

Board of Advisors Spring 2026 Agenda

April 17, 2026

10:30 – 12:30 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 Hoover, David Pyle, Kevin Reidy, Tina Snider, Ted Trimpa

Absent: David Grohne and Jennifer Shubert-Akin

Others in attendance: Marcy Benson, Steve Bosley, Joseph Bottum, Phil DiStefano, Taylor Jaworski, Cheryl Kisling, Andrea Kowalchuk, Michelangelo Landgrave, Shannon Mosness, Margot Neufeld, Joseph Porter, Alex Priou, Alexandra Roberts, AJ Shively, Earl Wright

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

- Strong donor support illustrates the strength of the mission of the Benson Center.
- The goal now is to further integrate with the university – faculty, administration, students – by building on the work of Interim Director Taylor Jaworski. This year was largely about relationship building.
- Board members should spread interest and support for the Benson Center within their networks to help the Center build a national profile.
- Tina thanks Jeri and Cheryl with their help with the NEH grant, Kevin with the director's search, and Phil for being a steward as the board continues to learn.

Provost Ann Stevens provides remarks.

- Provost Stevens got to know Taylor Jaworski and the Benson Center this past year in her new role as Provost.
- The mission of the Benson Center is critical to the University of Colorado Boulder and universities around the country. The Benson Center challenges students to think critically and learn the origins of our democracy.
- Debates like Bolton and Rice give hope and excitement for what's possible when working together. It served as a good model for students to see folks disagree amicably.



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- Provost Stevens is impressed with the efforts to complete the NEH grant, especially the fundraising component and how Taylor connected with other departments and units on campus.
- Provost Stevens thanks Chancellor Emeritus Phil DiStefano for his leadership with the director's search. She emphasized the importance of a broad national search.
- Provost Stevens believes the salary for the Director's line should be paid by the College of A&S, with programmatic and discretionary funding coming from the Benson Center's endowments.

Interim Director Taylor Jaworski provides an overview of programs.

- Taylor thanks the staff at the Benson Center for their efforts around programming.
- Taylor introduces visiting faculty, including Sabbatical Scholar Alex Priou and Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, Joseph Bottum. Bottum will serve as VSCTP in academic year 2026-27.
- Over the past three years, the Benson Center has awarded:
 - \$250,000 in scholarships to CU students
 - \$150,000 in faculty grants
 - \$25,000 in graduate student funding
- Taylor reviews events over AY 2025-26, highlighting relationship building initiatives.
 - i.e., the Colorado Constitution event: co-hosted with UCCS, introduced by the Director of the Center for the American West, and presented at CMU in Grand Junction
 - i.e., two co-sponsored events with Conference on World Affairs
- Taylor announces the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) workshops at the end of May and beginning of June. Workshops are organized jointly with the Chase Center at Ohio State University and the Hamilton Center at the University of Florida.
- This year, the Benson Center raised \$1.25 million from a variety of sources (i.e. private individuals and institutions like IHS). This funding allows the Benson Center to support current programming, as well as try new initiatives.

Faculty Fellows Michelangelo Landgrave and Andrea Kowlachuk provide remarks.

- Michelangelo is from Political Science and works on PPE programming. He is a connection between the Benson Center and the College of A&S.
- Andrea is rostered in Herbst Program for Engineering, Ethics, and Society in the College of Engineering. She is involved with undergraduate student programming.



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- The Benson Center works faculty as well as students. The Center seriously pursues differences in opinion.
- The Faculty Fellows program grew this year. Andrea suggests inviting faculty to debate issues around literature and art. Michelangelo suggests recruiting through the PPE program.
- The importance of the Benson Center telling its story both on campus and beyond is discussed. Taylor visited other civic centers across the country both to learn from them, and to promote the Benson Center.
- Board members suggest focusing on welcoming, constructive debates.

Assistant Director Alexandra Roberts provides updates on the budget and fundraising.

