

American University's



“Turning Passions into Projects!”

<https://www.american.edu/ocl/volunteer/Eagle-Endowment-Homepage.cfm>

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Mission: To grant funding and provide mentorship to students looking to create impactful, community-oriented projects in the DMV area.



The Eagle Endowment for Public & Community Service prides itself on its fiscal responsibility and stretching every dollar to help the community. Sometimes, external benefits like grant matching, (a student finds an organization that will match our grant), or long-term benefits (video production, advertising materials, alumni engagement events), are not easily reflected in our budget. We have a formal budget that can be sent, however due to confidentiality reasons, we are still awaiting approval to send it electronically.

Executive Summary

Organization Mission and Purpose

The slogan of the Eagle Endowment for Public & Community Service is to help students at American University “Turn Passion into Projects”. Our goal is to provide mentorship and funding for students and groups who want start social or community action initiatives.

There is a need at American University for our organization. Located in the nation’s capital and recognized as one of the most politically and socially active schools in the nation, students enrolling at American University are strongly motivated to make a difference in the world. Ask around for a single word to describe our student body you would likely hear ‘driven’. We have multiple academic programs educating students on sustainable and impactful social action, yet most students end up interning for a cause close to them and are often without the resources to lead a project themselves. It is important to understand that American University is a *small* school, trying to make a *large* impact (~7,500 undergraduate and 4000 graduate students).

The Eagle Endowment administers three grant cycles a year, which currently provide grants of \$100 to \$1,000 to any AU student(s) who wish to create or continue a project that positively influences the local DMV community.

For the last 15 years, the Eagle Endowment has sponsored over 100 diverse and impactful projects for community service and social action!

Brief Organizational Background

We have been an establish organization for 15 years. We hold the honor of being the first student lead endowment initiative in the country! The story of our creation itself highlights the passion in our students and gives context to how and why this grassroots idea began.

In 2000, a student, inspired by death of her father and her AU floor-mate, decided it was time for her to make a difference. Her idea was to create a playground in Southeast D.C to provide low-income youth a place to play and to develop a relationship between AU and the DC Community. In April as part of National Youth Service Day, she completed Project Playground in a day with 400 volunteers from AU and \$50,000 raised from the local community.

The following year, after 9/11, D.C. and the American University campus was strangled by the threat of terrorism. AU was repeatedly evacuated for bomb threats and Senior Rick Evanchec, like many others, were looking for a way to serve. In this spirit, he and other students raised enough money to turn the remaining \$12,500 from Project Playground to the \$50,000 needed to create an Endowment.

The vision was create a resource that empowers AU students with tools to turn ideas into service. The Endowment stood as the mechanism to give compassionate people the ability to help others.

The Endowment now stands at \$105,000. We stay sustainable by never taking from this principal and only using the interest that comes from the Endowment to fund our grant cycles.

Organization Structure

To continue this student-led soul while adding tenable structure, the Eagle Endowment is run through The Center for Community Engagement & Service, which gives us resources to connect students to community partners and potential donors. However, do note that we are completely self-sufficient and receive no money from student fees or the University directly.

The Eagle Endowment is composed of a Coordinator and the Advisory Council. The Coordinator, a Graduate Student working 15 hours a week, handles fundraising, marketing, grant review and distribution, administrative items (i.e. budgeting and reports), and the management of the Advisory Council. The Council, comprised of 6-8 graduate and undergraduate students, plans and initiates fundraising and marketing strategies, reviews grants, and mentors grantees

throughout the year. AU Staff interviews and selects the Coordinator who does the same in selecting the Council.

On Increasing Efficient Campus Philanthropy

We cannot overemphasize the importance of increasing campus philanthropy to the Eagle Endowment. This isn't only our mission, it is the literal passion of everyone involved.

I feel our goal is almost ironically similar to yours as we seek to empower students who bring potentially game-changing ideas to the field of community-action projects. The Heller School was specifically founded to advance those committed to social change and follows a mission, which includes "driv[ing] positive social change through research, education, and public engagement". The Sillerman Center helps emerging and established members of the philanthropic community hoping to move social justice work forward; especially through an emphasis on research, innovation, and creative thinking in social justice philanthropy.

We at the Eagle Endowment are also steadfast idealist and we too understand the necessity of informed public engagement. Therefore, we operate using community-based research guidelines. We believe this is a very strong model for the future of community and social action. This model requires students to truly connect to the community they are serving. This encourages student growth as they actively collaborate with their community partner when forming their project. This not only protects vulnerable communities from outsiders who falsely assume community needs, but protects our limited budget from projects that may not yield an optimal result. This is just one part of our multi-stage application process explained to applicants which we believe works towards a better world by generating knowledgeable leaders.

Practicing Philanthropy

Over 15 years, we've found multiple strategies that increase the practice and awareness of philanthropy on our campus. To start increasing the practice of philanthropy, there needed to be a centralized resource, and the Endowment abridged this gap on our campus. We feel that the student-group structure may be better way to connect to the student body than with administrators. We are active on campus and can talk directly to peers about an area they are passionate about and help them foster a concrete and sustainable idea.

Our council are volunteers, so our group practices philanthropy by helping students realize they are powerful enough to create change. Our principle is meaningful action and our guidelines come from our application process. The Council's grant review process secures a discussion on projects and their merits that helps us follow our principle.

We reach students through various approaches. We reach out to professors in multiple departments who let us present in their class and forward our grant cycle information to their students. We network with Greek Life, Multicultural Organizations, and any social, political, or service based organizations. We involve both graduate and undergraduate students. We use our website and social media for digital advertisements to accompany our fliers. We host events that help our AU community, like partnering with People.Animals.Love to bring support dogs to our campus in an event that reached 400 students and raised \$1,000. We constantly brainstorm new ideas to develop our presence and impact on campus with student leaders. Those who won grants in the past become champions of our program who encourage their friends to apply. We try to go beyond just engaging community; we try to create it.

