

College Donor QUARTERLY

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

2023 Oases of Excellence Conference



On September 8, 23 faculty from across the country met in Durham, North Carolina, for the 2023 Oases of Excellence Conference. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) hosted the day's program in partnership with the Civil Discourse Project at Duke University.

Campus centers earn ACTA's designation as an "Oasis of Excellence" by promoting rigorous academic study, a strong liberal arts curriculum, and viewpoint diversity. These faculty-led, donor-supported programs play a vital role in restoring the promise of higher education. See the full list of Oases of Excellence programs on ACTA's website.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Jed Atkins, director of the Civil Discourse Project, encouraged attendees to continue their good work to keep the study of the liberal arts alive and to expose students to the full range of intellectual

viewpoints. He said, "Hope is the virtue that is seen clearest precisely in times of difficulty. It relies on agency over passivity to navigate challenging circumstances."

This year's gathering included several longtime ACTA friends, including Siri Terjesen, executive director of the Madden Center for Value Creation at Florida Atlantic University, who moderated a panel on entrepreneurship featuring Bruce Caldwell and Justin Heacock, both recent additions to the network. Dr. Caldwell, who leads the Center for the History of Political Economy at Duke University, remarked, "Constant vigilance is the cost of liberty. . . and the cost of keeping a center going."

The conversation was enriched by the perspectives of faculty from a diverse range of institutions, including small private universities and large public schools. Panelists and participants

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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.

ACTA Welcomes Three Oases of Excellence

Madden Center for Value Creation & the Center for Great Books & Human Flourishing

Three more programs have joined ACTA's Oases of Excellence network, bringing the total to 90 centers. The directors of all three of the new centers attended this year's Oases of Excellence Faculty Conference held in North Carolina. The Madden Center for Value Creation at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), the Center for Great Books & Human Flourishing at Faulker University, and the Free and Open Societies Project at North Carolina State University are all dedicated to promoting civic education and introducing students to the liberal arts in creative ways.

The Madden Center, founded and led by FAU College of Business Associate Dean Siri Terjesen, seeks to provide students with an intellectual foundation to create value in their communities and contribute to overall prosperity within our society through training in entrepreneurship and an understanding of the free market. Students who **complete a seven-unit course receive a certificate in Value Creation**. The Center for Great Books & Human Flourishing offers undergraduates the opportunity to engage with questions of the good life and a flourishing society through student programming, speaker events, and fellowships. Now in its fourth year, it is led by Dr. Jason Jewell. The Free and Open Societies Project, directed by Andrew J. Taylor, the discussion of foundational political ideas through courses like Public Choice and Political Institutions or The Classical Liberal Tradition, lectures, and undergraduate research grants.

ACTA is thrilled to have three new programs dedicated to rigorous study, quality pedagogy, and viewpoint diversity. 🌿



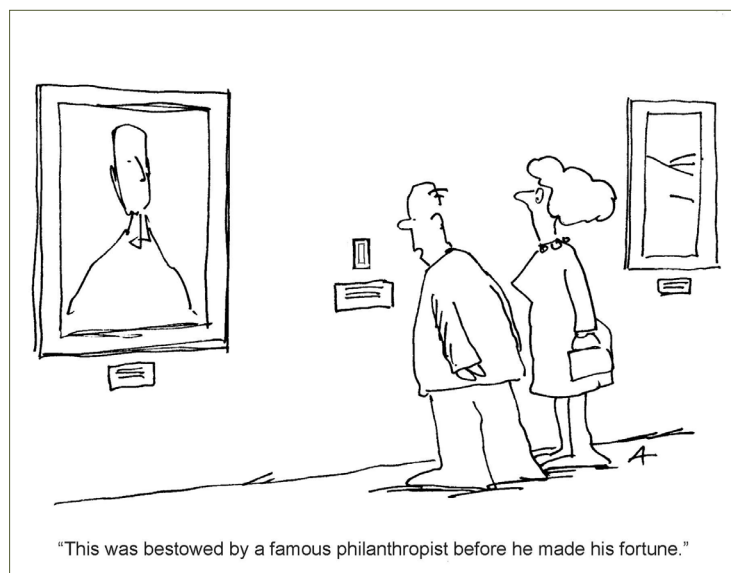
2023 Oases Conference, from page 1

shared their challenges and successes in leading their programs and expressed a shared concern for restoring higher education and upholding the liberal arts. Conference panels included: "Entrepreneurship, Economics, and the Liberal Arts," "Defending the Liberal Arts," "Workshop: Foundation Giving," and "Civics, Citizenship, and Civil Discourse."

