



The Division of Student Affairs has developed Democracy is in Our DNA a university initiative that seeks to strengthen our community through civic engagement and dynamic experiences that inspire curiosity and exploration. Our commitment is to cultivate a campus environment where each member can engage with opportunities and programs that foster student development, well-being, and belonging at GW and beyond.

This initiative consists of staff members across multiple offices in the Division of Student Affairs who review funding requests submitted by student organizations. If you have any questions, please contact us at studentlife@gwu.edu.

Funding Eligibility

Democracy is in our DNA funding supports student organizations who wish to host events that align with the values of the university initiative. To be considered for funding, events must fit into one of the initiative's principles:

Fostering Engagement & Student Development:

At GW our most important mission is to support the development of our students as they grow into the changemakers and leaders they aim to be. This means providing opportunities for students to learn and develop through transformative experiences in and out of the classroom. This also includes providing programming for students to engage in to help them explore different components of their identities while encouraging students to engage in conversations and complex issues.

Key Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to engage in conversations while thinking critically about complex issues
- Students will be curious about issues outside of the identities that they hold and will feel a desire to engage across differences
- Students will be able to engage in discussions that may be polarizing while still feeling part of the GW community

- Students will be able to define conflict and be familiarized with strategies to navigate empathetically its many forms
- Students will feel a desire to continue exploring and engaging with topics and programming centered around global issues and political discourse

Supporting Student Wellbeing & Centering Belonging:

GW recognizes that students who find community, and successfully overcome barriers to their wellbeing, can experience new heights of personal, academic, and life success. GW embraces this responsibility and strives to ensure that every student can pour their energy into their passions and ambitions, without compromising their sense of belonging in our community or state of wellbeing. To aid our students in engaging with current events and global discourse, we will create programming that supports student well-being by working to solidify resilience, encourage help-seeking behaviors, develop self-management skills, and maintain positivity in the face of challenges.

Key Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to critically think and analyze decisions before making judgments in order to prioritize their wellbeing
- Students will feel curious to engage in activities that elevate their well-being and sense of belonging to the GW community
- Students will feel they are part of a community and/or connect with different community members
- Students will feel empathetic towards themselves and their well-being as well as the community around them and the well-being of others
- Students will intentionally explore activities and learn strategies that they can add to their wellbeing toolkit
- Students will be familiarized with resources on campus at the institutional, departmental, and student organization levels

Timeline and Application Submission

Student organizations are strongly encouraged to submit the application as early as possible, but **at least one month prior to the proposed event date**. The Democracy is in Our DNA Committee may not be able to review applications made less than a month prior to the proposed event date. The application is available on [2024-2025 Democracy is in Our DNA Student Org Funding Request Application](#) on GW Engage.

Student organizations can request a maximum of \$500 for their event. Please note that you may not receive the total amount requested. The final allocation will be determined by the Committee, and based on the set rubric below.

Once the Democracy is in our DNA Committee approves an allocation, the money will be deposited into the student organization's budget account. The Democracy in Our DNA Committee will review applications on a bi-weekly basis. The Democracy is in our DNA Committee will review applications on a bi-weekly basis. You will receive an email with a decision from the Office of Student Life. If you have any questions, please reach out to studentlife@gwu.edu.

Post-Event Follow-Up

Background

It is important for Democracy is in our DNA Committee to be able to share the amazing programming and events that student funds support. To do so, we need your help. We're asking organizations utilizing funds allocated to Democracy is in our DNA to carefully document their events so that we can develop reasonable, sustainable funding goals and provide insights to organizations that request funding in the future.

Photos

We would also love some photos from your event! Please send photos to studentlife@gwu.edu and mention that you received funding from Democracy is in Our DNA.

Allocation Standards and Prohibitions

Tier System

The Democracy is in Our DNA Committee may consider the following factors in allocating Student Government Association Funds to student organizations, with the following tiers designating the relative order of importance.

Tier One

- The number of students expected to benefit.
- The location and accessibility of the event, with preference given to on-campus events.

Tier Two

- How efficiently the funds would be spent.
- The extent to which the line item description sufficiently justifies the need for the funds.
- Whether the item to be purchased is a durable/sustainable good or one-time use, with preference given to durable goods.
- The extent to which the primary purpose of the line item contributes to a diverse and inclusive campus community that supports historically marginalized students.
- The extent to which the primary purpose of the line item contributes to addressing incumbent issues on campus that educate the campus community.

Tier Three

- How much effort the student organization has made to fundraise and the revenue it generates or fundraises for itself, with preference given to line items that are not funded solely by the Student Association.
- Whether the event has been put on previously and to what success.
- How efficiently the student organization has spent the Student Association Funds allocated to it in accordance with its allocations in the past.

Tips for Requesters

The Event:

- The Democracy is in Our DNA (DemDNA) Committee prefers free events to events that charge admission or ticket prices.
- The event must be on campus to receive funding.
- Events must be open to the entire GW Community.
 - For example, for undergraduate events, members of the Law School should be able to attend and bring one or two law students. Events should target and appeal to the whole student body.
- Please consider working with analogous organizations in other schools of the University. This goes a long way in showing that the event is open to the entire GW Community.

The Request:

- Please try to make the request as detailed and accurate as possible. Include as much data as possible in your request, particularly if the event has occurred in prior years.
- Include quotes, images, and other attachments where applicable.
- Please provide as much *evidence* as possible regarding the amounts you are requesting. For example, if you are requesting funding for a guest speaker, you should have a current quote for the venue; if you are requesting funding for an artist, please tell us whether they are under contract at the time of your request.

The Application:

- Please come prepared with a short presentation on what your event is.
- Please be knowledgeable about the event you are applying for. You should know:
 - The purpose of the event
 - A detailed breakdown of the event's costs
 - The event location (it must be on-campus)
 - Why does this event correspond to our funding priorities and guidelines?
- The Democracy is in our DNA Committee will review Engage applications on a bi-weekly basis. You will receive an email with a decision from the Office of Student Life.

We Do Not Fund:

- Giveaways (including branded items to sell or distribute as marketing for an event).
- Fees paid to students.
- Off-campus venues (with some exceptions).
- Water (it is typically contained within single-use plastic *and* freely available on campus).
- Invitation-only events or events where not all students would be welcome.

Prohibitions Under University Policies

Items falling under the following categories apply to all University Funds your organization can use. University Funds are any funds associated with a GW sponsored/managed/affiliated bank or spending account, **including all monies in your Budget Account, Revenue Account, and Departmental Accounts**. For the latest updates, please refer to the [Student Organization Handbook](#).

Student organizations may not use any University funds (funds associated with a GW sponsored/managed/affiliated bank or spending account, including organization revenue, SA funds, or departmental accounts) for the following reasons including, but not limited to:

1. To purchase business or first class tickets, or upgrades for flights or other travel;
2. To purchase drugs, firearms, ammunition;
3. To purchase laboratory animals (must be ordered by the Animal Research Facility);
4. To purchase special occasion items for individuals (flowers, fruit baskets, candy, balloons, etc.);
5. To purchase prizes, awards, and gift certificates, such as gift cards and cash equivalents (GWorld debit cards);
6. To purchase single-use plastics -- non-compostable, disposable bottled beverages or non-compostable, disposable tableware such as serving plates, silverware, serving silverware (i.e single-use plastic, styrofoam, paper);
7. To reimburse GW students, administrators, faculty, or staff for campaign contributions;
8. As a direct monetary or in-kind contribution to a candidate seeking elected office in an off-campus election;
9. To make payments to individuals via CashApp, Venmo, or PayPal;
10. To purchase financial securities or cryptocurrencies;
11. To make purchases connected to gambling;
12. To reimburse for unapproved travel or events;
13. To reimburse for personal payment on a contract

Neither purchases nor reimbursements for items outlined above will be approved.