Impact of Investment: Helping our Beneficiaries

Since our creation, we have helped sponsor over 100 diverse projects. In the past 4 cycles alone, we advanced 21 diverse projects through the support of \$9,650. Numbers however don't

fully encapsulate the full impact of our grants. For examples, see Appendix A, which highlights a few recent beneficiaries.

Beyond the numbers, we do not just give money. We provide mentorship. We turn ambitious students into self-sufficient leaders in social justice philanthropy. We connect them to resources, help them secure donations, act as a liaison where needed, and most of all, give the funding that converts their imagination and idealism into a concrete reality.

I personally have seen students apply for a grant cycle, win, and then apply for every cycle until they graduate. I have seen students work hard to secure donations that save us money so that there is enough money to fund other students' projects. Furthermore, we aid multiple communities. We are not a single-issue model, so we are consistently helping solve different issues in a variety of communities. From arts education for kids, to inclusive sex education for LGBTQ+ teens, to combating poverty and homelessness in D.C.'s low-income wards, to sponsoring projects empowering community activism! Our students go from thinking to serving, and we ensure that both the student and the community benefit from the projects we fund.

How we Encourage Involvement

We are not a traditional style club. Our seven members are a sliver of our community. We involve the student body multiple times a semester through council recruitment, grant application, and fundraising/marketing events.

Our fundraising process has increased fourfold over recent months. We have secured sales-based funding partnerships with our University, created a sponsorship list that engages local community businesses, and engaged alumni for donations.

This year, we've planned some big events including: a 15th Year Anniversary event for alumni involved in the Eagle Endowment; a fundraising event partnered with our student-run coffee shop; and a fundraiser that will bring service dogs to AU students during finals.

Why the GenerousU Grand Prize is Perfect for the Eagle Endowment

We believe this year is a turning point for the Eagle Endowment. Due to increased visibility on campus, we have consistently received a record number of grant proposals and have had to turn away more projects or had to limit the creative vision of our applicants. This year we have focused on ensuring a solid foundation. We've increased our fundraising and visibility through securing long-term partnerships with internal and external organizations. In December, our Coordinator presented at the Corporation for National and Community Service's national conference in D.C. The theme was "From Evidence to Action" and we were selected to present as a national model for the *Service Learning in Practice* section.

We have the experience to turn your cash prize into real developmental improvements for the Endowment. Not only can the money go to funding projects or increasing the endowment, but we can put aside \$1,000-\$2,000 to sponsor our own campus wide case competition, the "*Time to Serve Challenge*" that focuses on a rotating social action topic and is judged by knowledgeable faculty who evaluates the feasibility of the project. We can then connect them to community-partners who could assist in implementing the winning model.

We are the first endowment of our kind nationally. We are students who are passionate about mixing a little time, innovation, and resources together to create real change. We have been locally and nationally recognized. We have proved sustainability for 15 years and impacted students and the DMV community through dozens of diverse projects a year. You can propel us to a new level as we look to take a step forward in a frustrated city and campus who feels that now is an important time to step up. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Appendix 1: Partial List of 2016-2017 Eagle Endowment Grant Recipients

- Adopt-a-School Initiative (Fall 2016- \$625): Led by the Frederick-Douglass Distinguished Scholars Program, this community garden project is a part of a larger project with LeSalle-Backus K-8 school in NE D.C. The FDDS program and the school principal identified five improvement areas and the grant is going to one of them- the sustainable construction of a community garden.
- SouthEast DC Young Artist Show (Fall 2016- \$350): This project aims to involve kids from Wards 6,7, and 8 into the arts scene by having their work shown at THEARC. On 2/28/17 at ArtReach Gallery, 22 young artists will be judged by renowned DC artists.
- Boys Town DC Orphanage (MLK 2017- \$600): Battling the problem of aging-out at a local orphanage, this project used a community-informed approach by asking the kids what they could do to improve their experience. They identified the unusable basketball courts as target for renovation and will be constructing a new court with Boys Town's facilities coordinator in March.
- Bruce-Monroe Elementary Art Program (MLK 2016: \$800): The goal this social action project is to implement a stronger arts education program into Bruce-Monroe Elementary School which has faced budget cuts and a pursuant reduction in arts education. This four part project included creating a mosaic mural, drawing pictures for children at the Children's National Health System, inviting renowned D.C. muralist Aniekan Udofia to share his story becoming an artist, and a field trip to the National Gallery of Art.
- Inclusive Sex Education for DC Public Schools (MLK 2017: \$250): This project uses a community-based research methodology to create toolkits for sex education educators to use to provide a LGBTQ+ inclusive education.
- Intimate Partner Violence Action Training and Help Strategy Directory (MLK 2016- \$300): This project is designed to solve the discrepancy in education regarding intimate partner violence within the AU community through peer-educated workshops and a strategy directory within Greek organizations.
- Peace House (MLK 2017: \$700): A part of *Blackout: Generation Liberation*, this project works with the Peace House in NE D.C. to create weekly educational seminars which will help increase community activism in addition to feeding participants and providing them with books and other supplies.
- Turk's Closet (MLK 2017: \$700): With the \$700 grant being matched by America's Promise Alliance, this project works with the Boys and Girls Club of Alexandria to develop a closet for supplies, clothing, and accessories that the children can use. It's named in honor of the son of the Program Director, whose son was recently killed in Alexandria.