



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

Board of Advisors Fall 2025 Agenda

October 10, 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, Kevin Reidy, Ted Trimpa

Absent: David Grohne, David Hoover, David Pyle, Jennifer Schubert-Akin, Tina Snider

Others in Attendance: Marcy Benson, Joseph Bottum, Steve Bosley, Phil DiStefano, George Hall, Taylor Jaworski, Cheryl Kisling, Daryl Maeda, Margot Neufeld, Joseph Porter, Alex Priou, Alexandra Roberts, Chancellor Justin Schwartz, AJ Shively, Jennifer Smith, Earl Wright, Todd Zywicki

10:30 am Co-Chairwoman Jeri Curry began the meeting with opening remarks

- Jeri Curry provided an overview of the history and mission of the Benson Center.
- The importance of donor intent, long-term sustainability, and the Center's role in supporting intellectual diversity on campus was emphasized.
- Jeri shared her experience as a first-generation college student and CU alum, and highlighted the need for a welcoming space for diverse viewpoints at CU Boulder.
- A copy of Bruce Benson's book was dedicated to the Benson Center library.

Chancellor Schwartz provided remarks

- Chancellor Schwartz thanked the Bensons for their commitment and support.
- CU Boulder ranked 5 in FIRE's free speech on campus. Individual scores could be higher, but overall CU is proud of the ranking. The Benson Center is a great example of CU's commitment to free speech and ideas.
- Chancellor Schwartz acknowledged the need for new space for the Benson Center. A long-term solution is being pursued, rather than a temporary location.
- Chancellor Schwartz expressed support for the strategic plan and affirmed that the Center plays a key role in helping students develop independent and critical thinking skills.

Interim Director Taylor Jaworski introduced visiting faculty

- George Hall, Brandeis University, is an Economic historian. He is a sabbatical scholar for fall 2025. He has given talks to the Economics Department, the Benson Center, and affiliate faculty groups. He will give a talk at UCCS in early December.
- Alex Priou, University of Austin, is a philosopher by training. He is a sabbatical scholar for academic year 2025-26. He's a Benson Center alum, having worked in the HERBST program before departing about a year and a half ago.
- Joseph (Jody) Bottum is the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP) from South Dakota. He is a prominent public intellectual of his generation. We've had a number of VSCTPs focused on politics and philosophy; Jody is considered more of an arts and humanities specialist.
- Jody Bottum shares his experiences so far at the Benson Center, citing the number of interesting speakers hosted by the Benson Center this fall.

Guests of the Benson Center provided remarks

- Todd Zywicki, Visiting Scholar of Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP) Fall 2023, emphasized the national importance of the VSCTP program, the need for permanent space, and the Center's role in supporting civic engagement at CU Boulder.
- Jennifer Smith, Sabbatical Scholar 2022-23, reflected on her fellowship year and highlighted the importance of relationship-building, mentoring, and interdisciplinary dialogue. The Center can bridge a small liberal arts education within a larger university setting.
- Paul Diduch, Benson Center Faculty Fellow, discussed the Center's contribution to civil discourse, great works programming, and its role in advancing liberal arts education at a research university.

Co-Chairwoman Jeri Curry provided a Board of Advisors Update

- The Board will have an executive session at the end of the Board of Advisors meetings going forward. This will be an opportunity for the board to provide feedback.
- The Board elected Jeri Curry vice chair. This position will be included in the bylaws.
- The Board and the administration are committed to starting a director search for a permanent director. Any Board member interested in serving on the search committee should contact chairwoman Tina Snider and/or Jeri.
- A MOU between the Benson Center and the University is being developed. The MOU will emphasize items that are important to the growth and longevity of the Benson Center.

- The presence of security at events is discussed. The Benson Center pays for security when required by the University. The importance of security versus the optics of ‘policing’ the content of an event is weighed.
- The relationship with Advancement is improving, mainly through consistent meetings with Pam Jones and the Benson Center.
- Space planning and the importance of aesthetics were discussed.

Interim Director Taylor Jaworski discussed the strategic plan

- Taylor Jaworski presented the strategic plan. As interim director, Taylor wants to create an institution that can stand on its own, regardless of leadership.
- The strategic plan consists of two pillars:
 - Western Foundations – Academic curriculum, faculty engagement, great works programming, and PPE development.
 - Civics Futures – statewide outreach, community engagement, and civics education initiatives.
- Curiosity should drive the Center’s work. Curiosity makes us Boulder – the mission of the Benson Center is the mission of the University.
- The Board provides feedback on strategic plan. The importance of the Benson Center supporting a major or minor was stressed. A discussion about the importance of metrics to measure progress followed.
- The Benson Center’s model of private philanthropic funding was touted as a strength of the program, as the Center is not at the whim of the legislature or the administration.

Assistant Director Alexandra Roberts provided financial updates

- The Benson Center received a large, generous gift last year from a board member. The same board member has committed to another large gift this year. It will be awarded as an operational gift, which will allow the Benson Center to support the initiatives and opportunities for the programming presented by Taylor.
- The Benson Center’s financial position remains strong. Given the Center’s goal to increase faculty to deliver teaching, the Benson Center is looking for the university’s commitment to cover the base salaries of faculty.

External Media Relations Manager AJ Shively provided an outreach and engagement update

- The Center advertised events in the Daily Camera, Facebook, and Instagram, which contributed to strong event attendance.

- Pre-event receptions were revived this fall to enhance student engagement and community development.
- An improved data-tracking system is being developed to understand attendance patterns more clearly.

Director of Undergraduate Studies Joseph Porter provides an update on the Benson Undergraduate Fellows Program (BUFs)

- The goal of the BUF program is to attract CU's best and brightest students and expose them to the Western tradition. Students come from all types of majors and years.
- There are fewer BUFs this year, but a 4-fold increase in undergrad programming compared to last year.
- New requirements this year include participating in reading groups, participating in a flourishing project, and enrolling in a Benson Center-approved course.
- Two goals for the BUFs going forward:
 - Introduce a second fellowship program, primarily for incoming Freshmen
 - Increase the academic opportunities for students (i.e. PPE and civics)
- Cross-listing of great works courses with the Philosophy department has been approved.
- Joseph Porter teaches a class that has 68 students and is teaching a similar class next semester. This allows us to expose more students to the Benson Center.

Undergraduates remark on their experience as BUFs

- Jamison Barcelona shared how the fellowship allowed him to focus on his academics and participate in advanced research and publications.
- Tia Egan described the strong intellectual community fostered by the Center and recommended emphasizing community and engagement when promoting the fellowship.

Interim Director Taylor Jaworski and Board Co-Chair Jeri Curry provide closing remarks

- Emphasized that students remain at the heart of the Benson Center's work and mission.
- Updates were shared on upcoming Center events and the VSCTP search.
- Board members acknowledged the momentum of the Benson Center and expressed strong support for Taylor's leadership.

Meeting Adjourned.