



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes September 1, 2026

Present: Taylor Jaworski, Jeremy Bailey, Joseph Bottum, Iskra Fileva, Ben Hale, Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, Michelangelo Landgrave, Thomas Pegelow Kaplan

Other Affiliates Present: Joseph Porter, Alexandra Roberts, AJ Shively

Absent: Scott Savage

Chair Jaworski called the meeting to order at 9:35 am.

Personnel and Program Updates - Taylor Jaworski

Chair Jaworski reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee members. He asked members to consider volunteering to review Benson Undergraduate Fellows applications, sharing event information, and supporting Center programming.

The Center welcomed two Visiting Scholars in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP):

- Jeremy Bailey, who will teach two courses in Spring 2027
- Joseph Bottum, who is teaching one course in Fall 2026 (currently 25 students enrolled)

Joseph Porter, Associate Teaching Professor, is teaching two Philosophy courses:

- PHIL 1010: Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ancient – 72 students
- PHIL 1800: Modern Social and Political Thought – 20 students (at capacity)

Porter is also leading CWCV 2025, the optional course associated with the BUF reading group, with three students currently enrolled.

Benson Undergraduate Fellows Program Updates – Joseph Porter

48 students have been accepted into the Benson Center's undergraduate fellows program. The program now has two tracks:

- Benson Undergraduate Fellows (BUF): Primarily upperclassmen who receive \$3,200 in tuition remission, these students are required to participate in the reading group in addition to other program requirements
- Freytag Fellows (FF): Primarily underclassmen who receive \$1,600 in tuition remission and have fewer program requirements.



Executive Committee members were encouraged to promote the program to their students when applications open, particularly during the spring recruitment period. It was noted that direct recruitment by Benson Center affiliates has been a vital source of strong applicants.

Fall Events – Taylor Jaworski

Chair Jaworski reviewed upcoming programming. In addition to events specifically for student fellows, the Center will offer public events in both lunchtime and evening formats.

Upcoming events include:

- September 17: Constitution Day, co-sponsored with UCCS
- September 24: Justin Blessinger on the ancient Greek *kleroterion*
- October 15: Hollis Robbins on AI and the university
- November 12: Frost Poetry panel with Marissa Grunes
- November 16 – 17: Poetry programming with A.E. Stallings and Dana Gioia, including class visits, a panel on philosophy and poetry, and an evening reading at Trident Bookstore
- February 11: Historian and classicist Kyle Harper on biodiversity and environmental and climatic change over the past 2,000 – 3,000 years

Executive Committee members were encouraged to help promote events within their departments, identify potential campus co-sponsors, and share programming with students and colleagues.

\$3 Million NEH Grant - Taylor Jaworski and Joseph Porter

Taylor Jaworski and Joseph Porter announced that the Benson Center has received a \$3 million grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The award will be matched by at least \$3 million in existing or pledged philanthropic support, creating a \$6 million endowment for *Advancing Humanities Education through a Western Tradition Program*.

The Benson Center was one of five awardees among 81 applicants.

The 20-year initiative will support the development of a comprehensive curricular and co-curricular Western tradition program. Plans include a multidisciplinary major and minor with multiple departmental tracks and participation from humanities and humanities-adjacent fields, including PPE.



Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

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The program is intended to support participating faculty within their existing academic departments while establishing a shared interdisciplinary curriculum. Models such as International Affairs and Public Health were discussed as potential organizational structures.

The Executive Committee may assume an expanded role as the program develops, including:

- Reviewing syllabi and curricular proposals
- Identifying faculty interested in teaching in the program
- Serving as liaisons to home departments

A broader goal is to expand the range of academic departments participating in Benson Center programming and more fully represent disciplines across the university.

The Center anticipates hiring additional staff to administer the grant and related funds following the appointment of a permanent director.

Fundraising and Budget Updates – Alexandra Roberts

Alexandra provided an update on fundraising and the Center's budget and introduced Shannon Mosness as the Center's A&S Advancement liaison.

Since September 2025, the Benson Center has raised approximately \$1.7 million. Endowment balances and distributions remain strong. The Center's current spending strategy prioritizes available endowment distributions before drawing down operating funds.

The committee discussed opportunities to grow targeted endowments to support expanded programming in specific areas, including graduate student fellowships.