



BENSON CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



Benson Center for the Study
of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

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ABOUT THE CENTER

In summer 2019, the Center for Western Civilization, Thought & Policy, long championed by outgoing CU president Bruce Benson, changed its name in honor of his support. The renamed Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization promotes critical reflection on the distinctive traditions and political perspectives that characterize Western civilization. It encourages residents of Colorado and the United States to more fully understand and appreciate their past, their future and a free, creative American society within an international environment.

Integral to this mission is the Center's commitment to fostering research, debate and dialogue about the fundamental ideals of our time. Our efforts are grounded in academic research that explores the context of Western civilization. The Center focuses on the values that grow out of historical Western traditions and traces their influence on the world — in particular, to study their role in the foundations and ongoing institutions of the United States.

In addition to this, the Center provides a forum for free and open discourse, study and research. It seeks to promote a lively and balanced conversation, encompassing both conservative and liberal ideals, and to maintain the full diversity of political, economic and philosophical perspectives on the CU Boulder campus. By stressing intellectual rigor and the highest academic standards, the Center offers a venue for students, scholars and the public to fully understand our nation's political and cultural traditions. By focusing on the Western values of individual liberty and independence, both political and economic, the Center provides members of the CU community — and inhabitants of our state more generally — a place to understand the ideals that shape our understanding of an important aspect of American cultural heritage.

Thanks in large part to the Bruce D. Benson Legacy Endowment Fund, the Center continues to advance its mission through a new endowed directorship. The most enduring part of President Benson's legacy, however, may be in fostering the intellectual diversity essential for higher education's role in this country. As President Benson wrote in his June 2019 farewell message, this program is “the centerpiece of our efforts to teach students how to think, not what to think, and to ensure that CU is a place where debate and discussion on all sides of an issue are alive and well.”

“With the hiring of an endowed director, the Benson Center is poised to lead the University of Colorado Boulder in its ongoing commitment to freedom of expression and viewpoint diversity. The Center has moved to the forefront of developing and exploring the classical liberal tradition, which exposes students and the larger community to the full range of discourse that takes place in today's world. At a time when it has never been more vital, the Center thereby affirms the university's promise to teach students *how to think, not what to think.*”

– University of Colorado President Emeritus Bruce D. Benson

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

To say that my past year as interim director of the Benson Center has been filled with excitement and novelty is to understate the obvious. It's been all at once stimulating, engaging and surprising — stimulating thanks to the local and international networks that we've been building; engaging thanks to the contributions of our many extraordinary visitors and guests; and surprising because earlier in the year, it was virtually impossible to imagine that we'd shift almost all of our activities online thanks to a global pandemic.

So it goes.

As with most university events, many Benson Center activities have been affected by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the various shifts in campus life, however, we've had an extraordinary year.

Most notably, the Center was extremely fortunate this year to be the beneficiary of the newly created Bruce D. Benson Legacy Endowment Fund. This fund made it possible for us to conduct a national search for a new director and, after visits from numerous high-profile candidates, to hire Professor Daniel Jacobson. In August 2020, he left his current post as a professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan to helm our program. In addition to serving as the Benson Center director, Jacobson is the newly appointed Bruce D. Benson Endowed Professor of Philosophy.

Over the past year we brought to the CU Boulder campus a diverse group of visiting scholars and guest lecturers who represent a wide spectrum of views about the cultural and political questions of today's complex world. This year's Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, Professor Colleen Sheehan, came to us from Villanova University, where she was a professor of political science and director of the Ryan Center for Free Institutions and the Public Good. She was joined at the Benson Center by Senior Scholar in Residence William B. Allen, dean emeritus at James Madison College and professor emeritus of political philosophy at Michigan State University; and by Senior Scholar in Residence John Doody, holder of the Robert M. Birmingham Chair in Humanities at Villanova University, where he serves as a professor of philosophy.

In addition to their teaching and outreach commitments, professors Sheehan and Allen organized a prestigious 2019–20 Conservative Thought and Policy guest lecture series consisting of nine lectures, through which they engaged prominent academics including Diane Schaub, Stephen Cambone, Robert Zimmer and Danielle Allen, to assess the present state and future prospects of an American national character. The project reflected a response to the repeated directions provided by George Washington at the founding of the United States that “we have a national character to establish.”

In addition to the Conservative Thought and Policy guest lecture series, the Western Civ Dialogue Series featured 10 diverse speakers including Jonathan Haidt, Ross Douthat and Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

For the 2020–21 academic year, the Center will welcome incoming Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy law professor John C. Eastman, as well as Senior Scholar in Residence political scientist Elizabeth C'de Baca Eastman. A second Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, journalist Robert W. Merry, will defer to the following academic year due to concerns over COVID-19.

Among myriad undesirable consequences of the pandemic, not least has been the prevalence of acrimonious speech, political infighting and xenophobia in our national conversation. The Center's work of fostering the intellectual diversity vital to the work of higher education is more critical than ever if we are to successfully address the unprecedented challenges that face our nation and the world. The generous contributions of our donors remain pivotal to this work.

Thank you for all you do to support the Benson Center and the University of Colorado Boulder.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Slater Hale
Associate Professor, Philosophy and Environmental Studies
Interim Director, Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization



2019-20

CENTER

FELLOWS

“Ongoing contact with scholars who hold diverse perspectives was beneficial... [and] exposed me to new ideas relevant to my own work.”

– *Benson Center Scholar in Residence*

Each year, the Center hosts visiting faculty, scholars in residence, CU faculty fellows and CU graduate student fellows. These scholars contribute to the Center’s mission by working in an area connected to the Center’s annual theme and contributing to an ongoing faculty seminar. This year’s theme, *American Identities*, explored the essence and commonalities, if any, of the Americas and of Americans. Additionally, an undergraduate fellows program with 28 members supported students who desire to learn more about the moral, economic and political questions of our time. All Benson Center faculty and fellows demonstrate an enthusiasm for fostering intellectual diversity and dialogue, both on campus and in the broader community. By leading and participating in seminars and events, among other important work, the faculty and fellows are an essential part of advancing the mission and outreach of the Center.



2019–20 Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy

Colleen A. Sheehan was the 2019–20 Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy.

Sheehan is professor of politics and director of the Matthew J. Ryan Center for the Study of Free Institutions and the Public Good at Villanova University. She has served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, on the Pennsylvania State Board of Education and on the Pennsylvania Governor’s Advisory Commission on Academic Standards.

Sheehan has been an Earhart Fellow, Bradley Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, NEH Grant recipient and Martin Manley Professor of the Year. She was the Mary and Kennedy Smith Visiting Professor in the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University and served as the inaugural Garwood Teaching Fellow in American Statesmanship in the Madison Program at Princeton.

Sheehan is author of *The Mind of James Madison: The Legacy of Classical Republicanism* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), *James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), *Friends of the Constitution: Writings of the “Other” Federalists, 1787-88* (with Gary L. McDowell, Liberty Fund Press, 1998) and *The Cambridge Companion to The Federalist Papers* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). She has published numerous articles and chapters, including in journals such as *The American Political Science Review*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Review of Politics* and *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal*.

