

**Faculty Senate
President Granberg's Report
February 14, 2025**

NIH Funding Policy Changes: University Response

As you know, since our last Faculty Senate meeting on January 10th, the new presidential administration has undertaken significant policy changes, the scope and scale of which are unprecedented.

To keep our community informed, we have launched two web pages. The first appears on the Office of Sponsored Projects site and was [specifically designed for our principal investigators](#), sharing the information and guidance they need related to the impact of federal actions on our research enterprise.

The second targets students, faculty, and staff and [explains the executive orders and federal guidance most relevant to higher education](#)—particularly in the areas of DEI, antisemitism, immigration enforcement, Title IX, and research.

We will be updating both of these sites as new information becomes available, especially because guidance will likely evolve as legal challenges advance through the judicial system.

One of the most recent changes involves imposing a 15 percent limit on indirect cost recovery associated with NIH grants. As we shared in the messages earlier this week, such a change would have a devastating effect not only on the GW research enterprise but on medical research across the country.

The announced cuts will threaten delays in advancements and discoveries related to critical diseases like heart disease, cancer, HIV, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. These delays will impede progress fundamental to advancing and improving disease prevention and outcomes for our patients, our D.C. community, the United States, and beyond.

In response to the NIH's directive, GW joined a lawsuit as a co-plaintiff in the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts. Alongside the Association of American Universities and several other AAU institutions, as well as the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the American Council on Education, GW opposes the proposed action not only because of its impact on research but also on the grounds that it is arbitrary and capricious and a violation of federal statute and regulations.

This was one of three suits filed on Monday. The judge issued a temporary restraining order pending a hearing next week, and the NIH has since issued a memo stating that until further notice they will follow their existing FY25 funding policies and use the previously approved negotiated indirect cost rates.

MFA Update

I know that there are ongoing concerns about the operational deficit at the MFA. We continue to work through the pathways to improve its operations under the oversight of GW. There will be an update on the MFA's financial results at the March Senate meeting.

I also want to acknowledge the public discussion going on about the university and conflicts of interest with regard to the selection of Savista as an independent contractor to manage MFA billing and reimbursements. I'll say at the outset that GW and the MFA both have robust conflict of interest policies and follow them faithfully.

For the university, these policies extend across our entire community and include faculty members who have started companies, staff members whose spouse the university does business with. Put simply, these policies ensure that there is no conflict between a duty to the institution and self interest. In every case, there are procedures in place to manage that conflict.

With that in mind, what I see in this public discussion is a fundamental disagreement about how those conflicts should be managed as well as the assumption that somehow GW should do more than execute the standard and effective approaches to managing those conflicts. There are people who think, for example, that if you have a conflict or even the perception of a conflict, you should never be able to serve on a board. What is problematic about that is that, particularly on boards that require knowledge of a particular field, it is relatively common for people to have conflicts to serve. If you remove the ability for anyone with any conflict to serve, you shrink the pool of qualified individuals. That is a piece of why the standard for managing these issues is to require disclosure of the conflict and then to create a management plan that is independently monitored.

This is what we have in place at GW. In my own service on boards, and in my own work at universities, I have now been involved in conflict of interest procedures at three different universities; no procedure is perfect. I do think, however, that the requirement of disclosure and management of that is an effective way to balance having good controls with ensuring that there is also an ample supply of qualified people to serve.

One other note I will make is that I have now worked with Ellen Zane for 18 months. I have observed her abiding by the requirements of the compliance plan and have at all times seen her to be someone who is very serious about doing a good job on behalf of the MFA and also abiding by the requirements of conflict management.

Leadership Update

Turning to leadership updates, soon after our last Faculty Senate meeting, GW shared the news that Donna Arbide, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, will be leaving her role to focus on her health.

Donna has been a difference-maker at GW since she became our chief fundraiser nearly 7 years ago, increasing annual contributions to scholarships and financial aid for talented students, boosting contributions to GW's endowment, and garnering philanthropic support for innovative university initiatives including the Global Food Institute.

The search will begin in the next few weeks and I anticipate having a new VP in place by early fall. Donna has agreed to continue in her role during the search process and will work with us to ensure a smooth transition.

Strategic Framework Update

I am pleased to share an update on our collective progress toward GW's Strategic Framework. I want to start by extending my gratitude to the hundreds of community members who have deeply engaged in this process. More than 400 faculty, staff, and students participated in community conversations, and over 170 idea briefs were submitted, reflecting the passion and commitment that earned GW its place among the nation's most distinguished universities.

A special thank you goes to the Innovation Committee for their hard work over the last two semesters and to Terry Murphy for her phenomenal leadership.

Two imperatives emerged from the wide-ranging feedback we received: first, prioritizing opportunities to enhance GW's distinctiveness and impact and, second, laying the foundation for GW to become a preeminent institution in higher education.

The ideas we heard demonstrated GW's exceptional interdisciplinary strengths and our capacity to embrace society's greatest opportunities. I am particularly excited by several recommendations that have emerged directly from community conversations and idea briefs. A few examples of things we are thinking about include:

- Creating opportunities for GW to be one of the top conveners in Washington DC by strengthening connections among GW academic government agencies, NGOs, and global institutions, leveraging our unique position in the District;
- Expanding our high-impact educational practices and pedagogy, including undergraduate research opportunities and real-world project-based learning; and
- Developing and expanding innovative intersections between our traditional strengths and emerging capabilities.