George Lucas, former president of the International Society for Military Ethics and professor emeritus of ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy, delivered the keynote address. A philosopher and military technology expert, Dr. Lucas explored the implications of artificial intelligence, particularly large language models (LLMs), for the liberal arts. It is easier for students to rely on LLMs like ChatGPT to cheat on exams or essays than pursue a rigorous course of study. Liberal arts proponents need to rethink how to advocate for the enduring value of a strong liberal arts education; it is not simply the acquisition of skills, but the pursuit of being human. AI risks making the liberal arts appear permanently irrelevant when its rise really means that understanding human nature is more important than ever.

Christine Basil, associate professor in the Belmont Abbey Honors College, said the conference provided "very valuable time to look up from the everyday work and to get a feel for the bigger picture of higher ed and the obstacles to the good as well as the very real successes it contains."

ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal is privileged to partner with faculty leaders who care deeply about their students' academic success and well-being and who are committed to introducing the best of the liberal arts to the entire campus community. Although the challenges facing American higher education today are great, the dedication and creativity of our Oases of Excellence leaders are reasons to be hopeful for the future. 🌿



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Donor TIPS

Discover FAR's Library of Resources

Did you know that FAR's website, AcademicRenewal.org, features a collection of resources to help donors give better to higher education? You can find all of these in our resource library by scanning the QR code.

The Intelligent Donor's Guide to College Giving

FAR's seminal guide for college donors includes case studies of successful gifts, examples of not-so-successful gifts, and explains how smart giving can transform our nation's colleges and universities.

Elements of a Sound Gift Agreement

A strong gift agreement is the foundation for a successful gift. Gift agreements should, at a minimum, articulate your intent, set expectations, and anticipate changes. Never make a major gift without carefully reviewing the terms and conditions.

Ten Questions to Ask Before You Give

Making a successful gift is like preparing for marriage. Do not rush to seal the deal before asking yourself these 10 questions that will help you define your goals and identify the priorities of your partner college or university.

Trustees and Donor Intent

This is an essential guide for trustees on how to build a university culture that honors donor intent. It also helps donors ask the right questions to determine if the university prioritizes transparency and responsible stewardship.

Individual Consultation

Each of these resources will help you make a stronger gift, but the best resource is scheduling a conversation to talk about the difference you hope your gift will make in the world. FAR's dedicated team can help you clarify your goals, plan your gift, and align your vision with the university's needs.

Email RRichards@AcademicRenewal.org to start a conversation today. 🌱

ACCESS FAR'S
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RESOURCES HERE.



From the Bookshelf

What is Philanthropy For? by Rhodri Davies

Reviewed by Emily Burden Rees

Rhodri Davies's 2023 book *What is Philanthropy For?* provides a strong

historical account of philanthropy and incisively examines the tensions between philanthropy and related concepts of charity, justice, the state, democracy and the market. In his treatment of each, he argues that we must be able to approach complicated issues with intellectual humility; an informed perspective; and a capacity to live with nuance.

Mr. Davies covers a significant amount of ground in his survey, from the role of the church in philanthropy

during the medieval period, to the main arguments behind tax breaks for charitable donations, to the increasingly blurred lines between businesses and nonprofits in philanthrocapitalism. The author skillfully weaves history into these ongoing debates but those who are more interested in philanthropic practice may find the level of detail overwhelming.

The book's emphasis on understanding the events, funders, and politicians who shaped philanthropy as it is today helps us develop "a shared understanding of the choices that have been made and why, and that we are able to accept these choices or to challenge them in a

constructive way when needed." Without this historical perspective, Mr. Davies observes, "Too often debates about philanthropy collapse into polarized polemic that breeds only defensiveness and resentment and moves nothing forward." This is the author's central insight, and one that bears repeating.

Controversy often follows philanthropy as donors try to solve complex societal problems, but a solid grasp of the related concepts of charity, justice, the state, democracy, and the market can transform a frivolous and highly fraught argument into a fruitful discussion that makes the world slightly better, one movement at a time. 🌱



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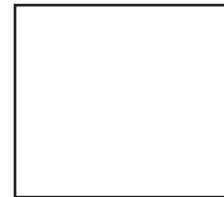
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About FAR

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 **\$193 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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