



Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
Executive Committee Meeting
April 8, 2021, 2:30-4 p.m., held remotely

Present: Daniel Jacobson (Chair), Shilo Brooks, Robert Pasnau, Benjamin Hale, Ken Bickers, Michael Huemer, Patty Limerick, Carole Newlands, Scott Savage

Absent: None **Staff present:** Lily Welch, Betty Kilsdonk

Chair Jacobson called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

Chair opening comments: Event logistics have been challenging due to pandemic limitations but there has also been opportunity to broaden outreach to Colorado and to other universities. Some events have had excellent attendance and generally events have been exciting and diverse in every sense of the word, bringing speakers to CU who would not otherwise be represented.

The Center's hitherto strategy of buying good will from Humanities departments through hiring junior scholars and awarding faculty grants has not been as successful. What little vetting the Center has done up to now has been related to structuring the advertisement to prioritize adherence to an annual theme. The Center has not requested input on how the visiting scholars contribute to furthering the Center's dual mission of the traditional study of Western Civilization and fostering intellectual diversity.

Despite great autonomy in the hiring of junior scholars in residence for next year, multiple departments have been unwilling to work with the Center. The strategy has not even bought toleration, let alone good will, in a year when the Center came under substantial, repeated attacks over the VSCTP program. Related issues include the Center's inability to get courses taught by visiting scholars listed in A&S departments, and the current BFA/ASC motion regarding changes to the visiting hiring process which would bar external members from being present at the final vote.

The Chair put forth an updated strategy for discussion.

1. **Downplay the annual theme aspect in programming.** Programming, especially VSCTP programming, should prioritize topical issues and express views not otherwise expressed at CU.
2. **Continue to cultivate relationships with individuals, CU departments and organizations outside of CU which want to be more closely associated with the Benson Center.** Tolerate those entities which do not wish to be associated, just as they would be expected to tolerate the Benson Center. The Benson Center does not have a say in the hiring of their faculty and other departments should not have a say in Benson Center hires.
3. **Junior Scholars in Residence.** For these scholars, the Center would take a stronger role in hiring, with a focus on hires who are committed to furthering one or both aspects of the Center's mission.

Discussion and feedback: The Committee discussed the possibility of the Center moving out of the College; practical impact of the BFA motion on the hiring process and on the external hiring committee members; benefit of getting feedback from a variety of stakeholders and of building consensus; importance of transparency in hiring process. Clarifying the way hiring committee members are appointed and feasibility of BFA involvement. Value of visiting scholars to the Humanities departments and desire for the Center to serve as a vibrant Humanities center with broad agenda. Expansion of faculty seminar participants beyond Center fellows. More outreach by Executive Committee members to Humanities departments.

Program updates: Associate Faculty Director Brooks reported on success of The Canceled webinar series; upcoming Summer Institute; forthcoming podcast launch; lecture co-sponsorship with College of

Engineering; expanding undergraduate engagement.

Upcoming programming: Chair Jacobson announced hire of visiting conservative scholar Kahan, who will organize a capitalism and ethics lecture series; new public health and individual liberty series; programs across the political spectrum; media bias. Heterodoxy workshops planned for this summer have been tabled. First sabbatical scholar, David McPherson, hired.

Open discussion: Importance of fostering collaboration with other departments and cross-listing to drive course enrollments for Center classes; support from deans to promote enrollment. Limited pool of qualified visiting conservative scholar applicants and whether lowering the teaching requirement would help.

Chair Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 3:59 PM.