



Benson Center for the Study
of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2022

Present: Daniel Jacobson, Taylor Jaworski, Alan Kahan, Matthew Burgess, Robert Pasnau, Patricia Limerick

Absent: Scott Savage, Michael Huemer, Benjamin Slater Hale

Staff Present: Alexandra Roberts

Chair Jacobson called the meeting to order at 12:52 p.m.

Chair opening comments: Betty Kilsdonk has left the Center. We are working with HR to hire her replacement. Dean Krutz is the new A&S Dean. Theresa Hernández is no longer the Center's dean. A&S has not yet announced who will fill that role. The Center has two visiting researchers. Jennifer Smith is an Associate Professor of English from Pepperdine University. Her work includes studying the work of medieval bishop Reginald Pecock. She will serve as visiting researcher for AY 2022-23. Kathryn Davis is an Associate Professor of English from the University of Dallas. Her work includes studying the text of Jane Austen. She will serve as a visiting researcher for Spring 2023 and Fall 2023.

Committee member updates: Carole Newlands is on sabbatical for AY 2022-23. We will replace her as a committee member next AY. Nominations for her replacement should be sent to Alex. Matt Burgess is named as a CTP search committee member.

VSCTP update: Lisa Nelson recently stepped down from pursuing the VSCTP position for AY 2023-24 due to a tuition issue for a family member at her home institution. The CTP search committee will need to start the process to hire a VSCTP replacement. All CTP search committee members will have access to the application materials. The Center will host two finalists to give public presentations. Because the executive committee already voted to have Alan stay for the fall and have the position vacant in the spring, the Center will follow that timeline and have the VSCTP start Fall 2023.

Board of Advisors update: Kevin Reidy was named as a new BOA member. He is a Denver businessman and philanthropist. There is one more opening for a BOA member. Dan will meet with Ted Trimpa tomorrow to discuss the person Ted may nominate.

Program Review: Taylor Jaworski updated the committee on the student-focused events he is hosting. Low attendance with undergraduate students is concerning; the committee had a discussion about ways to increase student engagement, such as reaching out to the Veteran student group, Presidents Leadership Class, etc. A discussion was had about how the Center should focus on event series that highlights the mission of the Center and can run through an academic year or beyond. Ideas for such series were discussed, such as "Profiles in Courage," "The Triumph of Losing," or "Difficult Conversations" like the series University of Denver is currently running.

Alexandra Roberts presented on the Center's goal this year to focus on fewer events with a bigger impact. An example of this is the Lionel Shriver event, which included around 50 people in-person, 43 online, and already has over 300 views on YouTube in two weeks. The Center will host two talks in the Fall semester and the two VSCTP finalists' presentations. The Benson Center remains on five social media platforms: Facebook (generated a total reach of 4,267 impressions during 2021-22 AY), YouTube (attracted 196,104 new views of all videos, 700 new subscribers, and 5,282,902 impressions), Twitter (generated 27,063 impressions on 124 tweets), Instagram, and LinkedIn. The Benson Center's digital subscriber list has 2,174 members.

Alexandra presented fundraising updates, including total endowment figures and number of donors. The remark was made that the Center did not have any Harper PhD fellows for AY 2021-22. Further discussions about how to increase student engagement was had, including reaching out to potentially interested students directly.

Currently, 348 students are enrolled in Benson Center faculty and faculty fellows 10 courses for Fall 2022.

Other Business and Discussion: The committee discussed the desire to have more students engaged with the Center's events and courses. The suggestion to have students apply to be undergraduate fellows in exchange for a stipend was made and discussed. Students would be asked to attend Center events and enroll in Center courses. A brief discussion of the pros and cons of the Center pursuing the option of becoming a Department was had; pros included the fact that the Center could house tenured faculty. Cons included the idea that Centers are not bound by traditional Department rules, such as merit increases. The committee acknowledged that becoming a department is not a top priority.

Chair Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.