



## **The Koch brothers have developed a pipeline designed to influence political change. It begins with students.**

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If patterns at other universities hold true, the Charles Koch Foundation might use graduate students and research in the Whitman School to influence legislation in Washington.

The foundation recently gave \$1.75 million to Syracuse University's Martin J. Whitman School of Management to fund the Institute for an Entrepreneurial Society. The Whitman School will recruit Ph.D. students to work and conduct research specifically in the institute.

In the past, Koch-funded free market institutes, similar to Whitman's, have been used as part of a larger cycle to enact legislation supporting deregulated capitalism. The Kochs have attempted to do that using two mechanisms: by generating a "talent pipeline," in which graduate student researchers at Koch-funded institutes later populate Koch-funded think tanks, and by developing their "Structure of Social Change" model, a process designed to influence politics that begins at universities.

"Privately-funded political change is at the heart of the Koch foundation's operation on campuses," said Ralph Wilson, a co-founder of UnKoch My Campus, a campaign that studies the Kochs' influence at universities.

Maria Minniti, the founding director of the Whitman institute, said there are "absolutely not" any strings attached to the Koch grant, and that the Kochs will not influence graduate student research.

But in the past, Koch officials have boasted about doing just that at other universities. At a 2014 Koch donor summit in California, a top Koch official explained the Koch foundation's desire to build a "talent pipeline" beginning with students, according to recordings published by the Center for Public Integrity.

The Kochs often start, experts said, by funding student researchers at institutes similar to Whitman's, with the Kochs frequently controlling the research so that it aligns with their

priorities of free market capitalism. Those same students later staff the Koch-funded free market think tanks and political front groups that the Kochs use to push for political change.

Kevin Gentry, the vice president of the Charles Koch Charitable Foundation, explained the process to Koch donors during a summit in 2014 and a recording of his speech was later published by the Undercurrent and the Center for Public Integrity.

“The students that graduate out of these higher-education programs populate the state-based think tanks and the national think tanks,” Gentry said. “... They ‘become the major staffing for the state chapters’ of the ‘grassroots’ groups.”

Universities and free market institutes similar to Whitman’s are also the first step in the Kochs’ “Structure of Social Change” model designed to enact policy changes.

The strategy, developed by Koch Foundation President Richard Fink, begins with the Koch foundation funding researchers at universities to create free market concepts that the Kochs call “intellectual raw materials.” The Kochs then fund think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute, to turn those concepts into real-world policy options. But because the think tanks generally aren’t able to implement change themselves, the Kochs then fund implementation groups to pressure legislators into enacting policies.

Together, each of those groups form what Koch officials call their “fully integrated” network.

“We see that institutions at all stages are crucial to success. While they may compete with one another for funding and often belittle each other’s roles, we view them as complementary institutions, each critical for social transformation,” Fink wrote in the “Structure of Social Change.”