Student Toolkit for 2015 National Day of Action
Against the Corporatization of Education
Thursday, November 5th

PROBLEM:

Over the last decade, the Koch brothers have been quietly funneling tens of millions of dollars into colleges and universities around the country through grants that come with strings attached. These strings give Koch foundations undue influence over course curriculum, hiring of teachers, and help to shape research coming out of universities.

In this sense, the Koch’s investment in higher education provides their broader network of State Policy Network think-tanks and advocacy fronts groups like Americans for Prosperity with the intellectual capital required to advance their larger political and economic agenda -- not to mention Koch Industries’ bottomline. Case in point: Charles Koch said it himself -- Koch's massive spending on university programs is part of his donor network’s $889 million spending plan for the 2016 election. After telling USA Today that a third of the money is for candidates, “a good part of the rest is education and research,” Koch said, ticking off university grants and other projects he is supporting.”

Meanwhile, Charles Koch and his political donor network have also been working for over a decade to cut federal funding for public services, including education. The impacts are sweeping--less state and federal funding for public schools means:

- Higher tuition, which leads to greater student debt and less accessibility for low-income students.

- Less funding to support full-time faculty salaries, which leads to an increase in part-time contingent faculty who often don’t get paid a living wage. An increase in contingents means the value of your education goes down due to unprepared and loaded down teachers.

- Strapped-for-cash schools and administrators who are more vulnerable to accepting gifts which could let in undue donor influence.

All of this is to say that the Koch brothers have hijacked our education system with their interests in mind, not ours. Something needs to change.

SOLUTION:
With the 2016 elections just a year away, we have a chance to clog Koch’s political pipeline by continuing to ramp up our local campaigns and national media efforts that are exposing Koch’s undue influence and political agenda on campuses.

On November 5th, our individual and collective actions will work to expose the corporatization of education and prevent donors from being able to buy undue influence at our schools.

But we need help to make this possible. In order to achieve our goal of engaging 50 campuses in the action, national media coverage, and keep these local efforts and national conversation alive after the DOA, organizing support is needed.

Whether or not your campus is receiving money from Charles Koch or his donor partners, your school administrators may still be tempted in the future to accept money from donors whose support is contingent on conditions that have historically undermined the integrity of the institution or violated academic freedoms. We must take action to elevate this issue and protect our institutions from future undue influence with strong policies, procedures and oversight bodies.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT** -- Sign up [HERE](#) to take localized action!

- We’re asking that everyone…
  - Take a group photo, or individual photo, holding a sign that says “Stop the Corporatization of Education” or another message that speaks to its impact on your campus/alma mater. Consider including your school or org name in the visual. **A few requests for your posting:**
    - **For Facebook uploads:** Post your pictures to your personal and group timelines with #UnKoch and tag our page by typing @Unkoch My Campus.  
    - **For Twitter uploads:** Tweet your photo with #UnKoch and at @UnKochCampus.
      - If suitable, also consider using #Koch and #Election2016.
  - Other ideas for localized action…
    - Submit a campus record request on the day of action investigating undue donor influence
● Write an open letter in your local or campus newspaper to your president asking for donor agreements to be made available to the public
● Ask campus editorial board to investigate koch funding and influence on campus
● Recruit faculty to sign the Academic Independence Project pledging “not to take income from interests directly affected by [public] policy positions” inside one’s area of expertise
● Host a teach-in discussing the corporatization of education, how it’s impacting your campus, and what you can do about it

- Please ask friends and allies on Koch-funded campuses to join in the above actions and check out our toolkit for investigating Koch’s influence on your campus. Nearly 400 campuses have received support from the Koch Foundation since 2009.

RESOURCES:

- UnKoch Campus Organizer’s Guide for research tips and a step-by-step guide on investigating and exposing donor influence

- Sample op-eds by student leaders at Florida State University and University of Maryland

- Examples of undue influence on campuses
  - Koch Pollution on Campus, a 2014 report by Greenpeace and UnKoch My Campus. Overviews undue Koch influence at Florida State, Utah State, West Virginia University and Clemson.
  - Food Industry Enlisted Academics in GMO Lobbying War, Emails Show, New York Times (9/5/2015)
  - Coca-Cola to World: Don’t Stop Swilling Sugary Drinks, Just Exercise! Mother Jones (August 10, 2015)
  - BP buys up Gulf scientists for legal defense, roiling academic community, AL.com (July 16, 2010)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Public records documents released by Kansas University show how Professor Art Hall was secretly paid by the Fred & Mary Koch Foundation with the specific purpose of attacking clean energy incentives, which Koch was actively lobbying against. Similarly, Koch-financed academics at Utah State University and Suffolk University wrote reports attacking not only Kansas’ clean energy law, but similar laws in North Carolina and Ohio.
In spite of this documented lobbying, both the Charles Koch Foundation and the professors it finances deny any ideological tint comes from these arrangements. This contrasts statements made by both Charles Koch and his brother David.

In 2007, David Koch noted plainly that Koch grants come with expectations: “If we’re going to give a lot of money, we’ll make darn sure they spend it in a way that goes along with our intent. And if they make a wrong turn and start doing things we don’t agree with we withdraw funding. We do exert that kind of control.”

Charles Koch has long advocated for business people to only give to universities when control can be maintained by the donor, in the interest of advancing business. In a 1974 speech as president of the Institute for Humane Studies, Charles Koch emphasized, “We should cease financing our own destruction and follow the counsel of David Packard, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, by supporting only those programs, departments or schools that ‘contribute in some way to our individual companies or to the general welfare of our free enterprise system.’”

There’s no better example of this than in Koch’s 2008 memorandum of understanding with Florida State University, where Koch required veto power of candidates interviewed for the professorship positions being funded. This is an unprecedented violation of academic freedom as well as shared governance, which usually puts faculty hiring decisions in the hands of faculty within the department. We’ve seen more subtle yet clearly intentioned restrictions placed in Koch agreements with Clemson, Utah State, and West Virginia universities.