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## *The Ethics of Private Funding for Graduate Students in the Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities*

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### **Abstract**

*This article offers a review of the strategic opportunities and ethical risks involved in the institutional pursuit of private funding for graduate students in the social sciences, arts, and humanities (SSAH) fields. There is little existing research about private funding for SSAH research, and this article seeks to address this gap. In addition to reviewing relevant literature about trends in the privatization of higher education, shifting funding priorities, and the ethics of private funding, we offer a set of guiding principles for developing a private funding policy in SSAH fields. We also illustrate relevant considerations and concerns using the example of a private funding policy for graduate student within a faculty of education in a public university in Canada. The discussions in this paper are relevant to public higher education institutions questioning how they can ensure the integrity and sustainability of their research activities in a changing funding environment.*



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Compared to students and scholars working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, researchers in social science, arts, and humanities (SSAH) disciplines tend to have fewer and shallower sources of both internal and external funding. In particular, the contemporary context of global trends toward the increased privatization and marketization of higher education puts SSAH research at a considerable competitive disadvantage for funding, which affects not only faculty but also graduate students. In this context, public institutions are increasingly seeking private sources of funding for students. Yet there is a notable lack of literature about non-public sector funding for graduate studies in SSAH. Further, although concerns about private funding are increasingly widespread, many people lack a sense of how to actually address these concerns in their own contexts. Rather than argue “for or against” private funding, this article discusses both the opportunities and risks involved in the pursuit of private funding for SSAH fields in public universities, both in general and specifically as it relates to graduate student funding. In doing so, it offers scaffolding for further, context-specific conversations about private funding for those working in higher education.

In an effort to consider the ethical and practical dimensions of any decision to seek private funding for graduate students, this article addresses how these issues were presented in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada and their decision to pursue private external funding for graduate students. Although education is an interdisciplinary field, education scholars tend to work within SSAH traditions. As such, although this article emerged out of the particular context of a public university in western Canada, it is situated within broader discussions about the ethics and impacts of private research funding and accountability on higher education. In this article we explore the complexities and shades of grey that shape the landscape of institutional and faculty decisions about higher education research funding, foregrounding the ethical questions that arise. These discussions are relevant to public higher education institutions questioning how they can ensure the integrity and sustainability of SSAH research activities in a changing funding environment.

We begin by discussing the wider landscape of privatization in higher education over the past several decades, and then consider how this landscape affects SSAH research funding in particular. We then address how ethical concerns around private funding have been addressed in other contexts, before turning to the example of the UBC Faculty of Education. Beyond the general need to ensure the ethical integrity of research, and to protect both critical research and research that is generally considered less “fundable”, we suggest that rather than a universal set of best practices, of primary importance when addressing the ethics of private funding is the local context, including institutional needs and faculty concerns. Thus, we offer a series of guiding considerations and accompanying discussion questions for faculty and administrators who are engaged in developing policies and procedures around private funding. Finally, we conclude the article by proposing a summary of possible frameworks that could be used to develop a policy and practice for private funding and donations for graduate students.

### **Trends Toward Privatization**

Over the past thirty years, funding from non-governmental/private organizations for higher education (e.g. sponsored research, building projects, endowed chairs) has significantly increased. This has been framed as part of a larger global shift toward the privatization of higher education and declining public funding (Ball, 2010, 2012; Bok, 2003), and movement toward a more entrepreneurial university (Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2008). This, in turn, has been described as a

significant shift away from the public good orientation of higher education in the post-World War II era (Marginson, 2018; Newfield, 2016; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Indeed, according to Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), there has been a shift from a “public good knowledge/learning regime” toward an “academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime,” although they argue that the two regimes continue to coexist (p. 28). In the public good knowledge/learning regime, emphasis is on universities’ indirect contributions to capital accumulation, as well as the generation of knowledge with use-values that are not even indirectly commodifiable. Within the currently dominant academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime, there is instead an emphasis on producing knowledge with immediate exchange-value. Although this paper does not examine or unpack in depth the underlying social, political, and economic reasons behind this shift, such an analysis should be part of any larger conversation about trends in higher education funding.

