

College Donor

QUARTERLY

a publication of the **Fund for Academic Renewal**

2021 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference

by Emily Burden Rees

On September 3, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) and the Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR) hosted 40 professors and guests for the 2021 Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference in Washington, DC. The event brought together select directors from ACTA's 73 Oases of Excellence to enjoy a series of engaging panels and speeches.

ACTA President Michael Poliakoff moderated the first panel, "Building a Campus Profile," which featured Steven McGuire from Villanova University, Jed Atkins from Duke University, and Jenna Silber Storey from Furman University. The discussion focused on how to build relationships with university administrators, students, media, and donors. Panelists advised directors to make students their top priority and to form ties with donors and administrators by inviting them to well-organized events that showcase the program's mission. The panelists also emphasized that program directors should adopt an attitude of "contagious courage" in the face of opposition from the administration.

At lunch, Professor James Stoner, director of the Eric Voegelin Institute at Louisiana State University, delivered a keynote address on "The Future of the Liberal Arts." His wit and geniality made higher education's challenges feel surmountable. Dr. Stoner remarked that today's social justice conversations have the potential to "restore the liberal arts to the center of education." A liberal education cultivates intellectual humility and critical thinking skills, and a background in ethics that equips citizens for fruitful discussions about justice and the common good.

Doug Sprei, ACTA's director of multi-media & campus partnerships, presented on our collaboration with Braver Angels to organize college student debates across the country in order to help reduce political polarization. Afterward, attendees connected with Mr. Sprei to discuss bringing debates to their Oases programs.

The afternoon panel featured a fundraising workshop by FAR Director Emily Koons Jae and Oases leaders Elizabeth Kaufer Busch of Christopher Newport University and Steven Frankel of Xavier

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INTELLIGENT COLLEGE GIVING. The Fund for Academic Renewal serves alumni and college donors who aim to support a renewal of the highest standards on college campuses through targeted philanthropy.

Oasis Profile: The Scala Foundation

ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal is pleased to recognize the Scala Foundation as an Oasis of Excellence. Oases of Excellence are a network of college and university academic programs across the country that are committed to educating students for informed citizenship in a free society and ensuring free inquiry into a diverse range of intellectual viewpoints.

The Scala Foundation fulfills its distinctive mission to "renew American culture by restoring beauty and wisdom to the liberal arts" through seminars, reading groups, conferences, summer programs, and webinars. The program empowers undergraduate and graduate students, teachers, creative writers, and educators to be "agents of cultural renewal" through the close study of the "millennia-old

tradition of liberal arts education and its power to form virtuous, purpose-driven citizens." Select faculty members from across the country serve on Scala's academic advisory committee and provide guest teaching and lecturing.

The program was founded in 2016 by Executive Director Margarita Mooney Suarez. Through its work, the Scala Foundation hopes to "offer Americans qualities they desperately need: meaning, purpose, and hope." Dr. Mooney Suarez currently serves as associate professor in the Department of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and is a keynote speaker on the intersection of higher education, culture, and Christianity. She recently published a book, *The Love of Learning: Seven Dialogues on the Liberal Arts*. 🍃

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University. Many Oases directors bear the brunt of essential fundraising in addition to directing and teaching. The panelists' advice included honoring donor intent and remembering that many philanthropists are eager to support programs that teach the liberal arts and promote the free exchange of ideas. "You don't have to persuade donors to give. They already want to help. Your job is to excite donors about what you're doing," said Dr. Frankel.

Jonathan Pidluzny, ACTA's vice president of academic affairs, chaired the last panel, "Fostering Free Inquiry and Expression in a Challenging Campus Environment." Allison Stanger of Middlebury College and Danilo Petranovich, director of the Abigail Adams Institute, highlighted the importance of preserving free speech in the classroom. Dr. Stanger said professors must develop in students "a love of learning and [the ability] to think for themselves." She also shared that courage to express disfavored viewpoints is



Professors and guests attend the Fund for Academic Renewal's 2021 Oases of Excellence Conference at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC.

essential to a robust culture of free inquiry.

During dinner, Barry Strauss, professor of history and classics at Cornell University, gave a speech entitled, "The Flame of Intellectual Freedom." He wove a beautiful tribute to the legacy of the distinguished Yale University professor Donald Kagan, who passed away in August, into a powerful case for the enduring importance of the classics and the liberal arts. Dr. Strauss

exhorted the audience to continue their work to ensure that students across the country can receive a rigorous liberal education.

ACTA's partnerships with Oases of Excellence programs are an indispensable part of our efforts to support a renewal of liberal education at America's colleges and universities. We applaud the work of our Oases directors to advance the study of the liberal arts and raise academic standards. 🍃

Donor TIPS

A Presentation at the Bradley Impact Fund

The Bradley Impact Fund invited the Fund for Academic Renewal to conduct a workshop on higher education giving at its annual fall conference. The Bradley Impact Fund is driven by the work of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation to “protect America’s founding principles and institutions” through “high-impact giving and the protection of donor intent.” ACTA President Michael Poliakoff and FAR Director Emily Koons Jae presented on “The Dos and Don’ts of College Giving” to an audience of donors, providing recommendations for how to navigate the giving process wisely. Dr. Poliakoff and Ms. Jae shared the following tips:

- DON’T write a blank check: Know your purpose and what you hope to achieve.
- DON’T let nostalgia cloud your vision: Take an honest look at your alma mater and consider whether other options better fit your goals.
- DON’T go alone: Find like-minded organizations and faculty to help guide the gift.
- DO think outside the box: Let your vision guide your structure.
- DO write a strong gift agreement: Never accept the university’s template without carefully reviewing it first, and revise key clauses to protect your rights.
- DO stay engaged: Remain in touch with the university and require an annual report on the use of your gift.

Following this advice will help secure your intent for your gift in perpetuity. As FAR Program Manager Rebecca Richards wrote in a recent article in *Philanthropy Daily*, “when donors and dedicated faculty share a vision, they can create programs that change students’ lives and shape the next generation for meaningful lives and productive citizenship.” 🌱



Photo by O’Dell Isaac, *The Gazette*, used with permission.

FAR Advises on New Gift to University of Colorado—Colorado Springs

Entrepreneur Kevin O’Neil recently made a \$3 million gift to the University of Colorado—Colorado Springs to fund two graduate research assistantships, one staff position, and the new Cybersecurity Education and Research Center. Mr. O’Neil’s office consulted with FAR to strengthen naming and reporting provisions within the gift agreement.

“The Fund for Academic Renewal proved to be a valuable resource as I considered making a large donation to a university for the first time. The staff at FAR were knowledgeable, easy to work with, and gave great feedback to ensure the intent of my gift was reflected in the final agreement.” —**Kevin O’Neil**



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About FAR

A program of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, the **Fund for Academic Renewal** (FAR) serves alumni and college donors who aim to support a renewal of the highest standards on college campuses through targeted philanthropy.

With access to a network of on-campus contacts, FAR assists donors in maximizing the impact of their investment by helping them craft gift agreements that are carefully tailored to achieve their goals. FAR has guided over \$170 million in gifts since 2016. Because every gift is different, FAR offers personalized guidance for individuals at every giving level.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, FAR provides these services, including legal consultation from Arnold & Porter LLP, at no cost to donors.



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