In fall 2019, Professor Sheehan taught “The Western Tradition” to 31 students and “Lincoln/Douglas Debates” to 26 students. In spring 2020, Professor Sheehan taught “American Political Thought” to 20 students and team-taught with her husband, Benson Center Senior Scholar in Residence Professor John A. Doody, “Foundations of Western Civilization: The Good Life” to 19 students.



This was one of the most stimulating experiences I have ever had in the classroom. ... I can honestly say that, having taught at a few universities, including Villanova, Princeton and Yale, that the students I have had the pleasure to teach at CU Boulder have been some of the best I have ever taught — and some of the best people, as well.

– Colleen A. Sheehan

Together with Benson Center Senior Scholar in Residence Professor William B. Allen, Sheehan helped fund and organize the Benson Center series on the American National Character (ANC). The series was part of a multi-year ANC project begun by Sheehan and Allen in 2014, spurred by concern for the growing divisiveness and ideological polarization in America. The ANC project reflects a response to the repeated directions provided by George Washington at the founding of the United States that “we have a national character to establish.”

Sheehan was impressed with how “this university and community meld together. Together they are part of the civic and intellectual landscape of this unique place called Boulder.” She particularly enjoyed the active group of auditors she taught in class and came to know over her year there. “Such bright, interesting and also welcoming people,” she said. “I not only had more good students in my class because of the auditors; I also now have new and good friends.”

Sheehan’s current projects include *The World of Emma Woodhouse* (an interpretation of Jane Austen’s *Emma*) and “Madison’s America.” Beginning in 2020, she will serve as director of graduate studies in the School for Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University, working with renowned scholars and civic leaders to renew civic discourse and friendship in America.

The visiting scholar position goes to highly visible scholars who are deeply engaged in either the analytical scholarship or practice of conservative thinking and policymaking or both. The search committee that identifies finalists includes members of the faculty and community.

2019–20 Senior Scholars in Residence

William B. Allen and **John A. Doody** were the 2019–20 Senior Scholars in Residence.

Professor Allen, one of two 2018–19 Visiting Scholars in Conservative Thought and Policy, returned as a Senior Scholar in Residence for the 2019–20 academic year. Professor Allen is a professor emeritus of political philosophy at Michigan State University (MSU) and dean emeritus at MSU's James Madison College. Professor Doody holds the Robert M. Birmingham Chair in Humanities at Villanova University, where he serves as professor of philosophy. He is the director and founder of the Villanova Center for Liberal Education.

Allen, a Fulbright senior fellow, has served in many capacities, including as director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, professor of government at Harvey Mudd College, chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a member of the National Council on the Humanities.

Allen's research interests include the "national character," an idea propounded by George Washington. With Professor Sheehan, Allen organized a series of colloquia and the 2019–20 Benson Center Conservative Thought and Policy Lecture Series, through which they engaged prominent academics to assess the present state and future prospects of an American national character. Allen is working on a forthcoming publication with contributions from lecture series participants.

"Nothing has ever been so compelling to me as the evidence of the past two years that the altogether congenial call to CU Boulder was more than a career capstone. It was, indeed, a ministry in the truest sense of the word," observed Allen.

"It is not that I was an evangelist. Rather, so many lay claim to a healing or encouraging touch that I could not avoid to conclude that I lay in the path they traveled by some grand design. As a consequence, never have I known more rewarding relationships with students, colleagues and just plain folk — and I have known many over three quarters of a century — than I have known and come to love in Boulder. The most capable students, the most doting community friends and the most endearing staff colleagues alike conspired to confirm in me the kind of satisfaction that ordinarily ought to put a fellow on guard against thinking himself something special. From a purely academic perspective I could urge the Benson Center to be on guard against taking its mission for granted and assuming that all were well. But from a human perspective, I must celebrate it for achieving a high degree of civil and invigorating discourse."



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– William B. Allen

Professor Doody has served in multiple leadership positions during his career at Villanova University, including interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, acting chair of the Department of Humanities and Augustinian Traditions, chair of the Department of Philosophy and director of the Augustine and Culture Seminar Program. Doody's areas of expertise include Contemporary Social and Political Philosophy, Augustine of Hippo, Jürgen Habermas and Critical Theory, Alasdair MacIntyre and Philosophy of Sport.

The highlight of Doody's year was the students, whom he considers the equal of "the very best students I have been fortunate to teach at the University of Notre Dame, Villanova University and Haverford College." He added, "The Benson Center is succeeding admirably in its mission to attract and mentor the very best students CU has to offer. The intellectual diversity I experienced in the classes organized by the Center is the hallmark of everything a university should be doing to promote liberal education at its finest."

"My year at the Benson Center was at once terrific and yet unfulfilled," reflected Doody. "Terrific because of the colleagues I met at the Center and the students whom I had the pleasure to teach in both the fall and spring semester. Unfulfilled because of the need to close the campus in mid-March and [cancel] planned events, including our speakers series and conversations among ourselves."

Senior-level scholars in residence are selected by a faculty search committee in consultation with an advisory board composed of prominent community members. The committee seeks highly visible scholars who are deeply engaged in either the analytical scholarship or practice of conservative thinking and policymaking — or both.

In fall 2019, Professor Allen taught a senior seminar on political theory to 17 students and "Foundations of Western Civilization" to five students. Professor Doody taught "Philosophy of Sports" to 39 students. In spring 2020, Professor Allen taught "Foundations of Western Civilization Special Topic: The Empire of Modern Science" to four students and "Liberalism and Its Critics" to 25 students. Professor Doody co-taught (with Professor Sheehan) "Foundations of Western Civilization, Special Topic: The Good Life" to 19 students.



The Benson Center is succeeding admirably in its mission to attract and mentor the very best students CU has to offer. The intellectual diversity I experienced in the classes organized by the Center is the hallmark of everything a university should be doing to promote liberal education at its finest.

– John A. Doody

Scholars in Residence



Renaud-Philippe Garner, *Bradley Scholar*

Renaud-Philippe Garner holds a PhD in philosophy (2019) from the University of Toronto. His areas of specialization are ethics and political philosophy, with particular focus on the ethics of partiality and just war theory. In fall 2019 Professor Garner taught “Reading, Writing and Reasoning” to 18 students, and in spring 2020 he taught “War and Morality” to 37 students, including a “movie and debate night” component. While a Benson Scholar, Professor Garner’s research was published in *The Journal of Philosophy*. He has an upcoming paper in *European Review of International Studies* and other papers in progress.

During the year, Garner immersed himself in the life of the Center, participating in almost all of its public lectures and leading and attending faculty seminars. Reflecting on his year, he said, “The time I spent at the Benson Center were happy and precious hours. To regularly bring together scholars of different specializations and interests to frankly discuss difficult topics is not only important but increasingly difficult. There were no shouting matches, no scandals, no chaos. Instead, we found thoughtful contributions from guest scholars followed by lively and enriching conversations with the audience.”