As Marginson (2018) notes, within Anglo-American contexts, “The public dimension [of higher education] is defined narrowly in terms of a market economy in which individual benefits are paramount. Thus the master public role of HEIs is seen as their contribution to profitability, industry innovation, and economic growth” (p. 324). In other words, not only have we seen a shift in emphasis toward private as opposed to public benefits of higher education, but even public benefits are increasingly redefined as those that contribute to economic growth, with the dubious assumption that this will be a shared benefit. This means that the benefits of research and fields of study that are deemed to have no direct exchange-value on the market are devalued, such as those that are oriented to “create and distribute knowledge and ideas, and advance free expression; foster scientific literacy, and sustain intellectual conversations and artistic work; contribute to policy and government, and prepare citizens for democratic decision-making” (Marginson, 2018, p. 322). Within contemporary funding regimes wherein academics are increasingly encouraged to pursue private funding, fields considered to be “distant from the ‘market’” (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997, p. 11) are at a serious disadvantage, not only because they are ideologically devalued but also because they tend to have fewer and shallower funding sources than more ‘market-adjacent’ fields. In particular, private research funding has primarily been oriented toward STEM fields, thereby disadvantaging SSAH fields in the new landscape of resource competition. This both reflects and deepens existing inequalities in public funding for different fields. For instance, in Canada in 2017-2018, the federal budget for the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) was \$547 million CAD, compared to \$848 million CAD for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and \$773 million CAD for the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) (Kondro, 2017).

University collaboration and resource seeking from private sources, including industry, non-profit organizations, and philanthropic foundations, is hardly a new phenomenon (Lowen, 1997). However, recent growth has been driven by intensified government pressure for universities to contribute more directly to local and national economic growth, and institutional pressure for individual academics and departments to diversify their funding sources, particularly through the pursuit of external research funding (Ankrah & Al-Tabbaa, 2015; Metcalfe, 2010; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Wichmann-Hansen & Herrman, 2017). The policy priorities and research strategy of universities and faculties, therefore, involve balancing academic autonomy and integrity with societal relevance, while maintaining access to different sources of funding. It has been noted that private funders are going far beyond providing one-off grants or donations to institutions, being also increasingly involved in advocacy, policy-making, reform efforts and having influence over how the mission of higher education is perceived (Baker, 2017; Hall & Thomas, 2012; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; MacLure et al., 2017). Baker (2017)

emphasizes that it is important to ask what universities are willing to concede and compromise in exchange for donations. In this changing political and economic context, there is a need for ongoing, open-ended conversations about the ethics of who benefits and how from new funding relationships, and for transparent oversight and evaluation of existing relationships (Bozeman, Fay, & Slade, 2013). Often absent from current funding discussions about universities is the recognition that at no point is the pursuit of any one funding strategy inevitable. Doing so (and doing so in any particular way) is always a choice, even or especially when the choice is framed as a practical necessity, which can depoliticize more complex realities, contexts, and conflicts that need to be analyzed and openly discussed (Burlandy et al., 2016; Newfield, 2016).

In particular there are valid concerns about the risks that private funding might compromise the honesty and integrity of academic research, either because the funders seek to influence or constrain the direction of the relevant research, or because the source (and by implication, the recipients) are in some ways tainted by the wider associations or business of the funders. Out of these debates has emerged a growing emphasis on the need for the proactive study, management, and minimization of potential risks and conflicts of interest (both individual and institutional) through clear policies and procedures (Baird, 2003; Fulop & Couchman, 2006; Harman & Sherwell, 2002; Resnik, 2007). Indeed, regardless of one's perspective on recent funding shifts, there is a general consensus around the need for robust ethical guidelines for partnerships with the non-public funders. Schwarz (1991) describes this as a “‘preventive medicine’ approach” to ensure research integrity (p. 757). At the same time, there is recognition that even this will not reduce the risk of compromised research to zero (Brisbois et al., 2016). Thus, while set guidelines are important and valuable, there is also a need for ongoing, open-ended, and transparent oversight and evaluation of existing relationships. Further, these conversations and considerations should attend to disciplinary norms and other dimensions of local institutional contexts. Indeed, as Torca (2018) notes, “analysis of institutional change must be expanded from the levels of normative policy discourses on doctoral training, regulative funding rules and formal organizational frameworks of doctoral programs to the cognitive level of social and epistemic rules that shape field-specific doctoral training practices” (p. 5).

