



# Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

## **Board of Advisors Meeting Minutes**

October 6, 2021

3:30-4:30 PM

Board members in attendance: Bruce Benson, Brian Domitrovic, David Pyle, Jennifer Schubert-Akin, Tina Snider, Ted Trimpa

Absent: David Grohne, David Hoover

Others in attendance: Phil DiStefano, Jim White, Marcy Benson, Daniel Jacobson, Cheryl Kisling, David Carpenter, Alan Kahan, David McPherson, Theresa Hernández, Shilo Brooks, Lily Welch, Betty Kilsdonk

3:32 PM Chair Bruce Benson called the meeting to order

- Welcome by Chancellor DiStefano
  - Appreciates the board's continued guidance and support
  - Welcomes professors Kahan and McPherson to campus
  - Has confidence in the Center and in Director Jacobson's leadership, commending his efforts to improve communication and transparency
  - Supports the bylaws changes being discussed today
- Director Jacobson reviewed proposed changes to the bylaws
  - The revised mission statement is more concise and better connects the two aspects of the Center's purpose: to promote the study of Western civilization and to enhance diversity of perspective
  - Visiting Scholar Search Committee revisions eliminate inconsistencies with outdated procedures and documents, align hiring practices with new rules passed by the faculty assembly, and formalize publicly posted procedures
  - A staffing update acknowledges the ongoing need for an associate faculty director
  - Proposed changes consolidate and supersede several earlier, outdated documents
- Discussion
  - The director and advisors will develop a procedure for providing candidate input
  - Procedures align with A&S practice to seek consultation from nonvoting stakeholders, which is taken seriously
  - External members are invited to participate in the process from the outset
  - Center was created with the idea of integrating it within CU, which requires time and effort to build relationships across campus
  - When posted procedures are consistent with bylaws, transparency is enhanced, and actions are defensible
- Jacobson and Brooks provided activities updates
  - Incorporating lessons learned during the pandemic, a robust calendar of live and

- livestreamed events is broadening the audience demographic
  - Visiting Scholar organized an outstanding “Capitalism and Ethics” lecture series
  - New (to CU) Heterodox Moral and Political Philosophy workshop this spring
  - Year-long Great Ideas survey course under development
  - *The Free Mind* podcast launched last month and has had 1000 listens to date
  - Lecture series partnership with Engineering Leadership Program
  - Both were invited to join the Academic Freedom Alliance
  - Brooks spoke at a recent Board of Regents retreat
- Jacobson introduced Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy Alan Kahan, a political theorist, and Visiting Sabbatical Scholar David McPherson, a philosopher
  - Kahan spoke to the “Capitalism and Ethics” lecture series and courses he is teaching at CU: “History of Liberalism” and “Mind vs. Money”
  - McPherson discussed his current book project, *Spiritual Alienation and the Quest for God*. McPherson, a past participant in Jacobson’s heterodoxy workshop at the University of Michigan, attested to its value
  - Each expressed gratitude to the Center for the opportunity afforded to them
- David Carpenter updated the board on fundraising efforts
  - Center continues to garner widespread support from alumni and community
  - Since the spring meeting, 31 gifts totaling \$329K+, and pledge payments of \$500K+ have been received
  - CU employs multiple levels of oversight to ensure donor intent is honored
- Lily Welch reviewed the Center’s current budget and operating expenses
  - Spending reflects pandemic-related reductions (such as in travel) and organizational growth
- Betty Kilsdonk reported on social media and news analytics, and outreach efforts
  - Across all social media platforms, the Center has earned a steady increase in activity and viewership, including almost 1M views on YouTube
  - A media focus on controversial stories related to the 2020 election dominated the Center’s news presence over the past year
  - Stories that accurately convey the Center’s mission and purpose, range of programs and positive impact are a focus of proactive effort
- Recent CU graduate Dylan Yachyshen, a Center undergraduate fellow and scholarship recipient, spoke to the program’s importance for his CU experience and lasting positive effect on his career and personal growth

4:35 PM Chair Benson adjourned the meeting