Scott Hill, *Snider Scholar*

Scott Hill holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (2014). The primary focus of his work is ethics and religion. In fall 2019, Professor Hill taught “Philosophy and Religion” to 72 students. In spring 2020, Hill taught “Philosophy and Race” to 72 students. While a Benson Scholar, Professor Hill produced a number of research papers, including publications in the *American Philosophical Quarterly* and the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, as well as several other submissions currently under review. Regarding his experience at the Benson Center, Hill commented, “This was the best year of my life. The intellectual community here is vibrant and diverse. I’ve never seen anything like it anywhere else.”



David Yee

David Yee holds a PhD in history (2019) from Stony Brook University. The primary focus of his work is the history of inequality and politics in modern Mexican cities. In fall 2019, Professor Yee taught “Introduction to Modern Latin America” to 44 students, and in spring 2020 he taught “Modern Mexico Since 1821” to 20 students. During his residence, one of Professor Yee’s research articles was accepted for publication by the journal *The Americas* and a second submission is currently under review for the *Journal of Latin American Studies*. He also secured a book contract with the University of Nebraska Press.

Looking back on his year, Yee commented, “The Benson Center has been a welcoming and supportive space for my academic development and pursuits. The events and seminars provided a continuous social network of scholars, which eased my transition of moving to a new place after finishing my doctoral studies. Ongoing contact with scholars who hold diverse perspectives was beneficial, particularly scholars with interests in political philosophy rooted in the U.S. context [which] exposed me to new ideas relevant to my own work.”

Faculty Fellows



Penelope Kelsey (Department of English)

Faculty fellow Penelope Kelsey, a professor of English and ethnic studies, is of Seneca descent (patrilineal) with family roots in western New York and Pennsylvania. She received her BA from Manchester College and her PhD from the University of Minnesota. Professor Kelsey studies Native American literature, language, film and theory, and she serves as faculty director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program. She has published two books: *Tribal Theory in Native American Literature: Dakota and Haudenosaunee Writing and Worldviews* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008) and *Reading the Wampum: Essays on Hodinöhsö:ni’ Visual Code and Epistemological Recovery* (Syracuse University Press, 2014). A collection of essays she edited, *Strawberries in Brooklyn: Maurice Kenny Considered*, appeared with SUNY Press in 2011 and won the Woodcraft Circle of Native Writers & Storytellers Best Literary Criticism Award. Her current project is *Sovereign Stories and Subjectivities*, which considers how indigenous languages embed alternate subjectivities, temporalities and historiographies into Native literature and narrative. In fall 2019 Professor Kelsey taught “Multicultural/ Postcolonial Studies” to 10 students, and in spring 2020 she taught a “Native American and Indigenous Studies Capstone Seminar” to 15 students.

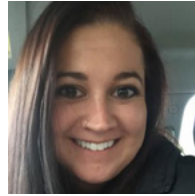
Faculty Fellows



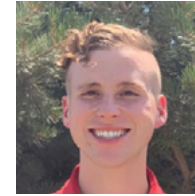
Juan Pablo Dabove (*Department of Spanish and Portuguese*)

Faculty fellow Juan Pablo Dabove, professor of Spanish and Portuguese, received his MA and PhD from the University of Pittsburgh. Dabove's research interests include Latin American literature and cultural history, from independence to the present, and he serves as faculty director of the International Education Program. Dabove is the author of two books: *Bandit Narratives, from Villa to Chávez* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017) and *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816-1929*. His book *Illuminations: Cultural Formations of the Americas* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007) was the winner of the 2010 Kayden Book Award for literary studies. In fall 2019 Professor Dabove taught "Literary and Cultural Analysis in Spanish" to 23 students and "Major Works and Trends in Literature and Culture in Latin America: 1900-Present" to 23 students. In spring 2020 he taught "Literary and Cultural Analysis in Spanish" to 24 students and a "Spanish American Literature, Colonial Period and/or 19th Century Seminar" to seven students.

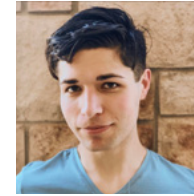
Harper Graduate Fellows



Tarren Andrews, a PhD candidate in the English department, completed her MA in later-medieval English literature at the University of Montana. Andrews adjuncted at Université Jean Jaurès in Toulouse, France, and at Salish Kootenai College, a tribal institution based in her home community on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Her current academic interests explore the relationships between critical Indigenous thought and theory, and early medieval literature, material culture and historiography from the North Atlantic archipelago. A founding member of the Native Graduate Student Group at CU, Andrews received the Dorothy Martin Endowment Fund Award for her work with Indigenous students in 2018. She received the inaugural Belle da Costa Greene Award from the Medieval Academy of America in 2019. Andrews teaches "Modern and Contemporary Literature for Non-Majors — Indigenous Ecocriticism and Modern Native American Authors."



T. Jake Dionne is a PhD candidate in the Department of Communication. He also teaches in the department, having previously conducted writing and rhetoric courses in the Program for Writing & Rhetoric. His research considers how western institutions communicate about the more-than-human world. His dissertation, "The Synecdochal Bison in an Age of Territorial Dispossession: Rhetorical De/Animalization as an Argumentative Resource for U.S. Settler Colonial Institutions," traces how settlers rhetorically mediate the social standing of the American bison to facilitate and justify territorial dispossession. His most recent published essays appear in *Environmental Communication Pedagogy and Practice* and *Rhetorical Animals: Boundaries of the Human in the Study of Persuasion*, which will soon be joined by forthcoming articles in *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society* and *Teaching Media Quarterly*.



Joe Edward Hatfield is a PhD candidate in the Department of Communication. Hatfield has taught in the Department of Communication and the Program for Writing and Rhetoric and currently serves as the managing editor of *Cultural Studies*. Hatfield's research and teaching focus on entanglements of gender, sexuality and digital social media culture. As a critical-qualitative researcher, Hatfield relies on a range of methods, including rhetorical and textual analysis, archival research and experimental computational techniques emerging from the digital humanities. His scholarship has been published in *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* and *Text & Performance Quarterly*, and in the forthcoming edited volume *Queering the South on Screen*.

OUTREACH + EVENTS

Providing a forum for intellectually diverse and academically rigorous events is the heart of what we do at the Benson Center. We advance our mission of exploring the Western tradition, the values that emerged from that tradition and their continuing role in U.S. institutions through multiple efforts. Our aim is to promote a lively and balanced conversation that respects both conservative and liberal ideals, thus fostering the full diversity of political, economic and philosophical perspectives on the CU Boulder campus and broader community, and serving as a model for other institutions.

