



John Brown University's Center for Faith and Flourishing

2022–2023 ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

“Did you hear what happened to Phillip Todd?” Nate Wertjes, a John Brown University alumnus, texted me as I was checking into the Montecito Inn after giving a lecture on faith and justice at Westmont College. “Was he ever one of your students?” I wrote back with my customary reserve: “He is wonderful. Love him,” adding that I saw Phillip, a JBU alumnus and chief economist for Senator Rand Paul, the same day I saw Nate, who had been working in D.C. for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. I joked with Nate, asking him whether he was writing to say Phillip had been arrested. “No,” he replied, “I’m terribly sorry to tell you this, but he was stabbed in D.C.”

Stabbed in D.C.? I texted Phillip and then his mother. Understandably, Phillip did not respond; his mother sent a heart. Meanwhile, I waited, and I prayed — as did many others across the country. Then a JBU alumna working in D.C. texted the good news: “He’s been talking and in good spirits. Asked for the best pourover available to man & has said that the joy of the Lord is his strength.”

God in his mercy preserved Phillip’s life; even more miraculously, he came through the vicious attack alive and well. He has returned to Washington, to continue his work. I mention this story here at the outset because we at the Center for Faith and

Flourishing hope to encourage all our students to grow in virtue, to find strength in the joy of the Lord, to discover how loved they truly are — and, yes, to enjoy a good cup of coffee.

Let me turn from a story to a statistic: 25 out of 800. That’s 25 grants that the John Templeton Foundation funded out of the 800 applications they received. I am pleased to inform you, if you don’t know already, that a grant proposed by two faculty fellows, Matt Wilson and Trisha Posey, was one of the 25 that were funded, instead of the 775 that were not. The result: The Center for Faith and Flourishing has the privilege of hosting our new Intellectual Virtues Program, launched with a \$390,000 grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

Program director Matt Wilson had led this new initiative capably in its inaugural academic year. Matt’s focus on intellectual virtues has had considerable influence on the Gateway course, which every student at JBU must take prior to graduation (and usually in the first year), and Matt’s emphasis on virtue has shaped our thinking about how the center should direct its efforts, too.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
JAY BRUCE, MATT WILSON, AND TRISHA POSEY

Established in 2019 at John Brown University, the Center for Faith and Flourishing continues its commitment to the university’s historic mission of educating for head, heart, and hand through lectures, seminars, and funding for travel to conferences. We seek to serve students here at John Brown University, and the Center for Faith and Flourishing provides a model for other universities to follow.

For this year’s annual report, we did something new. Instead of compiling comments from students and putting them together at the end of the report, we have them sprinkled throughout, so you can see, alongside an activity, how students responded to it. We continue to gather information on our alumni, though, and highlight a few towards the end of the report. We keep in touch with many more alumni than those on these pages, but the ones we mention here offer a small glimpse of the wonderful people we get to teach.

One last note: working with the Mercatus program helped us realize that the only person who can

manage this coordination problem is the director himself — he knows the students, and he also knows the organizations. This academic year, I have begun compiling a spreadsheet with student details and interests; in the coming academic year, I hope to have a corresponding spreadsheet with opportunities, including what those programming partners want. Many thanks to Mercatus for encouraging me to do this work!

Our work is growing, and we need your support, so that we can continue to address pressing questions about life and faith. So please help us nourish students so they can flourish.

All the best,

JAMES E. BRUCE, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Faith and Flourishing
Professor of Philosophy, John Brown University



YEAR AT A GLANCE

SUMMER 2022

JULY 31, 2022

\$390,000 to Start Intellectual Virtues Program

AUGUST 24, 2022

New Program Manager

JULY – OCTOBER, 2022

Accelerator Program with the Mercatus Center

FALL 2022



FALL SEMESTER

Philosophy, Politics, and Economics I (PPE I)

FALL SEMESTER

Gateway Program Requires New Exam for Intellectual Virtues

SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

Gateway Director Matthew Wilson delivers 18th Annual Balzer Lecture

SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

Intellectual Virtue Program Hosts First Community of Practice

FALL SEMESTER

Intellectual Virtues Program Sponsors Five Communities of Practice

SEPTEMBER 23 – 24, 2022

Center Director Jay Bruce Speaks at JBU Breakaway Retreat

OCTOBER 4, 2022

Johnathan Anomaly Speaks on “Public Goods and Government Action” in PPE I

OCTOBER 8, 2022

Tony Jelsma Lectures on “Gender Dysphoria: A Christian Biologist’s Perspective”

OCTOBER 11, 2022

Eric Edwards Speaks about Colorado River Drought in PPE I

FALL 2022 — SPRING 2023

OCTOBER 25, 2022 Reimagining Faith and Public Life (RFPL) with Jeff Bilbro and Bonnie Kristian	OCTOBER 25, 2022 RFPL Pastor Lunch	OCTOBER 25, 2022 RFPL Book Club
OCTOBER 25, 2022 RFPL Public Lecture: "Discerning Truth in an Untruthful World"	NOVEMBER 11 — 13, 2022 Student attends National Student Leadership Forum	NOVEMBER 29, 2022 Cass Sunstein Speaks about His work on Nudge and Sludge in PPE I
DECEMBER 8, 2022 Eric Edwards Gives Feedback to Student Projects in PPE I	SPRING SEMESTER Philosophy, Politics, and Economics II (PPE II)	SPRING SEMESTER Intellectual Virtue Program's Communities of Practice Continue



SPRING 2023

JANUARY 17, 2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration with Joe Jones	JANUARY 17, 2023 Joe Jones speaks on Isaiah 42:1-4 in Chapel	JANUARY 17, 2023 Joe Jones Dinner with Faculty
JANUARY 17, 2023 Joe Jones and Jay Bruce on "Why Colleges Should Care"	JANUARY 26, 2023 Intellectual Virtues Program Supports Holocaust Remembrance Day Movie Night	FEBRUARY 21, 2023 Working for the Common Good with Marcus Bullock
FEBRUARY 21, 2023 Marcus Bullock Lunchtime Event for Faculty	FEBRUARY 21, 2023 Marcus Bullock Dinner with Students	FEBRUARY 21, 2023 Marcus Bullock Lecture: "Faith and Resilience: What I Learned while Growing a Startup after Prison"
FEBRUARY 23 — 25, 2023 Arkansas Student Leadership Forum in Little Rock	MARCH 3 — 4, 2023 Liberty Tree Seminar	MARCH 3, 2023 Friday Student Dinner