- Endowment and Operational Funds - AY 2025-26
 - The principal market value of the endowment increased by \$2.8 million (roughly 9%)
 - Endowment remains strong and supports current programming (i.e. VSCTP support, public events, student scholarships, etc.)
 - The strategy is to spend endowment funds first whenever possible
 - Private gifts accounted for \$1,287,785 so far this year
 - Faculty were awarded a combined \$70,500 in grant funding, which will support new programs like the PPE conferences and programs on the American Founding
- Budget and Revenue – AY 2025-26
 - Salaries and benefits support director, VSCTP, teaching associate professor, two sabbatical scholars, two staff, 14 faculty fellows, and five student workers
 - Official functions include 12 public events, 20 student events, student reading groups, and nine PPE brown bag sessions
 - Travel expenses include guest travel expenses, as well as expenses related to community building (i.e. visiting other centers across the country)
 - Faculty fellow program increased from 8 to 14 fellows this year. In total, the Benson Center affiliates are teaching 41 courses, with 1,000 students enrolled (up 41% and 30% respectively compared to last year)
 - The Benson Center awarded nine faculty grants for a total of \$27,900
 - The Benson Center awarded four student grants for a total of \$8,000. This is separate from the scholarship funds
 - The Benson Center awarded 25 students scholarship, disbursing \$75,000
- Budget and Revenue – AY 2026-27



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- Budget does not include director's salary line
- Budget includes support for an associate faculty director's position (currently vacant)
- Budget supports two VSCTP positions and programmatic expenses
- Budget includes salary and benefits for a third staff position (currently vacant)

AJ Shively presents on outreach and engagement.

- The strategy this year was to limit the number of public events and focus more on student events. The Benson Center diversified the types of student events this year.
- The Benson Center is tracking how attendees learn about events. Posters, social media, and Canvas are effective.
- The Benson Center's social media continues to grow. Compared to other departments on campus, the Benson Center ranks 2nd only behind the official CU Boulder account. The Benson Center ranks 1st on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube compared to our civic institution peers.
- Board members encouraged to share Benson Center events and news on Linked In to grow the network.

Taylor Jaworski recognizes efforts of support.

- Joseph Porter for BUF programming and NEH grant writing.
- Jeri Curry for her technical contributions to the grant and reviewing it.
- Bruce and Marcy Benson for their leadership and vision with fundraising for the grant.
- Tina and David Pyle for their ongoing financial support for the Benson Center.
- Jennifer Schubert-Akin for co-sponsoring the Bolton/Rice debate.
- Phil DiStefano for providing advice and guidance.
- Cheryl Kisling is acknowledged for her terrific efforts in fundraising and support.
- Shannon Mosness is introduced as the new Advancement contact.

Taylor Jaworski presents future plans for next year.

- Joseph Bottum will return as VSCTP next year. Jeremy Bailey will join him.
- Sabbatical Scholars are Alex Priou, Elizabeth Sperber, and Daniel Wolt (spring 2027).
- Events next year will include Constitution Day (a joint effort with UCCS, featuring Paul Carrese), election-related event(s) in October, and a lecture by Kyle Harper.

Chancellor Emeritus Phil DiStefano provides an update on the director's search.



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- WittKeiffer Search Firm hired to manage the director's search.
- The Dean of Arts & Sciences appointed Phil as the chair of the search committee, as well as 5 other faculty members to serve as members. The faculty members have had past interactions and familiarity with the Benson Center.

Joseph Porter provides updates on the Undergraduate Fellows Program.

- The Benson Undergraduate Fellows (BUF) program has students from across the university, which helps tell the story of the Benson Center.
- A highlight was select BUFs went to Knoxville, TN and met former VP Mike Pence.
- Next year, the BUF program will consist of two tracks.
- The Benson Center continues to identify partnerships with other departments to integrate curricular programming and cross-listing courses to increase enrollment.
- Benson Center fellows are now affiliates of the President's Leadership Center.

A BUF provides comments on the impact of the program on their scholastic career.

- The Benson Center's tight-knit community of students is highlighted.
- The Center's programming so influenced the student's experience, they added Philosophy to their major.

Meeting Adjourned.