accounts, the Koch brothers invested approximately \$88 million between 1997-2011 into fighting studies on climate change and environmental regulations of the fossil fuel industry. We submit that the CKF's history of supporting specious anti-science research and organizations, aimed to protect the profit of their own industries, potentially damages Wake Forest's academic reputation, scholarly credibility, and Pro Humanitate commitment to social justice.

- An affiliation with the CKF undercuts the work of the university's growing Environmental Program, as well as the mission of the Office of Sustainability, and the work of students and faculty in the arts and sciences. Given the Koch's record of framing climate change as a questionable ideology, rather than a science, we would like to ask, then, that the Faculty Senate and Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility inquire as to the extent to which the faculty or staff who work in the fields of philosophy, environmental studies and sustainability and in the other relevant arts and sciences were consulted in the process of considering this controversial donation.

- Other academic institutions, like the University of Dayton, Brooklyn College, and Suffolk University have either stopped accepting Koch donations or rejected the Foundation's gifts altogether after considering their troubling opposition to environmental stewardship, affordable healthcare, and voting rights. Our concern is that in having accepted this donation, Wake Forest may very well have tarnished its good name to polish the Koch brand.

Respectfully submitted as of November 2nd, 2016

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