SPRING 2023 – SUMMER 2023

<p>MARCH 3, 2023</p> <p>Mark David Hall Lecture: "Why Tolerate That? The Rise and Fall of Freedom of Speech in America"</p>	<p>MARCH 4, 2023</p> <p>Liberty Tree Seminar on Free Speech</p>	<p>MARCH 4, 2023</p> <p>Liberty Tree Faculty Dinner</p>
<p>MARCH 15, 2023</p> <p>Marcus Witcher Dinner with Book Club</p>	<p>MARCH 15, 2023</p> <p>Marcus Witcher Lecture: "Black Entrepreneurship: Building the Foundation for Freedom"</p>	<p>MARCH 31 – APRIL 2, 2023</p> <p>Arkansas Center for Research in Economics Colloquium, "The Terrors of the First Night: Taverns, Commerce, and the Violent Birth of British-American Liberty, 1765-1766," with Vaughn Scribner</p>
<p>APRIL 4, 2023</p> <p>First YouTube Video Short Drops</p>	<p>APRIL 13 – 26, 2023</p> <p>Student Delivers Paper at Midwestern Political Science Association (MPSA)</p>	
<p>MAY 30 – JUNE 2, 2023</p> <p>JBU Virtues Summer Seminar with Nathan King</p>	<p>JUNE 19 – 22, 2023</p> <p>Student to Attend Acton University</p>	



INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES PROGRAM

WHERE KNOWLEDGE AND CHARACTER EDUCATION MEET

In the Fall of 2023, the Center for Faith and Flourishing launched a new Intellectual Virtues Program with the generous support of a \$390,000 grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The program partners with JBU faculty and student groups to promote intellectual virtue education across the campus, and to be a light for Christian virtue education to the world. The program sponsors and facilitates faculty discussions, training and research into the intellectual virtues, and a variety of events to encourage student education across JBU's campus.

WHAT ARE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES?

Intellectual virtues are the character traits or habits of mind that help us to learn, think, and reason well. The virtues enable us to become people who can ask thoughtful questions, learn from others, give a fair hearing to opposing standpoints, reason to well-informed conclusions, and speak up for what we believe in. In other words, to educate for intellectual virtue is to help shape the intellectual character of students so that they can flourish. Specific intellectual virtues we focus on include:



INTELLECTUAL COURAGE
Intellectual courage is a willingness to face fearful situations to acquire and promote knowledge and truth, including the fear of embarrassment or failure.



INTELLECTUAL CAREFULNESS
Intellectual carefulness is the disposition to pay close attention to details and to exhibit patience and diligence in forming conclusions or investigating evidence.



INTELLECTUAL TENACITY
Intellectual tenacity is a disposition to both engage in and persevere in difficult or challenging intellectual work, in order to see it to completion.



INTELLECTUAL FAIRMINDEDNESS
Intellectual fairmindedness is the disposition to sincerely listen to and entertain differing and competing viewpoints, especially in cases where one has strong views on a subject.



INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES PROGRAM



INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

Intellectual curiosity is the disposition to wonder, to seek out new knowledge or understanding through reflection, questioning, and the exploration of ideas in various subject matter.



INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

Intellectual honesty is a disposition to judiciously communicate ideas without coercion, force, or deceit, in such a way as to seek truth above personal prejudice or reputation.



INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY

Intellectual humility is the disposition to be aware of and accurately assess one's own intellectual strengths and limitations, and to be unconcerned with intellectual status or prestige.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The program's primary activity is to form communities of practice within each of JBU's colleges to discuss intellectual virtues education and revise curriculum. A community of practice is defined as "a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

Communities of practice engage in the process of collective learning in some domain, focus area, or human endeavor. In our case, the communities of practice focus on how faculty can come to a deeper understanding about the intellectual virtues and incorporate virtues pedagogy into their teaching practices and curriculum.

The communities of practice are designed to have faculty engage in joint activities and discussions, to help each other, give shared feedback, and to create

a sense of community that is supportive and caring. Our communities of practice differ from book clubs or other interest groups because the shared learning and collaboration is done by practitioners in their respective fields.

The program is sponsoring the formation of five communities of practice, one from each college, and one in the honors department. We recognize that educating for virtue may look different in engineering and nursing classes than it does in business classes or history and English classes. We therefore want to support practitioners who have experience in their respective disciplines to be able to come together and to make sure that such differences are appreciated. The communities of practice meet 3–5 times per semester and are led by program fellows. These fellows receive a course buyout each fall so they can invest deeply in these groups and in their college's pedagogy and teaching.

This year we have been running a pilot community of practice with honors program faculty. Eight full-time faculty members have been participating, and they met nine times this academic year.

In the fall, faculty focused on the intellectual virtues themselves, on why they matter as an educational ideal, and on how they are relevant to both instructors and students alike. From that foundation, the faculty turned to the task of introducing, reinforcing, and practicing intellectual virtues in the classroom. The discussion here centered on specific assignments, thinking routines, modeling, and direct education. The group used Jason Baehr's book, *Deep in Thought: A Practical Guide to Teaching for Intellectual Virtues* (Harvard Press, 2021) for guidance.

At the end of the fall semester, each faculty member chose one or two virtues and one class they wanted to experiment with in the spring.

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES PROGRAM

In the spring, faculty began implementing these novel ways of teaching in the classroom and investigating how they can gather data to know if their chosen tactics are working.

Additional activities included: campus events; program director Matt Wilson delivered a public lecture in the fall and presented at the Kern Partners for Character and Educational Leadership (KPCEL) convening in April; the center's annual Reimagining Faith and Public Life featured intellectual virtues as an aide in navigating the current informational landscape; and the program helped host a Holocaust Remembrance Day movie night.

In the future, the program expects to facilitate more events and to sponsor teaching awards for those who succeed in educating for intellectual virtue in the classroom. In the third year of the program, the program will sponsor a small conference to showcase and disseminate its work to other CCCU institutions.

