



Benson Center for the Study
of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

Board of Advisors Fall 2024 Agenda
October 25, 2024
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Flatirons Room (C4C building) or over Zoom

Board Members in Attendance: Bruce Benson, Kelly Brough, Brian Domitrovic, David Pyle, Kevin Reidy, Jennifer Schubert-Akin, and Tina Snider

Absent: Michael Dino, David Grohne, David Hoover, Ted Trimpa

Others in Attendance: Marcy Benson, Phil DiStefano, Daniel Jacobson, Taylor Jaworski, Cheryl Kisling, Jane Marsh, Matt Nagler, Joseph Porter, Alexandra Roberts, Chancellor Justin Schwartz, AJ Shively

10:32 a.m.: Center Director Daniel Jacobson begins the meeting with opening remarks.

- Daniel Jacobson introduces Chancellor Justin Schwartz.
- Chancellor Schwartz thanks the Bensons and Phil DiStefano. He comments that the success of the Benson Center is vital to the success of campus.
- Chancellor Schwartz commends the Center for its unique student-focused programming and commitment to free expression and intellectual diversity.
- Chancellor Schwartz encourages expanding faculty fellowships and fellow programs across campus disciplines.
- Chancellor Schwartz stresses the importance of building community around ideas and maintaining institutional neutrality, especially as the value of higher education is being questioned.
- Notes CU's high student voter turnout and commends civic engagement efforts.

Daniel Jacobson provides program updates.

- Jacobson reflects on the Center's growth since prior challenges and public criticisms.
- Highlighted recent VSCTP scholars: Alan Kahan, Todd Zywicki, Brandon Warmke, and now Patrick Deneen.
- The Center has strengthened its reputation by recruiting top-tier scholars, who in turn attract top-tier speakers like Vernon Smith and Scott Atlas.
- Introduction of sabbatical scholar Matt Nagler, who shared behavioral economics research.

- The faculty fellows program is growing, with eight current members. They are interdisciplinary and actively contribute to programming and research.
- The Undergraduate Fellows Program will benefit from the new Associate Teaching Professor, Joseph Porter.
- The Center plans to build a robust 4-year undergraduate fellowship program. The Center's vision is an active and flourishing intellectual community, training the future leaders of Colorado.
- The Undergraduate Fellowship program received 700 applications this year; next step is growing depth and rigor.

Associate Faculty Director Taylor Jaworski discusses curriculum & academic development.

- Two minors in development: CWCV (Classics, Western Civ & Values) and PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics).
- Taylor Jaworski received approval for an introductory course in philosophy and economics in the Economics Department. We hope to cross-list courses with the Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics departments.
- To be successful, the Center must continue to build relationships with faculty across campus; for example, supporting an event on Euripides with the Classics department.

Daniel Jacobson presents other Center updates.

- Patrick Deneen is the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP) this year. Patrick is a prominent voice in common-good conservatism.
- Patrick Deneen's recent CPR interview and upcoming events (e.g., with Matthew Crawford) showcase his impact.
- February 14 is the deadline to apply for reauthorization. All Centers are undergoing reauthorization in 2025; the delay is campus wide.

Daniel Jacobson provides board updates.

- Kelly Brough is welcomed to the board.
- Daniel Jacobson nominates Jeri Curry as a board member. She is deeply involved in local philanthropy and can provide fresh ideas for the board. The nomination is seconded by the Bensons. A vote is held. 7 for, 0 against, and 0 abstain. The motion passes.

Daniel Jacobson recognizes Chancellor Emeritus Philip DiStefano.

- Phil is recognized for his continued involvement in the Center post-chancellorship.
- Emphasized his role in helping integrate the Center with campus faculty and students.
- David Pyle likens his leadership to "Coach Prime," recruiting the best intellectual talent.

Assistant Director Alexandra Roberts presents fundraising & budget updates.

- Jane Marsh is introduced as the new Advancement liaison.
- Emphasized endowment-first funding strategy to preserve operational flexibility.
- Discussed operating funds being used for staff salaries and targeted events.

External Media Relations Manager AJ Shively presents events & social media outreach.

- The Benson Center continues producing high-impact events with broader reach.
- Social media growth is steady; short-form video content especially popular with younger demographics.
- Discussed partnership with PR firm Group 76 to elevate the Center's messaging and outreach.

Items not on the agenda are discussed.

- Ongoing effort to boost CWCV course enrollments through undergraduate fellowship requirements.
- Discussion of curricular strategy, major/minor alignment, and expanding course credit opportunities.
- Affirmation that the Center values diversity of thought over ideological purity in its programming.

Meeting Adjourned.