### **Trends in Research Funding**

In practice, there are now very few (if any) completely disinterested funding sources willing to hand over research monies with no conditions or expectations; even public funds are increasingly linked and focused around national or regional policy priorities, while philanthropic foundations, non-profit organizations, and even individual donors also have issues and areas that they want their money to address. Compared to students and scholars in STEM fields, those in SSAH fields have always tended to have fewer sources of both internal and external funding. Further, beyond the divide between STEM and SSAH fields more generally, arts and humanities research in particular is generally poorly funded (Humanities Indicators, nd). A 2013 report on global trends in arts and humanities funding showed that the allocation of research funding has been almost cut in half each year between 2010 and 2012 (Halevi & Bar-Illan, 2013).

Beyond unequal levels of funding, there are also concerns that the practices of research ethics and management that have been put in place for STEM fields are not well suited for SSAH fields. Given that private funding is more common and capacious in STEM fields than in SSAH fields, it is not surprising that most existing research about the integrity of funded research emphasizes STEM research. Important lessons can be learned from STEM experiences, but the

specific needs, concerns, and practices of SSAH-oriented fields should ultimately drive the discussion and decisions in these fields. Further, the uneven material and other support granted to social science versus arts and humanities fields should also be addressed.

Much private funding for STEM research comes from corporate/industry firms who sponsor applied research about potentially profit-generating products, treatments, or innovations (Lee & Miozzo, 2015; Thune, 2009). Bozeman et al. (2013) describe this as ‘property-focused research,’ which they contrast with ‘knowledge-focused research.’ Because of this, many in STEM fields openly acknowledge that private funding often influences researchers’ choice of topic, as in many ways this is precisely the intention behind the corporate/industry funder’s choice to support it, even as there remains a stated commitment to ensuring academic integrity and autonomy in the practice of the research itself (Harman, 2001). However, different researchers also draw different ethical and professional lines regarding their willingness to participate in industry-sponsored research (Slaughter, Campbell, Holleman, & Morgan, 2002).

Private funding for education research may be less likely to be directly oriented toward producing knowledge for profit or measurable impact, although there are exceptions; for example, Amazon’s 2017 collaboration with the University of Waterloo on the use of artificial intelligence in teaching. Nevertheless, the issues at stake when discussing private funding for SSAH research are becoming more complicated and multifaceted. Beyond STEM fields, there is a growing body of work about this issue in the professional field of (global) public health. The strong public good emphasis of this field means there are significant parallels with education in terms of risks faced, particularly in relation to potential conflicts between private (especially profit-oriented) and public interests. Richter suggests the need for “clear and effective institutional policies and measures that put the public interest at centre stage in all public–private interactions” (as cited by Hernandez-Aguado & Zaragoza, 2016, p. 8). Hernandez-Aguado and Zaragoza (2016) found that while considerable scholarly literature supports public-private health partnerships, there is little concrete proof that these partnerships result in positive health outcomes, and they therefore advocate for public health researchers and practitioners to play a stronger role in framing these partnerships. In one example, Galea and McKee (2014) offer five ‘tests’ when considering a public-private partnership related to health: 1) “are the core products and services provided by the corporation health enhancing or health damaging?”; 2) to what extent do “corporations put their policies into practice in the settings where they can do so, their own workplaces”?; 3) are their corporate social responsibility activities transparent?; 4) to what extent does the corporation “make contributions to the commons”?; and, 5) is there a robust firewall between policy-makers and the corporation? (pp. 4-5). Similar questions might be asked regarding potential private funding partnerships in education research.