To this end, the Center hosts two ongoing public lecture series: the Western Civ Dialogue Series and the Conservative Thought and Policy Series, as well as lectures and outreach by our visiting scholars. Visiting lecturers participated in regular faculty seminars and coffees with undergraduates, deepening their connection with CU academics and students. Campus visits by four finalists for the new Benson Center endowed directorship enhanced the year's offerings. A few spring semester events and the 2020 Summer Institute were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Western Civ Dialogue Series

Our flagship event series is the Western Civ Dialogue Series. These presentations feature individuals or panelists of expert speakers addressing topics of political, social or economic importance. During 2019–20, the Western Civ Dialogue Series sponsored or co-sponsored 10 events with a total attendance of 1,199 individuals. The Steamboat Institute Campus Liberty Tour debate was postponed, and a film screening and discussion with Senior Scholar in Residence Professor John Doody at the Boulder Public Library was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Doomed or Decadent? What the Internet, Superhero Movies and the Catholic Church Can Tell Us about Life in 2019

Sept. 17, 2019 | Attendance: 80

The crisis facing the West today is really one of decadence — when a wealthy and mature civilization runs into economic stagnation, institutional decay, and cultural and intellectual exhaustion. While decadence can endure for longer than its critics might imagine, there is hope for a new era. A provocative conversation with acclaimed Catholic thinker and *New York Times* op-ed columnist Ross Douthat. Co-sponsored by the Aquinas Institute for Catholic Thought.

Featuring:

Ross Douthat, *New York Times* op-ed columnist and bestselling author



America's Problematic Meritocratic Elite

Oct. 1, 2019 | Attendance: 25

Fifty years ago, the old Anglo-Saxon establishment that led America into the Cold War was replaced by a new striver elite. Now the nation is in a peril rooted in our organizational structure and the hollowing out of the working class. How did the new meritocratic elite's disregard for the interests and sensibilities of heartland America contribute to the election of Donald Trump?

Featuring:

Robert Merry, former *Wall Street Journal* Washington correspondent and *Congressional Quarterly* CEO



Public Discussions: Policies on Climate and Environment with Colorado Senators

Various dates | Total attendance: 80

On May 30, 2019, Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed a climate action plan into law. HB19-1261 set some of the strongest long-term climate targets in the country for reducing the pollution that causes climate change. But not everyone agrees on the scientific reasoning behind passing legislation to mitigate the effects of climate change. State senators from both sides of the aisle shared their views in this seminar series co-hosted by CU's Center for Science Technology and Policy Research and the Benson Center.

Featuring:

Oct. 9, 2019: Ray Scott, Colorado Senator (R-Grand Junction) | Attendance: 25

Oct. 16, 2019: Steve Fenberg, Colorado Senator (D-Boulder) | Attendance: 25

Nov. 13, 2019: Kerry Donovan, Colorado Senator (D-Chaffee) | Attendance: 30



The Coddling of the American Mind

Oct. 15, 2019 | Attendance: 202

Something has been going wrong on many college campuses in the last few years. Speakers are shouted down. Students and professors say they are walking on eggshells and are afraid to speak honestly. Rates of anxiety, depression and suicide are rising. How did this happen? Eminent social psychologist Jonathan Haidt thinks the new problems on campus have their origins in three terrible ideas that have become increasingly woven into American childhood and education — ideas that are making it harder and harder for students to become autonomous adults who are able to navigate the bumpy road of life. In this lecture, Haidt investigated the many social trends that have intersected to promote the spread of these untruths.

Featuring:

Jonathan Haidt, Professor of Ethical Leadership at The Stern School of Business

The Western Civ Dialogue Series



Antigone and Socrates: Model Citizens or Rebels?

Nov. 5, 2019 | Attendance: 25

The action in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito* thrusts the reader into the main characters' confrontations with the political order. The dilemma of following the law or challenging those in power prompts questions about the nature of citizens and their obligations to their family, fellow citizens and community. Both Antigone and Socrates were charged with crimes and suffered punishments. Are they innocent or guilty? Do their actions harm the community or improve it? These topics invite more general questions about present-day citizens and their responsibilities.

Featuring:

Elizabeth C' de Baca Eastman, political scientist, former professor at Chapman University and Azusa Pacific University



Born in the USA? Revisiting the 14th Amendment's Citizenship Clause

Nov. 11, 2019 | Attendance: 32

The Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment guarantees citizenship to anyone born in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof. As originally understood — by those who authored the amendment, by the Supreme Court and by the executive branch — the “subject to the jurisdiction” clause meant full and complete jurisdiction, not a partial or temporary jurisdiction such as exists with temporary visitors to the United States, whether lawful or unlawful. Our modern notion of birthright citizenship for all is therefore not constitutionally compelled.

Featuring:

John C. Eastman, founding director, Claremont Institute's Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence



Capitalism: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Nov. 14, 2019 | Attendance: 59

What's good and bad about capitalism as we actually find it operating in the real world? Commerce has liberated many from poverty, yet at the same time, many markets are rigged in unfair and unproductive ways. What, if anything, should we — and can we — do about it? This event brought together leading libertarian philosopher Jason Brennan and leading egalitarian philosopher Larry Temkin to explore both the allure and the downside of capitalism and the free enterprise system as it exists in our country today.

Featuring:

Jason Brennan, Robert J. and Elizabeth Flanagan Family Professor of Strategy, Economics, Ethics and Public Policy at the McDonough School of Business, professor of philosophy at Georgetown University

Larry Temkin, distinguished professor, philosophy, Rutgers University



The Market for Victimhood

Jan. 27, 2020 | Attendance: 696

To a packed audience and a standing ovation, activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali spoke of the dangers in the innate human tendency toward tribalism, the behavior and attitudes that stem from strong allegiance to one's own tribe or social group including race, religion, ethnicity and partisan politics. When the instinct toward tribalism goes unchallenged, every group feels under attack and others appear as enemies to be vanquished. In this climate, victim mentality flourishes. First Amendment protections are critical to fighting tribalism and its impact on the closing of the American mind. Sponsored by The Abby and Douglas Brown Family Foundation.

Featuring:

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Hoover Institution Research Fellow and founder of the AHA Foundation

Conservative Thought and Policy Guest Speakers

Toward the goal of increasing intellectual diversity on campus, the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy invites guests throughout the academic year to give public lectures on campus related to the Center's annual theme. This year's "American Identifies" theme inspired Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy Colleen Sheehan's collaboration with Senior Scholar in Residence William B. Allen on a lecture series through which they engaged prominent academics to assess the present state and future prospects of an American national character. Two lectures, by Daniel Mahoney and Yuval Levin, were canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The guest speakers had a collective attendance of 323 individuals.



Booker T. Washington and the Lessons of Lincoln

Sept. 19, 2019 | Attendance: 30

African American leaders from Frederick Douglass through Barack Obama have invoked Abraham Lincoln to further their own moral vision and statesmanship. Professor Schaub's lecture examined how Booker T. Washington deployed the example and memory of Lincoln as he sought to further the difficult work of racial reconciliation during an era of terrible and increasing racial oppression.