Something that emerged loudly from everything we heard in the fall—including the retreat with Faculty Senate—demonstrated the importance of building a strong foundation for our future preeminence.

Some examples of the foundational priorities identified during last semester’s conversations include:

- Strengthening our research infrastructure and support;
- Strategically hiring and retaining faculty across disciplines;
- Rebuilding staff capacity and providing opportunities for professional development; and
- Enhancing student financial aid, support, and experience.

With these in mind, I see a real path forward toward a framework for achieving institutional excellence at GW.

As we move into the next phase of the framework process, here is what you can expect:

- The Steering Committee is reviewing and synthesizing the Innovation Committee’s list of recommendations and our community’s extensive feedback
- In April, we will share a draft framework for public comment and host another set of community-wide briefings
- A draft framework will go to the GW Board of Trustees in May with final approval anticipated at the retreat in June
- The full framework will launch in in the fall.

We look forward to sharing more with the community as our framework continues to take shape.

Other Engagements and News

The Strategic Framework is just one way we are encouraging dialogue and engagement across GW’s various communities. I’d like to share a few others.

Soon after the semester started, our community came together for the GW 8th Inaugural Ball. We launched this tradition in 1993, and this year was another memorable night for the GW community to dust off dancing shoes and enjoy a special evening with friends.

Earlier this week, I was in Florida for a series of donor and alumni meetings. Among the highlights of the trip were the roundtable dinners in Palm Beach and Miami. These small gatherings are intended to create stronger bonds between GW and its supporters. Stacy Dean, Carbonell Family Executive Director of the GW Global Food Institute, joined me and did a wonderful job sharing information about the institute and its activities. The audience really enjoyed her presentation, , and Stacy will work with Deveopment & Alumni Relations (DAR) on follow up with interested donors.

Next week, I am travelling to New York City, where Frank Sesno will join me for another roundtable conversation. Over the next few months, we will be holding larger gatherings with GW alumni in the DMV and overseas. These gatherings mark our continuing work to share GW success stories with donors and alumni across the country and around the world, and I look forward to sharing more about these events as we move forward. Stacy and Frank are two of many faculty members who have joined me at these events, and all have been very well received.

I’ll add that last year when I travelled across country to meet with GW alumni and donors in my first year as president, I didn’t have faculty accompany me, and I really see the difference in the way our alumni connect when faculty are talking about subjects they are passionate about. Seeing these connections gives me great pride in all that our faculty are accomplishing, and I deeply appreciate this partnership in sharing the story of the GW research enterprise.

GW's global connections were reinforced earlier this week when we received a congratulatory letter from the U.S. Department of State for GW's designation as a "Top Producing Institution" of Fulbright U.S. Scholars and Fulbright U.S. Students in 2024-2025. This achievement is a testament to GW's deep commitment to international exchange and to building lasting connections between the people of the United States and people around the world.

The semester is barely 4 weeks old, and GW has already hosted an amazing series of events.

On day two of the semester, we welcomed Arati Prabhakar, who served as Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, discussed the administration's accomplishments and what lies ahead in health, climate change, and artificial intelligence. GW hosted her final public appearance as an outgoing member of the Biden Administration.

A few days later, Michael Smith, CEO of AmeriCorps, moderated an inspiring student leader panel at the opening program on GW's MLK Day of Service. As with Arati, this was Michael's final public appearance in his Biden Administration leadership role. That day, around 550 GW volunteers participated in the MLK Day of Service, contributing about 1,200 service hours in total on the day of service.

At the end of January, our Law School hosted the 75th Annual Van Vleck Moot Court Constitutional Law Competition for a packed Lindner Hall. Law schools across the country have moot court competitions, but at GW, our panel of judges this year included Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. One of our other judges—Chief Judge David J. Barron—serves in the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and is the son of GW Law professor and former dean Jerome A. Barron. What a special moment for our law students as they prepare themselves for the challenges of their careers. Kudos to Dean Bowen and her team for such an outstanding example of legal education in action.

At the beginning of this month, we hosted the Politics and Prose event that some of you may have attended, featuring Bill Gates and GW honorary degree recipient and Commencement speaker Savannah Guthrie.

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of helping to kick off the TrailsCon 2025 conference. GW hosted this two-day international conference on the theme AI at Work: Building and Evaluating Trust. Organized by the NSF-funded multi-institutional Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society or TRAILS, the conference featured more than 300 AI thought leaders, researchers, and advisors from academia, industry, and government.

I understand that one of the most exciting presentations was by Professor Robbie Melton of the University of Tennessee on the impact and value of different types of AI wearables in education (like smart glasses or watches that monitor wellness). Bringing together experts like Dr. Melton and hundreds of others allows GW to showcase the cutting-edge research faculty are doing across the country and around the world in the AI space, an outstanding example of the power of GW's role as a global convener.

GW is also showcasing our faculty's outstanding research at this very moment at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Boston, a meeting that GW is co-sponsoring. Most of you know that this is the world's largest multidisciplinary science gathering, attracting more than 4,000 participants from more than 65 countries. Our engagement at the conference spans multiple schools and offices and includes workshops, panels, and interactive exhibits.

I'll end on this high note. Thank you very much. This concludes my report.