In addition to considering the risks of private funding for “property-focused research,” there is also a need to assess the risks of philanthropic donations, which is a centuries old practice in higher education. The traditional and contemporary emphasis on fundraising and philanthropy in higher education is strong in the U.S. (Drezner, 2011; Drezner & Huehls, 2015; McClure, Frierson, Hall & Ostlund, 2017), but has recently become a focus for Canadian universities as well, particularly among the U15 Group of institutions. While they are both considered “private” (i.e. non-governmental) funding, there are differences between philanthropic and corporate/industry funding sources, with perhaps the greatest distinction being that philanthropic foundations/organizations are formally non-profit, while corporate/industry funders are for-profit institutions. At the same time, this does not mean philanthropic funding is

disinterested, or that all philanthropies are the same. For instance, philanthropic foundations may be: funded largely by individual donors or donor families, like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; community foundations that raise funds from both public and private sources; operating foundations, which fund and operate their own programs, although a few might offer external grants; or corporate foundations, such as the Walmart Foundation, which are directly tied to large companies (Martens & Seitz, 2015). Philanthropic organizations thus have their own orienting agendas, which are often tied up in some way (even if indirectly) with the interests of those who fund the organization. All donor motivations are nuanced, and it is nearly impossible to comprehensively canvass all of them (Bozeman, et al. 2013), but literature about foundation/philanthropic giving finds that motivations often exceed altruism and are informed by things like tax incentives and potential positive public image benefits (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990).

Overall, private giving – whether from individuals, non-profit organizations, for-profit corporations, or philanthropic foundations – is generally driven by the priorities of the donor/grantor, rather than by a more democratically determined vision of the public good (Martens & Seitz, 2015; Newfield, 2016). Even if not driven by the *direct* pursuit of profit, private donors are unlikely to fund research if they believe it will be critical of them and/or the type of work they do (Resnik, 2007). Conversely, there is a risk that donations may influence research in alignment with the donor’s interests. For instance, some have expressed concern that donor Peter Munk’s economic ties to resource extraction industries limits the potential for critical research to be conducted and supported by the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs (McQuaig, 2010). Elsewhere, the University of Arizona has recently come under critique for accepting over \$450,000 USD in research funding from a foundation, the Pioneer Fund, which “has promoted eugenics and financially supported ‘race scientists’ who maintain that blacks are intellectually and genetically inferior to whites” (Kunzelman, 2018).

Beyond more direct political influences, funding can also orient recipients to pursue particular areas of study, as is evident in two well-known examples of philanthropic funding for students. The Gates Scholarship program (which replaced the Gates Millennium Scholars program) funds Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander students in the US. The Foundation chooses its recipients, who apply separately to the academic program of their choice and bring their funding with them. While undergraduate recipients may pursue any area of study, those who continue on to pursue graduate degrees are more limited to the areas of computer science, education, engineering, library science, mathematics, public health, and science. Meanwhile, the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program funds African undergraduate and graduate students, who are chosen through university-wide selection committees at participating partner institutions of higher education around the world; the majors and degrees that are eligible for funding vary by institution. For instance, at UBC, Masters’ level MasterCard Scholarships are available in business, forestry, land and food systems, education, and medicine.

A growing body of research attends to the ethics of philanthropic funding more generally, including in educational contexts (see, for instance, the recently launched journal, *Philanthropy & Education*), but not in relation to graduate funding in particular. There is, however, some research that addresses the ethics of industry funding for graduate students. Wichmann-Hansen and Herrman (2017) suggest that research that addresses the effects of industry funding on graduate studies finds benefits and disadvantages. Some of the positive benefits have to do with the stability offered by the financial support itself, gains in access to wider scholarly and professional networks, particularly in relation to career opportunities (Harman, 2001; Mendoza,

2007; Wichmann-Hansen & Hermann, 2017), while some of the negative possible effects have to do with thorny questions about intellectual property rights when industry-sponsored research is done by graduate students as part of larger research team, delayed dissertations or publications because of a pending patent application, and the fact that students might be “less likely to be encouraged to think about problems that benefit the public or problems that were unlikely to result in profits” (Slaughter et al., 2002, p. 306). However, much research focuses on students whose private funding comes by way of their supervisors’ industry-funded research projects, rather than directly to the students themselves. Further, this research overwhelmingly emphasizes STEM disciplines. Thus, while this research can be instructive, the particulars of graduate research in SSAH fields must be considered when formulating any policy or guidelines for private graduate student funding, as in the case of the UBC Faculty of Education.