Featuring:

Diana Schaub, Professor of Political Science, Loyola University



Free Expression, Open Discourse and the Nature of Higher Education

Dec. 4, 2019 | Attendance: 101

Free expression, open discourse and ongoing intellectual challenge are a necessary foundation for an empowering education and a research environment that fosters creativity and originality. Students deserve the opportunity to develop the intellectual skills and habits of mind derived from such an education to confront the complex challenges they will face throughout their professional and personal lives. Failing to provide an education of deep intellectual challenge supported by an environment of free expression is selling students short and would fail to live up to our highest aspirations as educators.

Featuring:

Robert Zimmer, president, University of Chicago



American Politics: Is a Better Future Possible?

Feb. 3, 2020 | Attendance: 54

With American politics sharply polarized and the 2020 election coming up, which will surely enhance that polarization, many Americans wonder whether American politics will ever improve. Is bitter conflict and unproductive governance our inescapable future? Or could we be in a transitional period to a significantly better future? This lecture examined underlying demographic, economic and political trends, both nationally and in states like California, to examine these possibilities.

Featuring:

Ruy Teixeira, Center for American Progress senior fellow and co-director of the States of Change: Demographics and Democracy project



A Supermajority for Democracy: How to Rebuild a Society of Free and Equal Citizens

Feb. 18, 2020 | Attendance: 96

How do we revive civic education and get back to a point where a supermajority of citizens (at least 67%) both think that it's essential to them to live in a democracy, and have the knowledge, skills and capacities to participate effectively in self-government? Danielle Allen spoke of her work through the Democratic Knowledge Project, and sought to articulate a framework for a broader revival of civic education throughout the K-16 landscape.

Featuring:

Danielle Allen, director, Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, and James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University

Conservative Thought and Policy Guest Speakers



National Leadership, Policy Choices and American Character

Feb. 25, 2020 | Attendance: 42

In this lecture, Stephen Cambone reviewed the influence of national leadership in forming the American character. Beginning with Washington, through Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and Barack Obama, he presented the efforts each made to shape the American character in the context of prevailing circumstances and in support of their preferred choices of policy. His presentation underscored the influence the choices the electorate will make in the coming months and years, on the American character.

Featuring:

Stephen Cambone, associate vice chancellor of the Texas A&M University System and professor of practice in the College of Engineering of Texas A&M University

Conservative Thought and Policy Outreach

In addition to inviting guest speakers to give public lectures on campus, Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy Colleen Sheehan and Senior Scholar in Residence William B. Allen gave three lectures to 324 attendees. They and Senior Scholar in Residence John Doody also spoke at numerous off-campus conferences and seminars during the year. This outreach helped expand the Benson Center's audience.



American Friendship

Oct. 28, 2019 | Attendance: 24

Given the current climate of general disagreement among Americans today, one wonders if the country can still find common ground and civility. Can modern Americans be civic friends? Sheehan examined this pressing question through the lens of the origins of civic friendship. Madison and the founders made a point of working toward a common cause despite their differences. Can their values and dedication to civic friendship be applied to our present political predicament?

Featuring:

Colleen Sheehan, Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy 2019–20



The World of Emma Woodhouse

Dec. 1, 2019 | Attendance: 55

In celebration of Jane Austen's birthday month, the Benson Center and the Boulder Public Library presented the 1996 period comedy film *Emma*. Following the screening, Colleen Sheehan, an Austen scholar, led a lively discussion of the film. Even more than Elizabeth Bennet or Mary Crawford, Emma Woodhouse is Austen's most provocative heroine. She rivals Mary Crawford in smarts, Lizzie Bennet in wit and liveliness, and Marianne Dashwood in romantic imagination. Emma is "charm" — and "trouble" — writ large. Sheehan's talk explored the imaginative and charming world of Emma Woodhouse and its commentary on Austen's society.

Featuring:

Colleen Sheehan, Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy 2019–20



Down with Diversity

April 13, 2020 | Attendance: 245

(This lecture was held remotely via Zoom and YouTube due to concerns over COVID-19.) In the culminating lecture of the Benson Center's year-long "American National Character" series, Professor Allen reflected that the diversity regime has left higher education and much of the western world wandering in *una selva oscura*. Nor will we find our way clear of the self-seeding sprouts of identity politics until we renounce once and for all an intellectually indefensible and morally unsustainable commitment to diversity. Thus, from *e pluribus unum* to *ex unius plures* has become a more likely prospect than any distinct national character. In this exploration he weighed those prospects with an eye toward charting a path forward.

Featuring:

William Allen, Senior Scholar in Residence 2019-20

Endowed Director Candidates

In addition to inviting guest speakers and visiting scholars to give public lectures on campus, the Benson Center hosted campus visits by four interdisciplinary finalists for its newly created endowed directorship. The visits included public lectures with 218 attendees. Professor Daniel Jacobson was appointed to the position, which was made possible by generous gifts to the Bruce D. Benson Legacy Endowment Fund.



Western Finance, Eastern Development? Examining Western Influence on Japanese Banking

Aug. 27, 2019 | Attendance: 25

Using the technocrats of early Meiji Japan as an example, Professor Kris Mitchener explored how finance can be used to build coalitions in support of best practice reforms. These leaders borrowed western financial institutions to organize banks and secure support for a reformist economic and political agenda. They endowed likely opponents of the reformist agenda with bonds (claims that only paid off with the success of the government), which could be used as capital to start banks. Mitchener provided evidence that the creation of these banks led to local economic development.

Featuring:

Kris Mitchener, Robert and Susan Finocchio Professor of Economics at Santa Clara University



Freedom of Speech and Harmful Speech: Lessons from Mill

Sept. 5, 2019 | Attendance: 81

The debate over free speech centers on whether there are any opinions so harmful that it would be better not to tolerate them. John Stuart Mill defended the freedom to profess any opinion, however immoral or harmful — yet philosophers also attribute to him a harm principle, which makes action that harms others subject to social coercion. Professor Jacobson, an authority on Mill's moral and political philosophy, discussed how this tension mirrors the current political debate, asserting that Mill's often misunderstood argument shows how best to defend individual liberty.

Featuring:

Daniel Jacobson, professor of philosophy, University of Michigan



The Virtues of Democratic Citizenship, Ancient and Modern

Sept. 12, 2019 | Attendance: 57

Professor Ryan Balot contended that the flourishing of democracy — even its revitalization — depends on the citizens' possession of virtues appropriate to their civic activities. Taking a long historical perspective on democratic virtues, one centered on classical Athens and Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Balot drew attention to civic courage as the key to re-imagining a democratic ethos built on trust.

Featuring:

Ryan Balot, professor of political science and classics, University of Toronto



In Praise of a Forgotten Virtue: Moderation in the Twenty-First Century

Sept. 16, 2019 | Attendance: 55

What kind of virtue is political moderation and how can we study it? What does it mean to be a moderate voice in politics? What are the limits and benefits of moderation? Can moderation ever be a winning card in politics at the beginning of the 21st century? In this lecture Professor Craiutu argued that moderation is key to effectively combating the extremism prevalent in society today.

