



Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Board of Advisors Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2019

Benson Earth Sciences Building, Room 380

3:30PM-5:00PM

In attendance: Mark Kennedy, Debbie Kennedy, Bruce Benson, Marcy Benson, Phil DiStefano, Russ Moore, Ben Hale, Jennifer Schubert-Akin, Kate Brown, Brian Domitrovic, Tina Snider, Cheryl Kisling, Derek Bellin, Deb Coffin, David Carpenter, Colleen Sheehan, Dan Jacobson Betty Kilsdonk, Lily Welch and Margaret Bryant

Bruce Benson:

- Welcome and introductions; thanks Chancellor DiStefano for the renaming of the Center.
- In touch with Bob Pasnau while he is in Paris. Bruce feels everything is going well and that everyone is doing a wonderful job.

Ben Hale:

- Center updates:
 - Scholars:
 - Visiting Scholars Colleen Sheehan and John Doody, visiting from Villanova
 - Visiting Scholar William Allen visiting from Michigan State
 - Three junior-level visiting scholars: Renaud-Philippe Garner, Scott Hill and David Yee
 - Fellows:
 - All 11 visiting scholars, faculty fellows and graduate fellows join faculty affiliates and staff for a biweekly seminar where they workshop their research and share feedback.
- There are 29 undergraduate fellows and three interns.
- Examples of Benson Center courses include:
 - Liberalism and its critics
 - Philosophy and race
 - War and morality

- Examples of upcoming speakers include:
 - John Eastman
 - Robert Zimmer

- Ongoing initiatives:
 - Undergraduate and faculty grant programs
 - Certificate in Western Civilization
 - Creating a politics, philosophy, and economics curriculum that could be managed in the Center by pooling existing faculty resources.
 - A team-teaching initiative which welcomes two professors with opposing views to co-teach a course.

Bruce Benson:

- Introduces Dan Jacobson, who comes from a leading philosophy department at the University of Michigan.

Dan Jacobson:

- Founded and directs the Freedom and Flourishing Project with the primary goal to produce diversity of thought on campus. His work is based in the ethical theory of John Stewart Mill.
 - Mill wrote a lot about the state of English universities at the time.
 - He criticized that they were so orthodox they wouldn't be open to new ideas.
 - Dan fears that is also the case with US universities due to a narrow view of diversity
- Dan admires the University of Colorado for having a broad perception of diversity that includes diversity of thought.
- Dan sees the Benson Center as a necessary step forward in fostering intellectual diversity.
- Off campus there is a great opportunity to be a leader in the movement towards unapologetic study of the greatest achievements of western civilization.
- Dan's Center receives funding for various programs including a post-doc program and event series covering topics of current political interest.
- Dan Jacobson leaves the room and Bruce Benson leads a discussion about the search process and bylaws. Follow up: The Board asked for minor revisions to the Center's bylaws, specifying how the Advisory Board might be more closely aligned to the hiring process.

Chancellor Phil DiStefano:

- Chancellor DiStefano shares that Provost Moore is working on Academic Futures and the interdisciplinary work for undergraduates.

Provost Moore:

- Feels there's a particular appetite amongst faculty and students to engage in this type of interdisciplinary learning.

Brian Domitrovic:

- Observations about the applicant pool.

Chancellor Phil DiStefano:

- Shares we are looking for an endowed chair whose scholarly work is top level.
- Wants to demonstrate to the faculty and students that they can become more engaged than they have been in the past. Everyone wants more engagement on campus.
- Does not want the Center isolated on campus. If the Center is isolated, it will not get the interaction with faculty and students that we desire.

Provost Moore:

- Provost Moore is passionate about academic freedom and supports faculty in the practice of academic freedom in the classroom.

Tina Snider:

- Feels the Board came to the party late in terms of meeting the candidates.

Jennifer Schubert-Akin:

- Asks for the hiring timeline.

We are joined by President and First Lady Kennedy.

Bruce Benson:

- Introduces President Kennedy.

President Kennedy:

- The President is looking forward to learning more about the Benson Center.
- He had the opportunity to start fundraising and create a lecture series at St. John's University as a result of a four-million-dollar gift to the McCarthy Center.

There is a strong sentiment that CU students need an education that allows them to hear in stereo; i.e., hearing from both sides, not just one.

Phil DiStefano Update on Legacy Endowment:

- This year is the 20th anniversary of the Benson Earth Sciences Building.
- Bruce and Marcy have long supported the Center and we are so grateful for their contributions.
- Across campus, \$18.2 million has been given in honor of the Bensons.
- Chancellor DiStefano thanks Bruce for his leadership and vision.

David Carpenter shares fundraising updates

Betty Kilsdonk shares outreach updates:

- Current outreach priorities include:
 - Broaden Boulder audience
 - Increase student involvement

- Expand our reach across Colorado and across the nation.
- The Center currently has two social media communication interns and one project management intern. The Benson Center is now on LinkedIn. The Center also live tweets and streams events.
 - Seven new YouTube videos in the first quarter/29,800 new views
 - Two years ago, the Center's Facebook page had 25,000 followers. Today, there are 78,000 followers.
 - Two years ago, the Center had tweeted 58 times and had an average of 1200 impressions (how many times content is displayed). Last year, the Center tweeted 79 times and had an average of 1900 impressions per month. This year, the Center has 10,800 impressions on average per month.
- Students are our most important audiences. Our student fellows engage in the Center's network.
- The Center sends a monthly newsletter providing additional outreach to 1500 individuals and bi-weekly directed emails to about 65 selected stakeholders .
- The Center has redesigned event posters and streamlined website.
- Betty is taking on a new role as the Associate Director. She is responsible for strategic partnerships and community relations.

Kate Brown Provides Branding Update:

- Kate thanks the group for the opportunity to lead the branding update.
- Alex Holmgren, Ben, Betty, and Lily met to discuss branding for the Center.
- The branding research was focused on the following audiences: students, faculty, donors, larger academic community.
- The group asked: How do we consistently message/engage with these groups?
- Benson is a brand. We have yet to construct the brand house, which is bigger than the brand.
- The brand house starts with the core values and aspirations, goes to the mission. We identify audiences and needs. From there the roof is comprised of consistent messages/images.
- When we speak through our documents and platforms, we need to use consistent messaging so our messaging does not become diluted.
- We need to keep the mission intact.
- Kate recommends that we put time, energy, and resources, to work with a consultant (outside of the academic community) and facilitate conversation with stakeholders.
- Deb Coffin suggests the Advancement Marketing and Communications team as a resource for the Center to consult.
- Kate would like to send a survey out to the Board in order to get feedback.
- Ben encourages Board members to contact him with feedback as well

Student Intern Presentations from Noah, Delaney, and Zoe:

- Students speak to developing partnerships with other areas of campus such as the radio station and the Herd (undergraduate student alumni program).
- Bruce asks the students what platforms they personally use. The students share that Twitter and Snapchat are the most popular platforms.
- The group discussed hosting discussion nights for undergraduates.
- Kate Brown poses the question: If I had BLANK, it would be easier to reach the students.
- The students share their perspective:
 - Noah feels we are well resourced, but it takes time.
 - Delaney did not know about the events prior to joining as a student worker.
- The meeting concludes and Benson welcomes to the group to attend the reception.