



Benson Center for the Study  
of Western Civilization  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

### **Board of Advisors Spring 2025 Agenda**

**April 17, 2025**

**10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Benson Earth Sciences, Room 380 or over Zoom**

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

Absent: David Grohne, David Hoover, Ted Trimpa

Others in Attendance: Marcy Benson, Patrick Deneen, Phil DiStefano, Taylor Jaworski, Cheryl Kisling, Joseph Porter, Chancellor Schwartz, Alexandra Roberts, AJ Shively

10:36 a.m. Chairwoman Tina Snider begins the meeting with opening remarks.

- Tina opens the meeting, thanking Bruce Benson for founding the Center and expressing gratitude to staff and board members.
- Tina highlights the Center's progress despite challenges, emphasizing support from the Chancellor, Dean, and President.
- The Center's strong endowment reflects robust donor confidence.
- Tina introduces Jeri Curry as a new board member and names her as Vice Chair. Tina underscores the importance of succession planning and leveraging board member talents; for example, Jeri's experience with media and government work will help the Center.

Chairwoman Tina Snider and Associate Faculty Director Taylor Jaworski provide updates.

- Taylor Jaworski reflects on his background in economic history and his experience collaborating with faculty across campus.
- Taylor reflects on successes from the past year, including speakers Matthew Crawford, Jonathan Keeperman, Ken Marcus, and an upcoming conference featuring Colorado Governor Jared Polis. Ross Douthat to visit at the end of April.
- The Center hosted two sabbatical scholars: Matt Nagler and James Strasburg.
- Patrick Deneen is a leading political scientist studying "common good conservatism." JD Vance cites Patrick as an influence on his work.

Visiting Scholar Remarks: Patrick Deneen.

- Patrick reflects on his eight months at the Center, expressing appreciation for the opportunity and support.
- He describes the Center as "unusual" in having a strong budget, but underleveraged programming. He advocates for:
  - Better utilization of the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP) role.
  - Building a permanent student community that values open inquiry and intellectual diversity.
  - More central and visible space on campus.
  - Encourages board members to use their influence to secure departmental cross-listings and institutional support.
- A discussion around developing a minor and/or a certificate program to attract intelligent, motivated students ensues. With the current budget model, departments could be incentivized to participate in the minor. Students are interested in interdisciplinary studies and the certificate fulfills that.

Chancellor Schwartz joins the meeting and discusses university commitment & integration.

- Chancellor Justin Schwartz expresses strong support for the Center as part of CU Boulder's portfolio.
- He highlights the importance of student success through co-curricular engagement, flexibility in curriculum (particularly via certificates and minors), and the Center's role in promoting free speech and intellectual diversity.
- Taylor Jaworski discusses two proposals:
  - Creation of a PPE (Philosophy, Politics & Economics) program.
  - Launching a freshman seminar series (tentatively) titled "Dangerous Ideas."
- The board raises the need for formalized agreements between the university and the Center regarding space, course cross-listing, and continuity.
- The board discusses AI and free speech in the classroom. Patrick shares his experience with students who do not feel free to speak their mind in class. He makes a distinction between free speech standards and what it might look like to support and promote free speech in classrooms, especially for students from rural areas.
- Continuity in faculty at the Center is needed. Faculty should model disagreements.

Taylor Jaworski discusses the strategic vision & future programming of the Center.

- Taylor Jaworski emphasizes the Center's potential to become a national model for constructive inquiry in the Mountain West.
- Taylor Jaworski introduces Joseph Porter, the Associate Teaching Professor.
- Joseph Porter discusses curricular updates:
  - Requiring Benson undergraduate fellows to take a CWCV course.
  - Enhancing academic offerings

- Taylor previews next year:
  - Joseph Bottum to serve as VSCTP. He will teach a two-semester course on *The Rise and Fall of the Novel*. He will cross-list a course with Philosophy on mysticism in the spring semester.
  - Joseph Bottum has already extended invitations to potential guest speakers for next year, including Wilfred McClay, Robbie George, and Peter Thiel.

Assistant Director Alexandra Roberts presents development, budget, and administration.

- Alex Roberts gives a brief overview of Center finances.
- The board explores processes for filling new roles and aligning job titles/salaries. In the meantime, the Center needs to immediately close gaps discussed in the meeting. Taylor Jaworski's reputation and relationships on campus will help strengthen the Center's profile.
- The Center needs stronger recognition and support from A&S and the university.
- The board emphasizes the importance of student momentum and strong foundational years. The program will grow if the correct structure is in place.
- Kelly Brough proposes compiling a "low-hanging fruit" list of next steps to review at the next board meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.