Featuring:

Aurelian Craiutu, professor of political science, Indiana University

Undergraduate Coffee Series

This year the Center held two student engagement outreach events and seven undergraduate coffees with visiting lecturers such as *New York Times* op-ed columnist Ross Douthat, University of Chicago president Robert Zimmer, associate vice chancellor for cyber initiatives at Texas A&M Stephen Cambone, and candidates for the Conservative Thought and Policy position. These events provided students with the opportunity to informally engage with a diverse group of guest speakers, thereby enriching their undergraduate experience.

STUDENT
+ FACULTY
GRANTS



Student Grants

The Benson Center provides financial support to students interested in studying one of the many languages connected to the field of Western civilization. This year's language scholarship recipients include two classics graduate students studying for comprehensive exams in ancient Greek and Latin. The Center also partners with the CU in D.C. program and works closely with multiple CU departments to support experiential learning via student internships in areas related to Western civilization such as law, government, public policy and education. Among this year's internship placements were congressional offices, federal agencies and think tanks related to diplomacy and public affairs. During the 2019–20 academic year, the Benson Center awarded \$10,999 in grant funding to 10 undergraduate and graduate students.

ff I interned for the Republican leader for the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy. This internship has been a blessing for me. My boss was in the news almost every day, and it was fascinating to see my work come to fruition in television news, newspapers and online news sites. The policy staff taught me a lot, and the experience I gained this semester is something I could never have received in a classroom.

– **Chase Davis**, CU in D.C. internship scholarship recipient

Student Grantee	Grant Type
Morgan Chisholm	CU in D.C. internship – Congressman Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)
Chase Davis	CU in D.C. internship – Congressman Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)
Thomas Francis	Language Study – Ancient Greek
Alana Horwitz	CU in D.C. internship – Director's Office of the Peace Corps
Andrew Kim	CU in D.C. internship – International Bar Association
Cindy Marisol Pena	CU in D.C. internship – Congressman Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)
Lukas Nicholson	Language Study – Latin
Skyler Nunn	CU in D.C. internship – American Academy of Diplomacy
Karissa Urbaneck	CU in D.C. internship – U.S. State Department, Bureau of Global Public Affairs
Dylan Yachyshen	Internship – Foreign Policy Research Institute



Faculty Grants

The Benson Center supports research and educational initiatives by CU Boulder faculty in multiple disciplines that contribute to critical reflection on the development of Western civilization. These include public lectures by renowned experts, innovative conferences and academic endeavors, and community outreach. During the 2019–20 academic year, the Benson Center awarded 26 faculty grants totaling \$33,175. Most guest lecturer campus visits included class visits and other student activities in addition to the stated event. Seven spring semester events were postponed or canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our feedback from visiting graduate students was overwhelmingly positive. They felt welcomed and taken care of, and many of them remarked on how smoothly the conference flowed. These students will go back to their home departments and share their positive experience of the classics department at CU Boulder.”

– **Sarah James**, assistant professor, classics

Grantee	Department	Amount	In support of	Event date
Jackie Elliot	Classics	\$760	Public lecture by David Levene, NYU: “Livy’s <i>Periochae</i> between Reader and Audience”	Sept. 16, 2019
Lauren Stone	Germanic & Slavic Languages & Literatures	\$500	Critical Theory Speaker Event	Oct. 9–12, 2019
Carole Newlands	Classics	\$697	Public lecture by Michael Roberts, Wesleyan University: “Narrating the Saints: Paulinus of Nola and the Beginning of Verse Hagiography”	Oct. 16, 2019
Jillian Porter	Germanic & Slavic Languages & Literatures	\$573	Public lecture by Deborah Martensen, Columbia University, “Shame and Guilt in Dostoevsky’s <i>Crime and Punishment</i> ”	Nov. 1, 2019
Ramesh Mallipeddi	English	\$1,000	Public lecture by George Bouloukos, Southern Illinois University	Nov. 12, 2019
Michael Ferguson	Political Science	\$1,025	Public lecture by Sarah Rushing, Montana State University	Nov. 13–15, 2019
Fernando Loffredo	Art & Art History/CU Mediterranean Studies Group	\$750	Public lecture by Enrico Parlato, Università della Toscana, “Shaping Pietro Aretino’s Controversial Persona”	Dec. 6, 2019
Peter Hunt	Classics	\$550	Public lecture by Jessica Lamont, Yale University, “Ancient Greek Magic: New Finds and Approaches”	Dec. 12, 2019
Nabil Enchaibi	Media Studies	\$2,000	Keynote lecture, Ann Laura Stoler, The New School for Social Research in NYC, “Colonial Diffractions in Illiberal Times,” Center for Media, Religion and Culture annual conference	Jan. 8–11, 2020

Celine Dauverd	History/CU Mediterranean Studies Group	\$1,686	Seminar: Alejandra Osorio, Wellesley College, “Of Imperial Genealogies and Royal Exequies: Legitimizing Monarchical Rule in the Spanish Habsburg Empire”	Jan. 15, 2020
Scott Powell	Aquinas Institute for Catholic Thought	\$2,000	Annual Aquinas Institute Great Debate: “‘Hey Siri’ What is Personhood in the Age of Artificial Intelligence?”	Jan. 31, 2020
Sarah James	Classics	\$750	Classics Colloquium Graduate Conference: “Space and Spectacle in the Ancient World”	Jan. 31–Feb. 1, 2020
Zachary Herz	Classics	\$700	Public lecture by Carlos Noreña, UC Berkeley, “Imperial Integration on Rome’s Atlantic Rim”	Feb. 17, 2020
Robert Rupert	Philosophy	\$1,000	Critical Theory Event with Martin Shuster, Goucher College	Feb. 20–22, 2020
Carole Newlands	Classics	\$700	Public lecture by Celia Shultz, University of Michigan, “Fulvia and the Perusine War”	March 5, 2020
Kathryn Goldfarb	Anthropology	\$1,500	Teaching Ethnography for Social Engagement Faculty Pedagogy Workshop	March 6, 2020
Robert Rupert	Philosophy/Center for Values and Social Policy	\$400	Public lecture by Eric Schwitzgebel, UC Riverside, “We Might Soon Build AI Who Deserve Rights”	March 12, 2020
Graham Oddie	Philosophy	\$1,000	“Value of Reason” workshop	March 14–15, 2020; postponed
Fernando Loffredo	Art & Art History	\$975	Faculty panel with Katharina Piechoki, Harvard, “Cartographic Humanism: The Making of Early Modern Europe”	March 16, 2020; canceled
Lauri Reitzammer	Classics	\$750	Public lecture by Seth Schein, UC Davis, “Generic Expectations and the Interpretation of Attic Tragedy: Preliminary Questions and Cognitive Considerations”	April 9, 2020; canceled
Janice Ho	English	\$1,500	Public lecture by Walter Cohen, University of Michigan	April 20, 2020; canceled
Arnie Hoecker	Germanic & Slavic Languages & Literatures	\$3,000	European fiction symposium	May 14–17, 2020; postponed
Penelope Kelsey	English	\$2,243	Documentary screening and lecture, <i>Thomas Indian School Reunion</i> , with filmmaker Terry Jones	spring 2020; canceled
Suzanne Magnanini	French & Italian	\$1,526	Guido Ruggiero, University of Miami, campus visit to present and meet with students	spring 2020; postponed
Ross Taylor	College of Media, Communication and Information	\$1,090	National and international film festival entries for <i>The Hardest Day</i> documentary	2019–20
Rebecca Maloy	Center for Medieval & Early Modern Studies	\$4,500	Support for multiple events	2019–20