FUTURE EVENTS

MAY 30 – JUNE 2, 2023

The Intellectual Virtues Program will host a weeklong teaching seminar for faculty this summer. Nathan King, author of *The Excellent Mind* (Oxford, 2021), will lead the seminar.

“My participation in the community of practice on intellectual virtues has revitalized my perspective on teaching my Research Methods class. I now see how I can impact my students' minds in ways that go beyond teaching them how to conduct research. My work with the group is helping me focus on explaining the 'why' of learning to do research well, and it is re-focusing my thoughts on how I want my students to be changed by the class. My participation has supported my desire to contribute to the scholarship on teaching and learning; I am now conducting a research project myself to measure the effect of teaching the intellectual virtues.”

— **RICK FROMAN**
PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Deep in
Thought
A Practical Guide



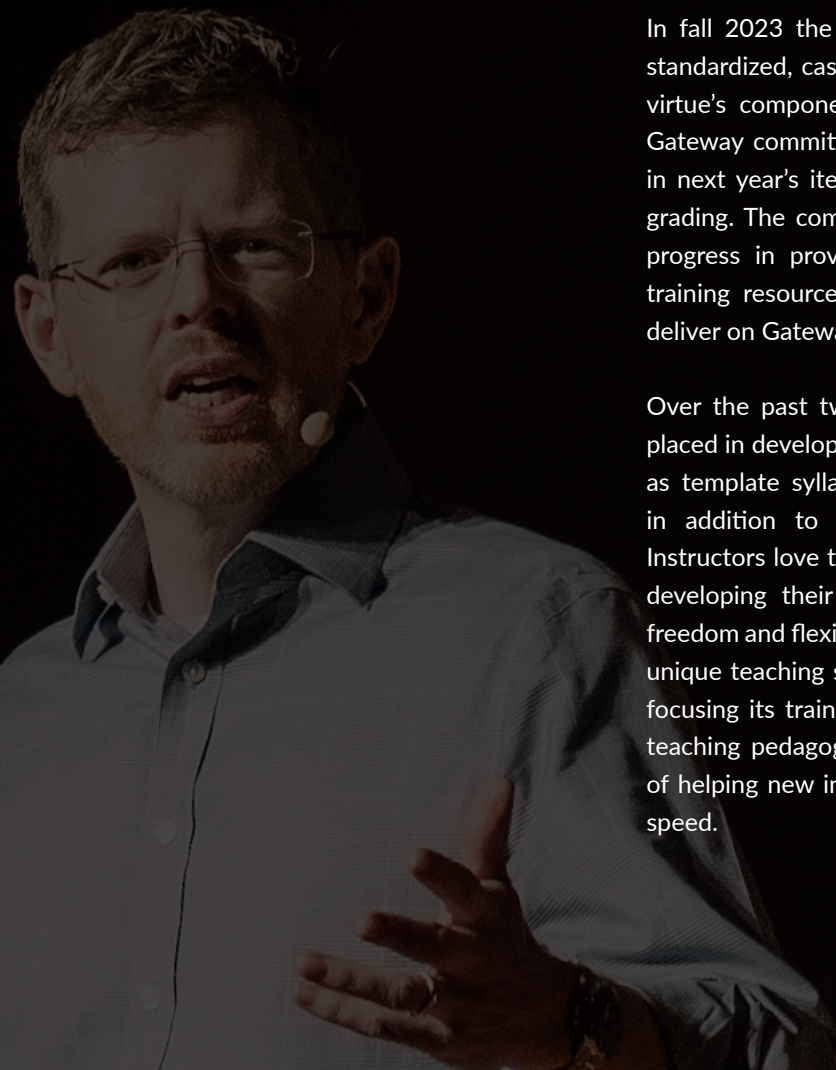
THE GATEWAY PROGRAM

The Center funds the directorships of both the Gateway Program and the Intellectual Virtues Program. The Gateway seminar is designed to help students transition to college and to approach their college education from a Christian perspective. It introduces students to the concepts of faithful learning, Christian calling, and Christian character, especially as it pertains to the intellectual virtues.

Gateway began introducing the intellectual virtues curriculum starting in fall 2021, and it has been well received. Students like learning about the virtues. It gives them a new vision for positively shaping their intellectual lives during their time at college, in a way that goes beyond learning new information or preparing for a career. It also helps students see possibilities for personal intellectual growth in required core courses or courses they might not like. For example, a student who does not like math can now see core math classes as opportunities to grow in virtues like intellectual tenacity, intellectual carefulness, and intellectual humility. Students can also see how living intellectually virtuous — being curious, fairminded, and humble, for example — can play a role in loving God and others.

In fall 2023 the Gateway program established a standardized, case-based exam for the intellectual virtue's component of the Gateway course. The Gateway committee is working to refine that test in next year's iteration to improve consistency in grading. The committee has also made significant progress in providing standardized, best-in-class training resources to equip instructors to better deliver on Gateway's mission.

Over the past two years significant efforts were placed in developing baseline documentation, such as template syllabi, lecture notes, and handouts, in addition to a 58-page instructor's manual. Instructors love these resources as a place to start developing their courses, while also having the freedom and flexibility to modify the course to their unique teaching styles. This year the committee is focusing its training efforts on the finer points of teaching pedagogy, as opposed to its prior focus of helping new instructors get oriented and up to speed.



PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS

We teach a two-semester sequence in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) every other year. We had our first year of teaching PPE in the 2020–2021 academic year, when PPE stood for personal protective equipment, and not an interdisciplinary study of key texts and historical figures that examine central questions to the human experience. This academic year, we taught the creatively named PPE I and PPE II a second time. We with unmasked faces discussed everything from Socrates to the present.

In the fall, students in PPE I had the privilege of hearing from Jonathan Anomaly, one of the editors of their textbook, speaking on public goods and government action. They also spoke twice with Eric Edwards about the Colorado River drought; he spoke to the class first to help them consider the variety of solutions available to them. He spoke a second time to offer feedback on their proposed solutions.

Cass Sunstein — a fan favorite from the previous season of PPE I — returned this year to discuss his work in nudging, that, is, how people can be encouraged to better behavior by presenting choices to them in a different way. He also spoke about his recent work in sludge, his word for the seemingly endless paperwork unnecessarily required to do anything nowadays.