### **The University of British Columbia Faculty of Education**

Social science, arts, and humanities research that is conducted in higher education institutions in Canada is funded by a broad spectrum of sources from public, non-profit, and industry/commercial entities, each of which have their own purposes and agendas. Of course, faculty members also undertake much SSAH research without any funding, beyond their salaries. However, given growing reliance on non-public sources of funding, institutions and faculties increasingly consider funding motivations other than those determined by individual academics and research groups. Research concerns involve a balance between academic autonomy, public and private interests, and university priorities. UBC’s research strategy narrative reflects these emphases: to pursue research excellence; attract the top ranked graduate research students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty; and to be seen as producing relevant and valuable research (UBC Strategic Research Strategy, 2008, p. 12). At UBC in 2016-2017, funding from industry and the business sector made up around 10% of overall research funding, and only 2% of Faculty of Education funding, although these numbers are growing (UBC Research + Innovation, 2017). The remainder of research funding at UBC comes from a spectrum of sources from university, public, and non-profit agencies, each of which brings different research agendas and purposes motivating their distribution of funds. UBC already acknowledges in its research strategy that much public discourse narrows the definition of research impact and importance into commercial impact, or a combination of commercial and health outcomes. In response, the university has stated that it remains committed to embracing the full scope of research, and valuing research without commercial outcomes or specific applications (UBC Strategic Research Strategy, 2008). Yet, the realities of research funding are not addressed by stated commitments alone.

In Canada, graduate research students (i.e. not those pursuing a professional degree), including masters and doctoral students, support the cost of their studies through varied means, often including one or more of one of the following: direct public funding from a federal or provincial agency (e.g. a Tri-Agency doctoral award); indirect public funding, by way of funds received by their research supervisor (e.g. as a graduate research assistant on a Tri-Agency grant); direct institutional/university funding, which may itself originate as a mix of public and private funds (e.g. the Four Year Fellowship at UBC); private funding for projects sponsored by industry, non-profit, or philanthropic organizations (either directly to the student, or indirectly via funding received by their research supervisor); or, taking out loans, working in the university but not as a researcher (e.g. as a teaching assistant or in an administrative role), working outside of the university, or receiving funding support from family members. The portion of graduate

student funding that is not covered by public or institutional monies is a substantial and generally unacknowledged form of direct and indirect funding for SSAH research in Canada, particularly for non-resident students who are not eligible for many public funding opportunities. Further, even many sources of public funding come with a work requirement beyond the work required to conduct one's own research (e.g. when graduate funding is attached to a research assistantship on a faculty grant). The extent to which students rely on different types of funding, and the amount of debt that many students accumulate over the course of their graduate studies, are important considerations when faculties analyze the ethics of different funding sources.

This context of research funding in Canada and at UBC sets the stage for the UBC Faculty of Education's recent consideration of possibilities for pursuing private external funding for graduate students. The following were articulated as immediate motivating concerns:

- SSAH research is often eligible for fewer grants and less federal and institutional/university funding than STEM research;
- Institutional graduate funding is increasingly limited;
- Not all graduate students are eligible for federal funding (in particular, non-resident students);
- The provincial government of British Columbia, unlike some other provincial governments in Canada, does not offer graduate funding opportunities; and,
- A recently introduced university policy that will require four-years of guaranteed minimum funding for all full-time students pursuing a doctorate of philosophy at UBC.

In this context, the Faculty of Education has sought to expand its funding base for graduate students, particularly by seeking private funding from corporations and/or from individual donors. At the same time, ethical considerations around new and existing funding relationships were paramount, which ultimately led the Faculty Dean's office to commission the research that informed this article. In particular, it was considered imperative that any decisions about private funding should uphold UBC's core values, including: academic freedom (defense of free inquiry and scholarly responsibility); advancing and sharing knowledge (contributions to knowledge and understanding with and across disciplines); excellence (educate students to the highest standards); integrity (fulfilling promises and ensuring open, respectful relationships); mutual respect and equity (valuing and respecting all individuals who individually and collaboratively contribute to the learning environment); and public interest (enhance societal good within the wider community) (UBC Vision and Values, n.d.). There was also concern to ensure that partnering with a private funder would not compromise the university's vision statement, to "create an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship, advance a civil and sustainable society, and support outstanding research to serve the people of British Columbia, Canada, and the world" (UBC Vision and Values, n.d.).

In line with these values, it was proposed that the Faculty of Education could develop a gift acceptance policy that clearly articulated a set of ethical guidelines for determining appropriate donors, and established a standing review committee or other oversight mechanism, to research and make decisions about possible funders. These guidelines would need to meet, though may exceed, any existing institutional guidelines about corporate partnerships. For example, according to the "Corporate Strategic Partnership Guidelines Process" approved by the



UBC Board of Governors (2007), “When assessing a potential partner, the University will, at a minimum, hold a corporation to the local legal standards of each jurisdiction in which it carries on business.” However, more rigorous assessments and standards could also be developed for partner selection, for instance with due consideration to the ethical and political dimensions of a funder’s mission, their business/focus, and their actual practices (Galea & McKee, 2014; Sandford, Pache, & Gautier, 2016).

Because the particulars of any policy need to be attentive to local needs and concerns, and need to be negotiated with faculty constituencies in particular, we did not propose one set of ethical guidelines. Instead, the primary outcome of the commissioned research was a series of issues to consider when creating those guidelines, which we reproduce below with some alteration so as to make them more widely applicable to programs and institutions outside of UBC, and beyond questions of private funding for graduate students only. These considerations were developed with reference to the available literature (reviewed above), much of which was adapted from other fields in order to be more relevant to a SSAH-oriented field like education. Beyond summarizing issues of consideration and concern, we also provide a series of guiding discussion questions for each that could help orient conversations among faculty members, and between faculty and administrators and any other relevant constituencies.

As noted at the beginning of this article, although these considerations and questions were developed with the UBC Faculty of Education context in mind, they would have resonance at other public institutions that are also considering how to develop or revamp their private funding policies. In particular, given that there is a lack of such examples in SSAH, these considerations could be useful for those working in these fields.

### *Ensuring research autonomy and integrity*

Existing research suggests that ensuring private sponsorship does not interfere in any way with the integrity of free and open inquiry is one of the most important considerations in any funding arrangement (Parks & Disis, 2004; Schwarz, 1991). No amount of funds is worth compromising graduate students’ ability to determine, undertake, and disseminate, in consultation with their supervisory committee, their line of research, approach, and argument; and no amount of funds is worth compromising public trust in institutional integrity. This is perhaps most crucial for protecting critical scholarship, particularly if the critique addresses, however indirectly, the business of the sponsoring organization or individual.

In one example of insufficient protection of academic autonomy, a University of Toronto researcher had her pharmaceutical company-funded research terminated after she expressed concern about one of their drugs, and was not supported by the university, which was anticipating a significant donation from the same company (Ginsberg, 2012). In another case, a private company sought to suppress publication of sponsored research of a researcher, and the Brown University medical school that employed him initially supported the company and closed his program. The decision was eventually reversed, but not without significant harm to the school’s reputation (Harman & Sherwell, 2002). Clearly, researchers must be protected from pressure to publish or create biased or dishonest research. Nonetheless, the existence of cautionary examples does not entirely preclude the possibility of private funding arrangements that address the interests of funders and researchers without comprising ethical standards.

Questions to be considered regarding ensuring research autonomy and integrity include: What is the best way to structure private funding to ensure researchers' full academic autonomy and scholarly integrity, with regard to all elements of the research design, approach/method, and dissemination? What mechanisms should be put into place to ensure and monitor this? Should donors be permitted to fund students in specific areas of research, and if so, how could it be assured that, within this broad scope, students will have autonomy? What are the potential effects of the fact that there are more likely to be interested donors for certain projects and not for others - in particular, less interest in critically-oriented research, or arts and humanities research?

### *Ethics and Selection of Private Funders*

Public research institutions and private organizations (in particular, profit-driven ones) have distinct purposes (Bozeman et al., 2013; Davis & Ferreira, 2006). As a part of a public institution, individual scholars and departments are charged to ensure that their partnerships will uphold the university's values, research priorities, and public good mission. Guiding ethical principles around selecting a possible donor/funder might address whether or how the following characteristics could affect whether their donation/funding is solicited or accepted: labour practices (for instance, if they are a known violator of civil and/or human rights through wage theft or sweatshop conditions); source of the funder/donor's wealth (for instance, if they are a resource extraction or arms manufacturing company), or political position (for instance, if the funders offer support for xenophobic, transphobic, or eugenic policies).