COURSE DATA + PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



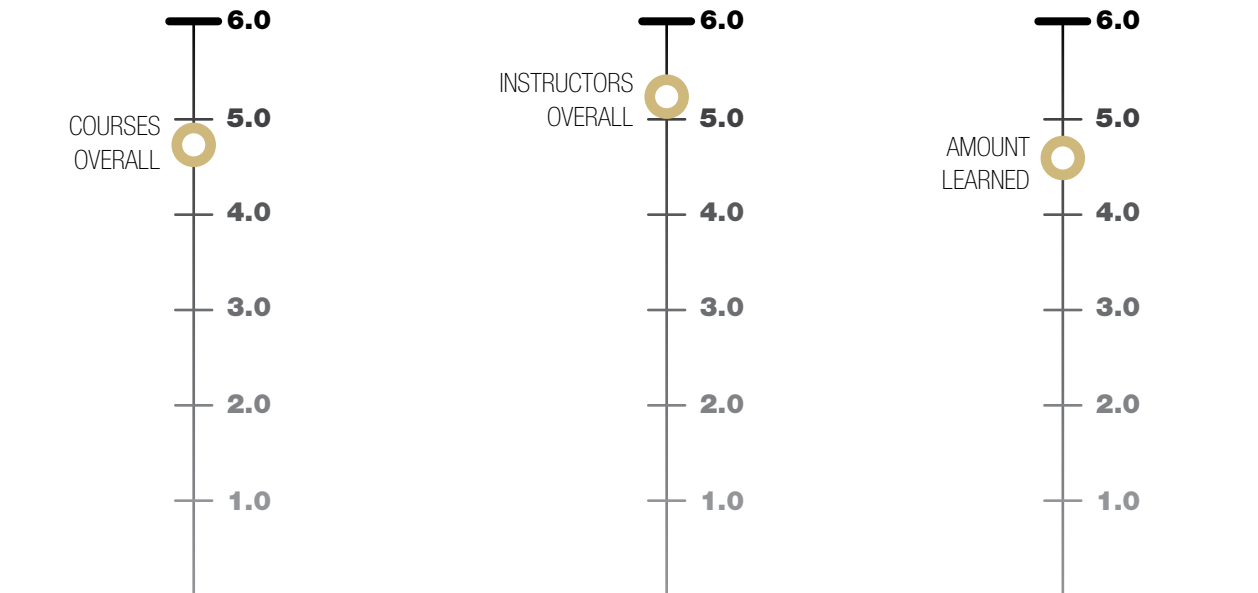
Course Data

During the 2019–20 academic year, **468 students** were enrolled in one of **16 Benson Center-offered courses** taught by six visiting scholars, a 33.3% increase in courses offered and a 20.6% increase in enrollment over 2018–19. Courses ranged from “The Western Tradition” to “The Lincoln-Douglas Debates”; from “Liberalism and Its Critics” to “War and Morality.”

On a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being highest, “Courses Overall” averaged a 4.8 student rating, “Instructors Overall” averaged a 5.1 student rating and “Amount Learned” averaged a 4.6 student rating. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptive impact on spring semester, course evaluation information was limited to the fall semester.

By offering courses in three disciplines (political science, history and philosophy), and under its own Foundations of Western Civilization listing, the Benson Center reached CU Boulder students across multiple majors and interests.

Notably, three courses were taught at full capacity: “American Political Thought,” “Philosophy and Sports” and “Reading, Writing, and Reasoning.”



“The richness of your presence and knowledge will linger long with all of us who attended your classes.”
 – **CU senior course auditor to Professor Allen**

Media Coverage

In the 2019–20 academic year, the Benson Center has earned approximately **37 mentions** from **11 different outlets**, mostly in Colorado. The Center also earned a mention on C-SPAN 2.

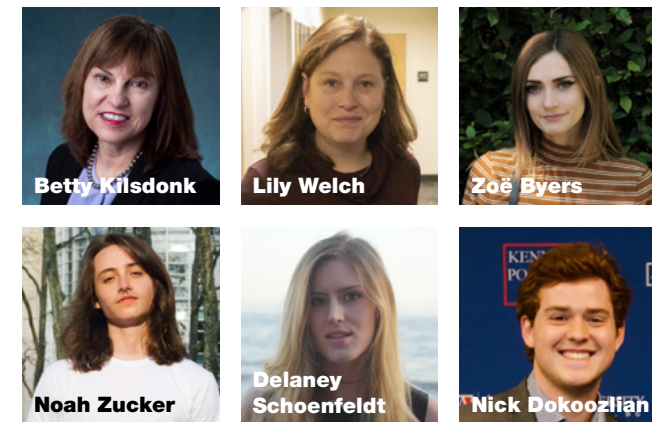
The Center’s media coverage is worth approximately **\$39,900 in publicity value**, appearing via websites with a combined **unique visitors per month of 18.5 million**, as well as broadcast and newspapers with a **combined reach of 236,400 people**.

Events coverage has dominated the year. Human rights activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s visit was republished from the *Daily Camera* to the *Colorado Daily* and *Longmont Times-Call*. There were also mentions on the climate policy series and Benson Center events moving online due to COVID-19.



Staff and Interns

Lily Welch joined the staff this year as program manager, and Betty Kilsdonk was promoted to associate director. Zoë Byers, Noah Zucker, Delaney Schoenfeldt and Nick Dokoozlian were undergraduate interns.



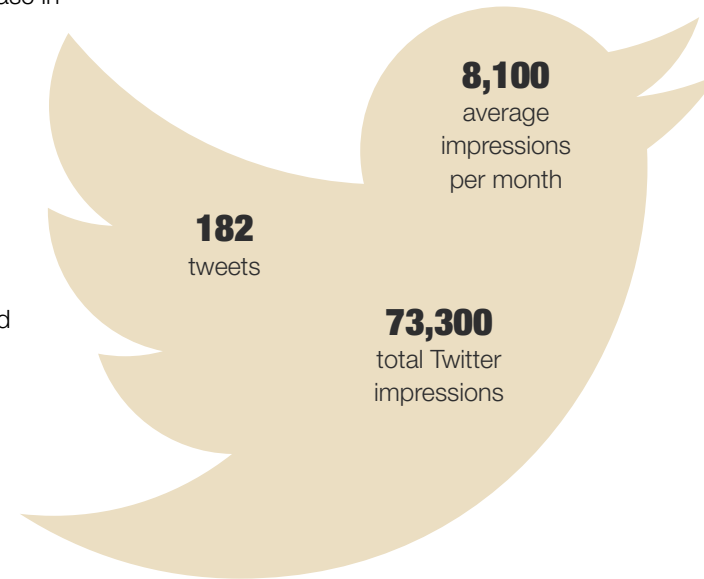
Social Media Analytics

The Benson Center runs four social media platforms: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter have seen a steady increase in activity and viewership in the 2019–20 academic year over past years. This was the first year on the LinkedIn platform.