In the spring, we had our full contingent of professors. Jay Bruce, a philosopher, Dan Bennett, a political scientist, and Randall Waldron, an economist. In addition to regular teaching, we had a series of roundtable discussions, in which the three professors would answer questions posed by the students, ask each other questions, and ask the students questions, too.

At the end of the spring semester, students talked openly of how much they enjoyed the course. One

student was particularly adamant that more students should take the class, and he even proposed the two courses he thought they should replace!

Given the response, we have started thinking about what it would be like to launch a Philosophy, Politics, and Economics major in addition to the minor we currently have.

LECTURES IN PPE

OCTOBER 4, 2022

Johnathan Anomaly Speaks on “Public Goods and Government Action” in PPE

OCTOBER 11, 2022

Eric Edwards Speaks about Colorado River Drought in PPE I

NOVEMBER 29, 2022

Cass Sunstein Speaks about His work on nudge and sludge in PPE I

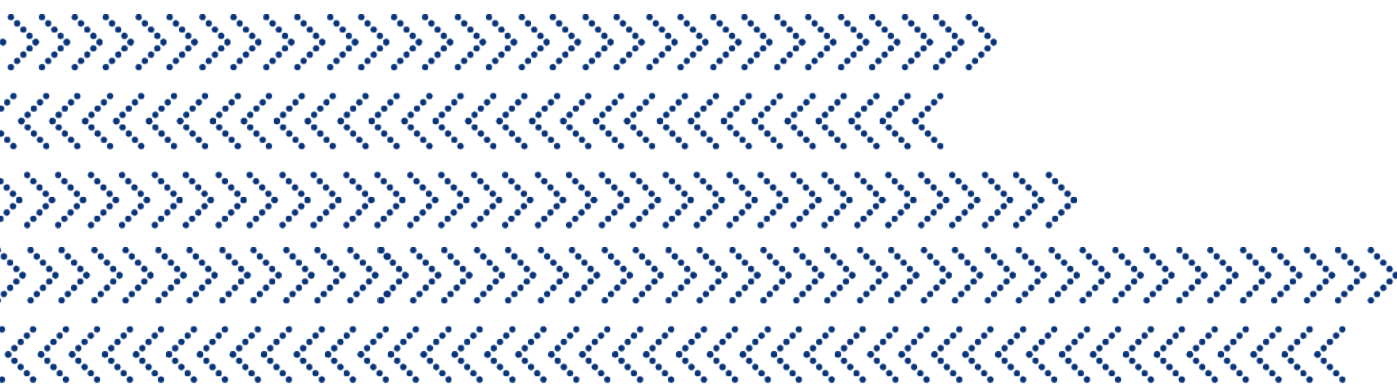
DECEMBER 8, 2022

Eric Edwards Gives Feedback to Student Projects in PPE I

MERCATUS CENTER ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

The Mercatus Center selected Jay Bruce, the director of the Center for Faith and Flourishing, to participate in an accelerator program for center director, in order to address a problem we should be grateful to have: we have an oversupply of students and an oversupply of opportunities for them. We at the center have recognized the need to better coordinate the many students we have with the opportunities that our strategic partners provide, and the Mercatus center graciously agreed to help us.

The Mercatus program helped us realize that the only person who can manage this coordination problem is the director himself — he knows the students, and he also knows the organizations. This academic year, he has begun compiling a spreadsheet with student details and interests; in the coming academic year, he hopes to have a corresponding spreadsheet with opportunities, including what those programming partners want. These combinations can quickly become complex, because people and organizations are far more variegated than we give them credit. So, for example, a nursing major may be really interested in the history of the American founding; an engineering major may love poetry. Similarly, a libertarian organization may want left-leaning students for viewpoint diversity, or a faith-based organization may welcome the contributions of unbelievers. Our director has received considerable encouragement from the Mercatus program and has applied himself to this task for the benefit of our students. Our thanks to Mercatus for encouraging him to do so, and also to Leah Krol, author of *Innovator for Social Change*, who deserves special mention here, giving generously of her time in order to make this project a success!



EVENTS



SEPTEMBER 8, 2022
Creating a Culture of Ownership in Christian Higher Education

Matt Wilson, a center faculty fellow and director of the JBU Gateway Program and the center's Intellectual Virtues Program, delivered the 18th annual Balzer lecture, "Creating a Culture of Ownership." His remarks continue to make us think about how to become the kinds of people that take appropriate responsibility for the work we do. 78 faculty and staff members attended this lecture.

SEPTEMBER 23 — 24, 2022
JBU Breakaway Retreat

Center director Jay Bruce was chosen as the speaker for the annual spiritual retreat at New Life Ranch. The theme this year was "Taste and See," from Psalm 34:8. Jay gave three talks: "You are What You Eat," on Psalm 34; "Eat What You're Served," on 1 Kings 17:1-7; and "Save Room for the Main Course," on Revelation 19:6-10. Attendance was 210, 200, and 190.

OCTOBER 8, 2022
Gender Dysphoria: A Christian Biologist's Perspective

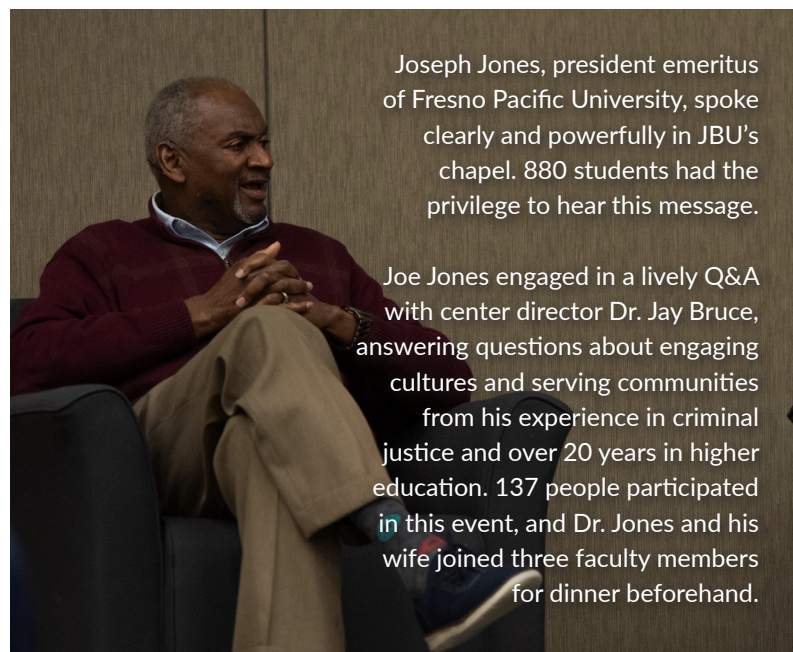
Tony Jelsma of Dordt University delivered a lecture on "Gender Dysphoria: A Christian Biologist's Perspective." The lecture was followed by an ice cream float social to keep the conversation. 123 people attended this event in person and 38 were present on the livestream, and this lecture has reached 648 views since its release.



OCTOBER 25, 2022
 Reimagining Faith and Public Life: Discerning Truth in an Untruthful World

This year's annual Reimagining Faith and Public Life saw Bonnie Kristian and Jeffrey Bilbro discuss ways we can live in an increasingly muddled media landscape. Lecturing to 28 individuals in person and eight via livestream. Our speakers also took time to have lunch with four pastors from the area, and they discussed their books with 6 students in the book clubs. Many thanks to Bonnie and Jeff for joining us! We also want to thank the Honors Program, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the American Values Coalition for their support.

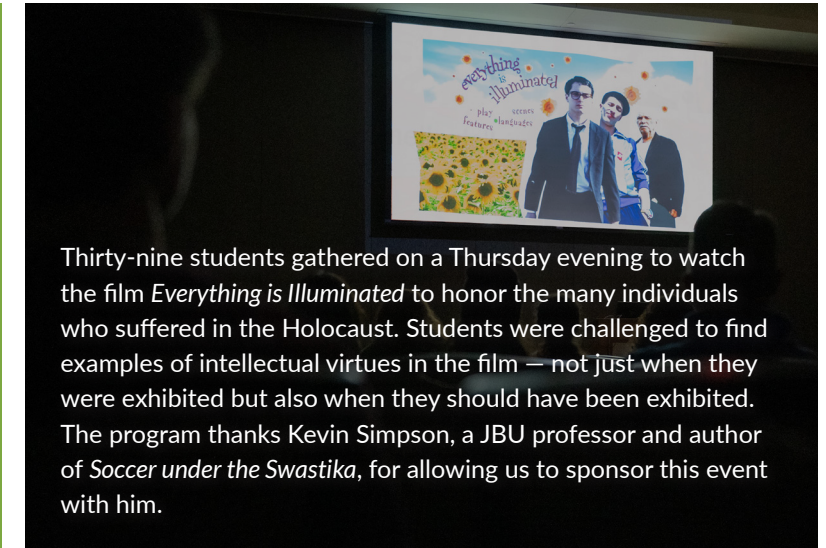
JANUARY 17, 2023
 "When Justice Comes to Earth," on Isaiah 42:1-4
 Why Colleges Should Care: How Institutions can Engage their Cultures and Serve their Communities



Joseph Jones, president emeritus of Fresno Pacific University, spoke clearly and powerfully in JBU's chapel. 880 students had the privilege to hear this message.

Joe Jones engaged in a lively Q&A with center director Dr. Jay Bruce, answering questions about engaging cultures and serving communities from his experience in criminal justice and over 20 years in higher education. 137 people participated in this event, and Dr. Jones and his wife joined three faculty members for dinner beforehand.

JANUARY 26, 2023
 Intellectual Virtues Program Supports Holocaust Remembrance Day Movie Night



Thirty-nine students gathered on a Thursday evening to watch the film *Everything is Illuminated* to honor the many individuals who suffered in the Holocaust. Students were challenged to find examples of intellectual virtues in the film — not just when they were exhibited but also when they should have been exhibited. The program thanks Kevin Simpson, a JBU professor and author of *Soccer under the Swastika*, for allowing us to sponsor this event with him.

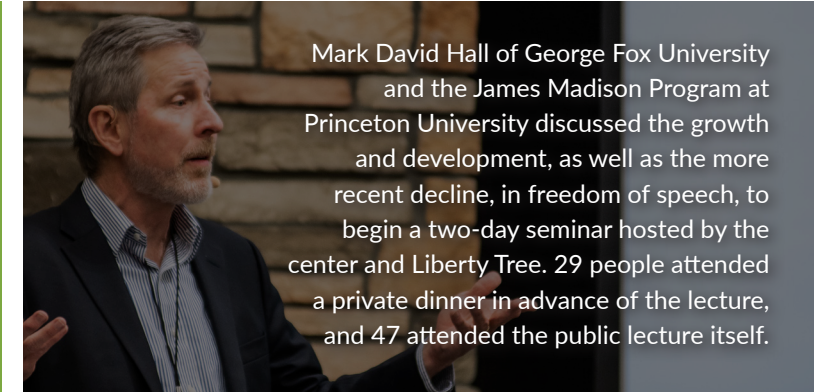
FEBRUARY 21, 2023
 Working for the Common Good: "Faith and Resilience: What I Learned while Growing a Startup after Prison"
 Working for the Common Good Conversation with Faculty and Staff



Marcus Bullock, an entrepreneur whose company empowers friends and families to remain connected to prisoners, gave this year's Working for the Common Good lecture. This trip was Marcus's first to Arkansas, and we are grateful he came. He was able to share with 182 people how he uses Flikshop to honor God, serve others, and impact the world.

Marcus Bullock addressed 44 faculty and staff in a lunchtime conversation about his growth and development.

MARCH 3, 2023
 Why Tolerate That? The Rise and Fall of Freedom of Speech in America



Mark David Hall of George Fox University and the James Madison Program at Princeton University discussed the growth and development, as well as the more recent decline, in freedom of speech, to begin a two-day seminar hosted by the center and Liberty Tree. 29 people attended a private dinner in advance of the lecture, and 47 attended the public lecture itself.

MARCH 4, 2023

Liberty Tree Seminar

Mark David Hall led 25 students in a thoughtful consideration of free speech through readings, discussion, and a simulated exercise. Students learned that protecting free speech in a pluralist society, though crucial for civil society, can at times be difficult. At the close of the seminar, Dr. Hall had dinner with 6 people, including center director Jay Bruce.



BAILEY MACIAS

“I really quite enjoyed my time at the liberty tree seminar and will hopefully have the opportunity to do it again next year! I thought it was extremely creative and made me think more about politics in a fair way.”

JAMES KEYS

“This weekend was an incredible opportunity to discuss the important issue of free speech with a variety of intelligent individuals. I also enjoyed meeting some upperclassmen whom I hadn’t had a chance to interact with yet.”

BAKER LOFTEN

“The Liberty Tree Seminar was the most politically engaging event I have attended at JBU and I look forward to doing it again.”



MARCH 15, 2023

Black Entrepreneurship: Building the Foundation for Freedom

Dr. Marcus Witcher, coauthor of *Black Liberation Through the Marketplace: Hope, Heartbreak, and the Promise of America*, lectured on the role of black businessmen and women in developing a civil society that made the Civil Rights Movement possible. Though it was the week before spring break, 18 people still attended the lecture, which had been rescheduled because of an ice storm. Our speaker joined Jay Bruce and four students to discuss his book over dinner, before the event.

CLUBS

BOOK CLUBS

FALL 2022

Jeffrey Bilbro, *Reading the Times: A Literary and Theological Inquiry into the News* | 6 participants

FALL 2022

Bonnie Kristian, *Untrustworthy: The Knowledge Crisis Breaking Our Brains, Polluting Our Politics, and Corrupting Christian Community* | 6 participants

SPRING 2023

Rachel S. Ferguson and Marcus M. Witcher, *Black Liberation Through the Marketplace: Hope, Heartbreak, and the Promise of America* | 4 participants



PHILOSOPHY CLUB

Julianne Peterson and Chris Davis run the club. They had 29 meetings this year, with an average of 12 students per meeting. Topics ranged from social construct theory to chat ChatGPT to the death penalty. And that’s just face to face! They still have their online paper, The Defendant. Look for it online!

Though the topics have ranged widely, their consideration of the topics has not been shallow. Instead, students asked for external readings to inform their discussions. Overall, the club continues to be a success, with lots of interest from students generally and consistent attendance from the freshman class, too. We are looking forward to seeing how next year goes!

STUDENT LEADERSHIP FORA



NOVEMBER 11 — 13, 2022

National Student Leadership Forum

William Newton, senior English major, participated in the annual National Leadership Forum that selected a group of leaders from around the country. The Center for Faith and Flourishing helped pay for this trip.

FEBRUARY 23 — 25, 2023

Arkansas Student Leadership Forum

We had another successful year of student participation in the Arkansas Student Leadership Forum! 11 students, 10 new and 1 repeat, along with the Centers Program Manager attended. They were enriched by diverse speakers who shared their advice and experience on how the students could reflect Christ through servant leadership. Along with the speaker sessions the students were able to engage with other students from surrounding universities, creating new friendships and connections in the process. The Center for Faith and Flourishing paid for all who traveled to this forum.

TESTIMONIES

CURRENT STUDENTS



**CALLIE
FREEMAN**

Freshman at John Brown University

“My first year at JBU has been exciting, and challenging. My classes have been pushing me to grow in knowledge, and I have really enjoyed getting to know the professors from the history and philosophy departments. One year at John Brown has spurred my motivation as a Christian and as a student to become equipped for a lifetime of service in the kingdom of Christ. For the summer break, I am working two restaurant jobs as a waitress. The days are long and the weeks are busy, but I am motivated to get through it by looking forward to next semester when I will be back home with my church in Siloam, as well as back in my classes and with friends.”



**EMMA
BEAGLE**

Junior at John Brown University

“As Dr. Bruce’s teaching assistant, I continue to help him with his classes, research, and presentations. That means I have helped grade logic tests, sift through hundreds of books, and organize resources on J. Gresham Machen and H. L. Mencken for a possible colloquium. Most recently, I have been transcribing lectures on justice and thinking about how to Dr. Bruce can have a perfect flowchart for a handout. I will be returning as Dr. Bruce’s TA for the 2023–2024 academic year. I continue to think about the privilege I had last year to participate in the Savannah Seminar, an event hosted by the Center of Religion, Culture, and Democracy and run by the First Liberty Institute, focused on the American founding, democratic ideals, and the role that religious institutions play in the development of flourishing societies. I continue to be grateful to the Center for Faith and Flourishing for this opportunity.”



**JULIANNE
PETERSEN**

Graduating Senior at John Brown University

“I have been attending Center for Faith and Flourishing events since my freshman year, and I have grown so much through the challenging discussions (topics such as policies on sex trafficking, freedom of speech, etc.). Engaging in difficult discussions has challenged me both academically and individually, and is partly what motivated me to add my minor in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, and to lead JBU’s Philosophy Club. Now that I have graduated, I will be performing music full-time throughout the states as well as internationally. Although my career as a musician is not directly tied to my academic pursuits, the opportunity to step into hard discussions has given me the eyes to see the frameworks of the systems that I believe in, as well as the systems of those around me. I am very thankful for the ways CFF has allowed me to flourish as a student and individual.”

ALUMNI



**CAITLYN
AVERSMAN**

American Enterprise Institute

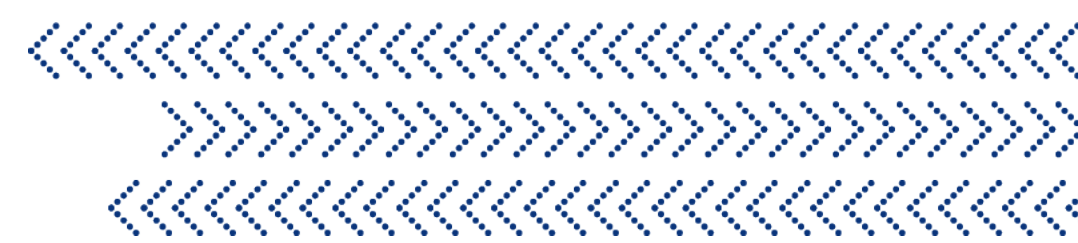
“Since graduating in 2022, I have worked at the American Enterprise Institute, where I now serve as a program manager in Education Policy Studies. I became familiar with the work of think tanks through Dr. Jay Bruce, CFF’s director, and Dr. Randall Waldron, a CFF faculty fellow. JBU’s Philosophy, Politics, and Economics program made me better equipped to work on issues related to higher education financing – particularly student loan forgiveness – with an eye to reforming the existing structure of federal financing, asking questions at this intersection. More importantly, CFF programming helped me craft my theology of work and shape my understanding of how I want to live in this world. Justin Giboney, Andrew Walker, and Laura Fabrycky’s time on campus was particularly meaningful to me, and I continue to be grateful for CFF paying expenses related to my participation in the Witherspoon Institute’s seminar on Natural Law & Public Affairs in Princeton, New Jersey. Overall, the Center for Faith and Flourishing helped me learn both in the classroom and beyond it, and I am grateful to the center for encouraging me to make more considered steps when moving into my new life as a young professional.”



**SETH
BILLINGSLEY**

Harvard Law School

“My first year at Harvard Law has been an amazing experience, and I am so thankful for John Brown University, the Center for Faith and Flourishing, and all my incredible professors for their help preparing me. The opportunities I had to publish research, travel the country, attend incredible seminars, and participate in reading groups rooted my interests in the law and jumpstarted my academic career. I can confidently say my time at Harvard, and certainly my incredible experience here, could not have happened without that institutional, academic, and personal support. Since starting at Harvard, I have worked as a Research Assistant for the Energy and Environmental Law Program, taken an Associate Research Fellowship with the UNESCO Endowed Chair for Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, and received a research grant from the Harvard Radcliffe Institute. I’ve had the chance to study under truly incredible professors and alongside amazing peers and colleagues, and I will spend the upcoming summer dividing my time between a litigation boutique in Austin, Texas and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Texas, criminal division.”





FACULTY, STAFF, AND FELLOWS



**JAY
BRUCE**

Director, Center for Faith and Flourishing

James (Jay) Bruce is the inaugural director of the Center for Faith and Flourishing and a professor of philosophy at John Brown University. Educated at Dartmouth, Oxford, and Baylor, Jay loves to follow ideas across academic disciplines. His book *Rights in the Law* considers the relationship between God and morality in the thought of Francis Turretin (1623–1687). Jay's next book — in progress — explores the relationship between Christianity, justice, and equality.

Writing: Three-year project of reviewing a Robert Alter's new translation and commentary of the Hebrew Bible came to fruition last summer, resulting in a longform review, published in *Law & Liberty*, and an interview on Liberty Law Talk. "Does the PCA Ordain Homosexuals? 'Well, Yes, But' or 'No, But,'" *Aquila Report* October 25, 2022 (republished January 9, 2023)

Lectures: Lectures on "Natural and Positive Rights in Law," "Christianity, Justice, and Equality," and "Law and Morality," for Trinity Law School, September 28, 2022; on "Natural Law and Community" and "Justice and Human Flourishing," Free and Virtuous Society, Acton Institute, Joplin, Missouri, November 9, 2022; on "Knowledge" and "Truth," Downline, Fayetteville, Arkansas, November 28, 2022; on "Will your Faith Survive your Justice?," at Providence Christian College, January 23, 2023; "Will your Faith Survive your Justice?," at Westmont College, March 27, 2023; and on "Will Your Faith Survive Your Justice?"

and "A Short History of Natural Law Theory: The First 2,500 Years," Acton Institute's Acton University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 20 & 22

Events: Free Market Forum, Hillsdale College, Boise, Idaho, October 27–29, 2022; American Enterprise Institute Annual Dinner, November 15, 2022; Liberty Fund Colloquium on Thomas Sowell, Santa Barbara, March 23–25, 2023

Activities: One of four judges for the 2022 *Christianity Today* Book Award in the category of Politics and Public Life



**DANIEL
BENNETT**

Assistant Director, Center for Faith and Flourishing

Daniel Bennett is an expert on the intersection of law, politics, and religion in the United States. He is the author of *Defending Faith: The Politics of the Christian Conservative Legal Movement*, and has written academic articles and book chapters on political behavior, legal advocacy, and the federal courts. He has been interviewed about his research in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, and *Associated Press*, among others.

Writing: Worked on book manuscript while on sabbatical. *Uneasy Citizenship: Embracing the Tension in Faith and Politics* should be released late 2023 or early 2024

Interviewed by Scott Tong on Here & Now, April 12, 2023

Activities: Led a student group on "God's Purpose for Your Organizational Life." Coordinating with Redeeming Babel and JBU Honors to offer a year-length curriculum on institutions, politics, and anxiety



**KATELYN
KINGCADE**

Program Manager

Katelyn Kingcade graduated from JBU with a degree in photography. While at JBU, she worked as a photographer and photo editor for *The Threefold Advocate*. Within JBU's visual arts department, she served the Visual Arts Foundry as a committee member, helping to coordinate events such as the annual Arties and Student Gallery Shows. After JBU she worked as a freelance photographer, at Friendship Community Care, and at Sassafras Springs Winery. During her time at the Center for Faith and Flourishing, Katelyn has redesigned the center's website, generated considerable interest in the center via social media, and — yes — taken a few pictures.

Event: Artwork displayed in the 2nd annual exhibition of *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time* at the Walton Arts Center, October 6–November 14, 2022



**MATT
WILSON**

Center for Faith and Flourishing Faculty Fellow, Intellectual Virtues Program Director, Gateway Director

Matthew Wilson is Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Gateway Director, Faculty Fellow at the Center for Faith and Flourishing, and Director of the Intellectual Virtues Program. He also holds an appointment as an Associate and Faculty Affiliate of Harvard University's Human Flourishing Program.

Writing: Production of a 48-page instructors manual for the Gateway Program

Lecture: Balzer Lecture on "Creating a Culture of Ownership in Christian Higher Education," September 8, 2022

Appointments: Inaugural director of the Intellectual Virtues Program; Affiliate of Harvard University's Human Flourishing Program





**TRISHA
POSEY**

**Center for Faith and Flourishing
Faculty Fellow**

Trisha Posey is the director of the Honors Scholars Program at John Brown University. Her primary academic interest is in the relationship between religion and reform in the 19th-century United States.

Writing: Published a review, “The Unsung Heroes of the Underground Railroad” in *Christianity Today*. Wrapping up a book project on lament and history in the African American community

Lectures and Interviews: Presented at the CCCU Advancing Women in Leadership Conference. Interviewed Tracy McKenzie at the AEI January retreat

Activities: Ran the Bridging the Gap program for JBU. Ran a community of practice as part of our Templeton Intellectual Virtues grant. Served as external reviewer for the Wheaton History Department ten-year review. Led “Wisdom Sits in Places,” a meditation on place, at JBU



**RANDALL
WALDRON**

**Center for Faith and Flourishing
Affiliated Fellow**

Randall Waldron has majors in Economics and Political Science from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. in Economics from Vanderbilt University. Prior to attending graduate school, he worked as an analyst for the market research firm, Market Facts, Inc., in Chicago and Los Angeles. Dr. Waldron is a Fulbright Scholar and has lived and taught in China, First at Beijing Jiaotong University and more recently at Yunnan Province at Honghe University. His work has also taken him to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Thailand, as well as Europe.

Events: Attended AEI’s Initiative on Faith and Public Life Faculty Retreat, January 13–14. Took four students to participate with him in a colloquium hosted by the Arkansas Center for Research in Economics, March 31–April 2



**JESSICA
HOOTEN WILSON**

**Center for Faith and Flourishing
Affiliated Fellow**

Jessica Hooten Wilson is the inaugural Seaver College Scholar of Liberal Arts at Pepperdine University. She is the author of four books, including *Giving the Devil his Due: Flannery O’Connor and The Brothers Karamazov*, which received a 2018 *Christianity Today* book of the year award in arts and culture.

Writing: *Reading for the Love of God: How to Read as a Spiritual Practice*; *The Liberating Arts: Why We Need Liberal Arts Education*, co-edited with Jeffrey Bilbro and Davey Henreckson



**ANDREW
KAUFMANN**

**Center for Faith and Flourishing
Affiliated Fellow**

Educated at Covenant College and Catholic University of America, Dr. Kaufmann has a special interest in Christian political thought and how Christians should engage the public square. He started a new position, as associate professor of politics and government, at Bryan College in August 2022.

Lecture: Delivered “Can Civic Education Save American Democracy from Itself?” for Constitution Day at Covenant College



**PRESTON
JONES**

**Center for Faith and Flourishing
Affiliated Fellow**

Preston Jones has published eight books, dozens of scholarly articles, and more than a hundred op-eds, essays, and reviews. Preston has interviewed hundreds of combat veterans and has also done interviewing on behalf of the U.S. Department of Defense. Preston has run 55 marathons and his favorite album in 1981, when he was in the 8th grade, is still his favorite album: *Seconds Out* by Genesis.

Writing: Lead researcher and writer for Simmons History Project; book manuscript, *Uncommon Common Man: M.H. “Bill” Simmons & the Poultry Industry in Northwest Arkansas, 1949-1974* (250 pages) near completion. Ten op-eds in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*

Lectures: Keynote speaker for company-wide Arvest Bank Memorial Day event; commencement speaker at the Cambridge School of Dallas

Oral History: 112 interviews with combat veterans, primarily from Vietnam, for the War & Life Project; 20 interviews with survivors of the May 2011 Joplin tornado; interviewed three police officers and one journalist about December 2015 San Bernardino terrorist attack. Continued collaboration with the Jonestown Institute, San Diego State University; recorded discussions with military personnel who responded to November 1978 tragedy; consultant on U.S. military response to Jonestown tragedy for 72 Films, a British production company



ADVISORY BOARD AND PARTNERS

The Center for Faith and Flourishing gratefully acknowledges the support and encouragement of its inaugural advisory board.



JOHN BROWN

John E. Brown, III, executive director of the Windgate Charitable Foundation from 1993 to 2018, served as president of John Brown University from 1979–1993 and a trustee from 2004–2017.



GARY OLIVER

Gary Oliver holds the Oliver chair of psychology and practical theology. Gary is the executive director emeritus of the Center for Healthy Relationships at John Brown University and a licensed clinical psychologist.



JOE WALENCIAK

Joe Walenciak is a distinguished professor of business and holds the Walenciak chair of business at John Brown University.

We gratefully recognize our partners in this year’s work. Thank you!

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

- American Enterprise Institute
- American Values Coalition
- Arkansas Center for Research & Economics
- Charles Koch Foundation
- Liberty Tree
- Mercatus Center, George Mason University
- John Templeton Foundation

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Center for Healthy Relationships
- College of Bible, Humanities & Arts
- College of Education & Social & Behavioral Sciences
- Department of Political Science
- Faculty Development
- Honors Scholars Program
- Office of Diversity
- Office of Academic Affairs
- Office of the President
- Soderquist College of Business



ROOM FOR GROWTH

Our annual report can never be a mere pat on the back. We have to take stock of our limitations and concerns. We list two here.

First, our center, despite its many successes, is still financially fragile. The biggest challenge we face is the need for funding year to year. For the center to outlast us, we are hoping to raise five to ten million dollars to establish the Center for Faith and Flourishing as a financially independent center housed at John Brown University. We have a compelling value proposition; there is simply no other center in the country doing what we do, and we offer a model for other colleges and universities to follow.

Until we have an endowment, we must continue to reach forward into the future, doing what we can with what we have with the hopes that we will all have our jobs in years to come.

So why do we do it? Because we are not shaping widgets here, but human souls. College students are old enough that they sit still in class without stern warnings, but they are young enough that they really do have their lives ahead of them. We have a privilege of coming alongside them at a truly unique moment in their lives, and we do not take this privilege for granted.

Second, we continue to refine how we serve students. Our Intellectual Virtues Program has really helped us think about what we want to teach and model to our students. The Mercatus Center helped our director, Jay Bruce, think about how to create a workflow for student opportunities. Right now we are in an enviable position: We have more students and more opportunities than we know what to do with them! Hopefully, as the years progress, we will be able to meet freshmen students with a clear series of possible pathways for them to pursue.

As we have more and more alumni going out and doing amazing things, we have increasing confidence that we can serve our students well and help them succeed in ways they could not have imagined.



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