Some institutions have established standing review committees or other oversight mechanisms, to research and make informed decisions about possible funders. A program or institution might also include ethical conduct statements as part of their individual contracts with external partners. For example, the Queen's University Senate (2003) approved the practice of putting such a statement in each contract, such that: "The statement as noted defines the university's essential values and makes it explicit that the university will not accept external support that compromises these values or the university's commitment to its academic mission."

Questions to be considered regarding the ethics and selection of private funders include: By what guidelines and practices should a program/faculty/institution determine which funders are appropriate partners? How can a program/faculty/institution ensure that its partnerships are mutually advantageous? Who will be responsible for assessing potential partners, and who will have the authority to make the final determinations? What say will individual students have in these discussions? How will assurances about ethical expectations be formally built into negotiations and agreements with potential sponsors? What would be the procedure for changing an existing determination if those expectations are violated?

### *Student Selection*

Student recipients of private funds should be selected on their merit and potential contributions, broadly defined according to measures determined by the deciding body/committee, rather than on their alignment with a particular funder's ideological position or line of inquiry. Even in cases of research programs placed in business settings or hybrid industry-study programs, these are still subject to university admissions protocols and the department should retain the final word on who is accepted onto a doctoral program, and whose research satisfies the requirements for the completed award. Regardless of how the structure of funding

might be organized, the authority to select students to receive scholarships should be clearly designated. Determinations need to be made about what input, if any, funders will have. Were students to be selected directly by funders and/or by the university's fundraising staff, this could potentially compromise their research autonomy and integrity, and the merit-basis of the decision. From the outset it should also be clear what kind of relationship funders are permitted to have with sponsored students. Students should be thoroughly informed of these rules and regulations, and their continued funding should not be contingent on donor approval of an individual, lest this compromise the autonomy of their research.

Questions to be considered regarding student selection include: How should scholarship recipients be selected? Will funders fund an individual student or contribute to one large fund to be dispersed amongst multiple students within a program/faculty/institution? What are or should be the guidelines in place to address the possibility that a donor might wish to contact student beneficiaries of their funds? Should there be any conditions placed on students' continued funding, beyond academic achievement and proof of steady progress through their program? Will funders have any proprietary claim on the research of students they fund?

### *Long-Term Effects of Private Funding*

Even with ethical measures and firewalls in place around direct influence on the students receiving private funds, there is a risk that opening the door further to private funding will have significant and potentially unforeseen and indirect effects. For instance, it may lead to the further naturalization of minimal/declining public or institutional funding for graduate research, as well as of the perception that 'there is no turning back' once the move toward privatization begins (Newfield, 2016). Further, the perceived necessity to attract or pursue private funding may lead the faculty as a whole, and/or individual faculty members, to "self-censor", particularly in relation to critical perspectives (Gray & Kendzia, 2009). This censoring can affect not only the framing or approach to research or its dissemination, but also the choice of particular research topics or approaches over others (Brisbois, et al., 2016). Conversely, greater movement toward a private-funding model may result in the further devaluation of the contributions of faculty members whose research is not considered "fundable" by private donors (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). Finally, being too dependent on any one source of revenues can leave a program vulnerable to undue influence. Thus, some organizations have created policies that limit the percentage and/or amount of revenue that can be received from any particular funding source type and/or from a particular funding organization. For instance, the World Wildlife Federation caps the funding that it accepts from corporate sources, while Greenpeace accepts zero funding from corporate philanthropy (Sandford, Pache, & Gautier, 2016).

Questions to be considered regarding long-term effects of private funding include: What is the ideal mix of total funding for graduate students? Who will determine this mix? How will it be achieved? How might acceptance of private funding shape the future funding landscape for a program, faculty/college, university, state/province, and even country? How can a program/faculty/institution ensure that scholars whose research does not have commercial value or specific application, or is in other ways difficult-to-fund (e.g. because it is critical), will not be punished (e.g. in tenure and promotion processes) for not receiving funding?