YouTube: In 2019–20, the Benson Center posted 17 public videos of lectures hosted by the Center, attracting 7,661 new views and 453 new subscribers. To date, the Center’s YouTube page has 465,801 views across all videos and a subscriber base of almost 3,000 individuals. Notably, the Center’s January 2020 video “Ayaan Hirsi Ali: The Market for Victimhood” has received 132,795 views. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor William B. Allen’s April 13 lecture was live streamed on YouTube and Zoom to 245 attendees.

Facebook: The Benson Center Facebook page generated a total reach of 2,959 impressions during the 2019–20 academic year. “Likes” increased by 4.5%, from 287 to 300. The Center made 24 posts throughout the academic year, generating 1,691 organic post views.

Twitter: The Benson Center received a total of 73,300 impressions on 182 tweets. The Center’s Twitter page followers have increased by 75% this year, from 74 to 130. The Center’s tweets averaged around 8,100 impressions per month, a 425% increase from the 2018–19 average of 1,906 impressions per month.



total reach of
2,959
impressions



17
public videos
of lectures



465,801
views across
all videos

2019–20 Expenses

	2019–20 Expenses	2018–19 Expenses	2017–18 Expenses	2016–17 Expenses
Salary Expense Total (Wages + Benefits)	\$918,595	\$773,496	\$521,453	\$367,552
Faculty	\$588,810	\$508,413	\$336,808	\$218,530
Officer/Exempt	\$115,387	\$72,447	\$61,067	\$53,981
Classified Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,181
Student Wages	\$14,581	\$12,804	\$9,544	\$6,051
Benefits	\$199,817	\$179,832	\$114,034	\$87,808
Operating Costs Total	\$259,484	\$173,537	\$191,264	\$157,665
Operating Expenses	\$178,348	\$125,894	\$94,546	\$92,692
Travel	\$21,116	\$27,748	\$40,124	\$25,545
Transfers Out (Faculty & Student Grants)	\$60,020	\$19,895	\$56,594	\$39,428
Total Expense	\$1,178,079	\$947,033	\$712,717	\$525,217

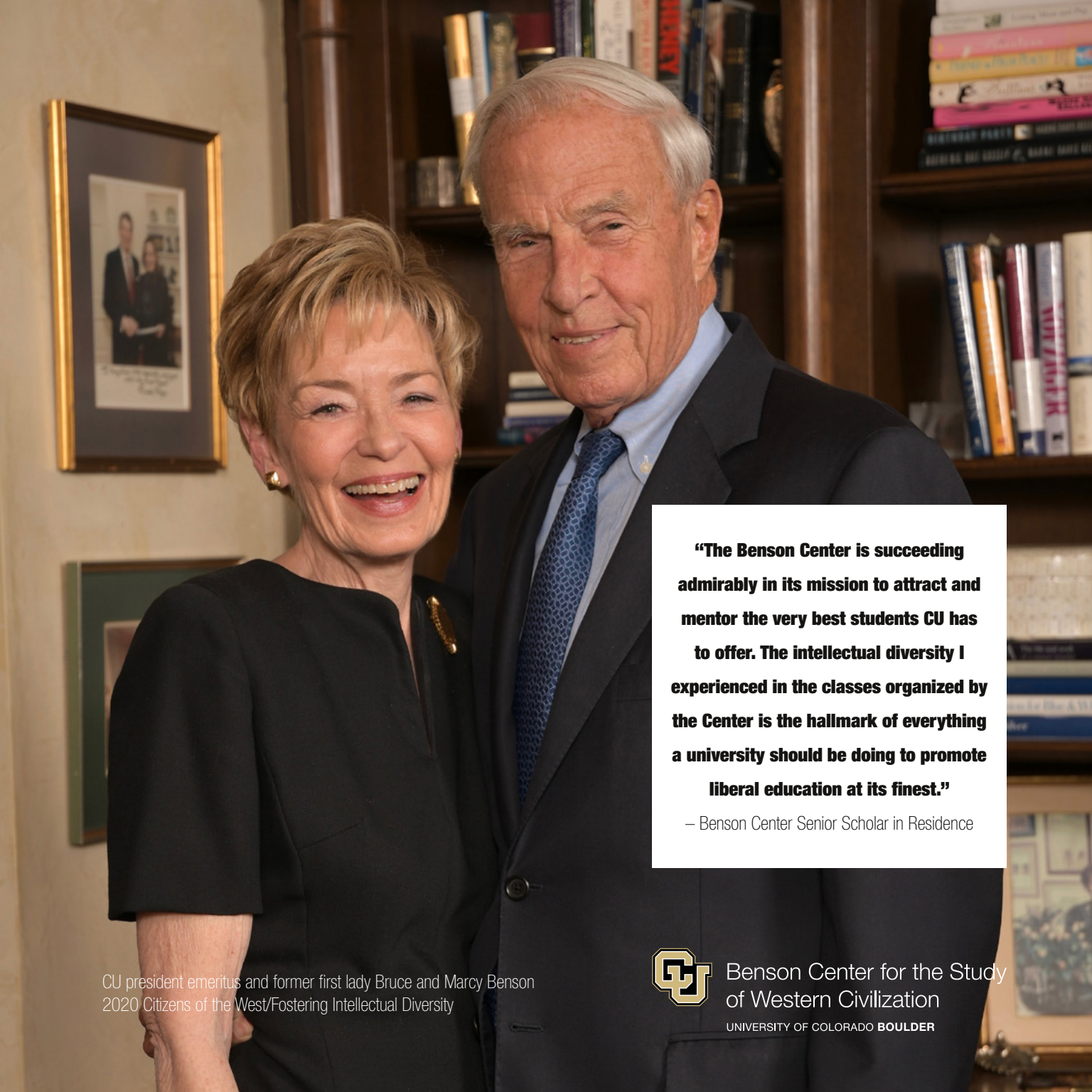
Photo Credits

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Ray Scott photo credit: Katie Weeman/CIRES

Ross Douthat photo credit: Delaney Schoenfeldt

Any campus photos in this report that do not depict current safety practices were taken prior to COVID-19 public health orders and guidelines.



“The Benson Center is succeeding admirably in its mission to attract and mentor the very best students CU has to offer. The intellectual diversity I experienced in the classes organized by the Center is the hallmark of everything a university should be doing to promote liberal education at its finest.”

– Benson Center Senior Scholar in Residence

CU president emeritus and former first lady Bruce and Marcy Benson
2020 Citizens of the West/Fostering Intellectual Diversity



Benson Center for the Study
of Western Civilization

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER