



April 29, 2024

Dear Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to provide this letter of support for Cindy Zha's application for the 2024 Resilience and Compassion Seed Grant for the *Spill the Tea* program. I have known Cindy for eight months, working closely with her as her supervisor for her appointment in the Department of Global Health (DGH) as the Graduate Student Resource Coordinator (GSRC). DGH enrolls around 60 graduate students each year, many of which are international students from South America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The GSRC position was developed to meet the needs voiced by DGH students around community-building and peer-to-peer support. When I joined the Department of Global Health in 2019, academic programs staff were responsible for creating programming to meet these needs. The resulting programming, although thoughtfully developed and coordinated by staff, generated very minimal engagement, with students continuing to express these needs. This was exacerbated by the move to remote work and online courses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Returning to in-person operations was a time to reassess our work. Given the minimal success of the staff-led student community-building programming, we decided to try a student-led model, where a student would be responsible for program development and execution under a Staff Assistant appointment and with the support of a staff supervisor. Cindy was hired into this role in October 2023.

Cindy developed the *Spill the Tea* series and has carried out all aspects of the program with ongoing support from staff and guidance from our department's Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The aims of *Spill the Tea* this current year have been to bring DGH students together to discuss DEI topics pertinent to their experience as students at UW in a student-only space. With input from students, Cindy identified topics of discussion, prepared materials, and facilitated discussions. Participation numbers were significantly higher than the staff-led programming, and the feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with students reporting that they feel more connected to their peers, they can better understand and articulate their own experiences related to the discussion topics, and they are more able to care for themselves and others. As one participant in the Boundaries discussion shared, "From Cindy's last session on boundaries, I learned that a way we can support each other as students is respecting each other's boundaries and not taking it personally when someone sets a boundary."

With the success of this year's *Spill the Tea* series, Cindy plans to expand this programming next academic year to include more meetings, encourage more students to attend, further develop her discussion facilitation skills (especially around supporting discussion of difficult topics) and implement a more robust evaluation plan. If she is awarded the Seed Grant, the funds will be used for these purposes, especially to support expenses our department does not cover. We feel encouraged by the initial success of the *Spill the Tea* series and are confident in Cindy's abilities to carry out the expansion of the program as proposed in this application.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about the *Spill the Tea* series, Cindy Zha, or our department's support for this program. We are very excited about the continuation of *Spill the Tea* and I am more than happy to elaborate on any of the information I've shared in this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirsten Greene", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kirsten Greene, MA
Program Manager for International Programs and Student Opportunities
Dept. of Global Health Travel Fellowships Manager

kngreene@uw.edu