### *Clarity, Transparency, and Oversight*

Communications about any decision to accept private funding should be thoughtfully developed, with particular concern for clarity and full transparency, so as to assure and ensure the continued integrity of and trust in the results of research for various constituencies, including fellow scholars and the public at large (Miller et al., 2014). As Schwarz (1991) notes, even the perception that research integrity has been compromised can be damaging for an individual's research or even an entire program. Williams-Jones and MacDonald (2008) also note that often official policies around, for example, conflicts of interest are written in legalistic language that is not very accessible, is oriented toward avoiding institutional liability, and emphasize prohibitions rather than constructive guidance. Further, even when policies, principles, and procedures are put into place, there is a need for ongoing oversight to not only assess whether/how these are functioning as intended, but to also address unforeseen issues. This may, for example, take the form of a permanent oversight committee with rotating appointments, with regularly scheduled assessments as well as the charge to meet on an as-needed basis as issues arise.

Guiding questions regarding clarity, transparency, and oversight include: How will final decisions about private funding be made? How will these decisions be communicated internally, and to the public? Which bodies will hold the responsibility and authority for oversight of private funding agreements? On what schedule or according to what imperatives will this oversight body convene for assessments? How will their autonomy be guaranteed?

### **Possible Frameworks for Private Graduate Student Funding**

With all of the above in mind, in Table 1 we summarize some of the possible approaches to pursuing private donor funding for graduate students, including the benefits, risks, and possible questions that might arise when considering any particular option.

Given the range of approaches and possible effects on the research of individual students and faculty members, as well as faculties and institutions as a whole, it is imperative that any SSAH program or faculty interested in pursuing private funding for graduate student research create spaces for open, honest, and agonistic discussion amongst its faculty members and students about the practical and ethical dimensions of private funding. SSAH researchers face the challenge of ensuring that their work maintains integrity and matches academic assessments of what is consequential and ethical, while recognizing the realities of operating in a context of unstable funding with uneven opportunities across discipline and research type. Regardless of the approach ultimately taken with regard to private funding for graduate students, and more generally, if private funding is pursued, then existing research and models from STEM disciplines suggests that there is at minimum a need for clear ethical guidelines for determining appropriate donors, and firm safeguards to ensure the integrity and the continued value of all kinds of scholarship – including scholarship that seeks to foster independent, multi-voiced, critically-informed and socially-accountable debates about the future of higher education itself.

Table 1  
Possible Frameworks for Private Graduate Student Funding

Option	Benefits	Risks	Variants/Questions
<p><b>1:</b> Multiple private funders contribute to a single scholarship fund, for accepted doctoral students, researching any subject; faculty members adjudicate recipients</p>	<p>With no individual designated as the recipient of a particular funder’s contribution, this could minimize risks of compromising research integrity</p>	<p>Funders may strongly prefer having names attached to a specific scholarship (and thus, student); spreading funds could spread risks of influence/ conflicts to the program/department/ institution as a whole.</p>	<p>Funding could go to a set number of students and/or be used to “top up” or “match” existing funding offers/ opportunities</p>
<p><b>2:</b> Individual private funders fund scholarships for students researching a specific research <i>subject</i>; faculty members adjudicate recipients</p>	<p>Individual funders may be more inclined to donate if they can determine the area of research that the recipient will address</p>	<p>Strong potential for students to feel pressure to represent funder and/or funder’s position on said subject in a positive light; only certain kinds of research will attract funding</p>	<p>Would students be considered for these scholarships prior to, concurrently with, or after, their program application process?</p>
<p><b>3:</b> Individual private funders fund a particular <i>student</i> (or students), and their proposed project</p>	<p>Individual funders may be more inclined to donate if they can develop a ‘connection’ with a particular student</p>	<p>Strong potential for students to feel pressure to represent funder (and/or their business) in a positive light.</p>	<p>Who selects the students – funder, faculty, both? Would students be considered before, during, after their application to the program?</p>
<p><b>4:</b> No private funding for students pursued</p>	<p>Risk of research integrity compromised by private interests is reduced to zero</p>	<p>If public funding declines or even stagnates, there may be few funding sources for graduate students; this would not apply to existing private funding streams (e.g. Gates Scholarship)</p>	<p>How do decisions at the department/ faculty level relate to graduate funding mandates made at the university level?</p>

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