

# NAS Update

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## Kirkpatrick Award Goes to NAS Chairman

In Washington, on 27 February 2009, the second annual Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick Academic Freedom Award was bestowed upon NAS Chairman Stephen H. Balch at the Ronald Reagan Dinner of the American Conservative Union by the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and the ACU. Chairman Balch's acceptance remarks follow:

It is a great honor to receive this award. Jeane Kirkpatrick was a courageous and eloquent champion of freedom in the university and throughout the world. As generally happens, she paid a price for that heroism: having her own freedoms

challenged by homegrown totalitarians.

The institution from which I received my advanced degrees, the University of California, world-class in so many respects, has among its indelible shames the abuse Dr. Kirkpatrick received when she delivered an address on its campus in 1983, the first of a number of prominent speakers to get this treatment including conservatives like Clarence Pendleton and Benjamin Netanyahu, and not-so-conservatives such as Madeleine Albright and Sandra Day O'Connor.

Dr. Kirkpatrick fought back, completing her address at Berkeley, even above the howling din. She also fought back by becoming a founding member of the advisory board of the National Association of Scholars, and the keynote speaker at our first national conference in 1988. In so doing she made a huge contribution to establishing the NAS as a major player in the debate then rising over what came to be called "political correctness". I and my organization will always remain deeply in her debt.

The award it's my privilege to receive is about academic freedom and its defense, so indulge me in a remark or two about this misunderstood concept.

Academic freedom is universally imagined to be something belonging to academics. This is a profound mistake. Academic



*NAS chairman Steve Balch addresses the Ronald Reagan Dinner of the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington on 27 February 2009 after receiving the Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick Academic Freedom Award from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation and the American Conservative Union Foundation.*

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# OUTLOOK

## Robots v. Dinosaurs

by Peter Wood, President

News report on the box office take for movies over the July 4 weekend, focused on the top grossing pictures, *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*. The headline: “Robots vs. Dinosaurs.”

That makes sense. A few years ago after attending the Swarthmore graduation of my niece and hearing the president pretty much boast of his success in eliminating from the faculty all academic traditionalists, I went home and painted a mural-size depiction of the Swarthmore campus as the setting of a melee of robots vs. dinosaurs. It is not my best painting but it captures a certain scaly, ray-blasting, gear-crunching truth.

The culture war is not the whole truth about higher education, but it is a big truth. Those who hold to the centrality of the Western tradition, to the importance of civilization as an ideal, or to the need to distinguish *higher* knowledge from popular culture are deemed dinosaurs, who should have rightfully gone extinct at the end of the academic Cretaceous, around 1971. A new age was then dawning, marked by the emergence of the *studies* departments. Fields like black studies and women’s studies were ostensibly about expanding the curriculum to give proper attention to hitherto neglected areas of human accomplishment, but they quickly brought something else to the fore. They pioneered the idea that political advocacy is a legitimate academic pursuit. And they combined this

willingness to dispense with the niceties of objective inquiry with profound hostility to Western culture. The robots had landed.

The National Association of Scholars emerged from this conflict in the mid-1980s when it was well along, although it was not yet clear that the dinosaurs had definitely lost. NAS rallied the scholars who wanted to call American higher ed back to its core principles. Who could rightly oppose the pursuit of truth by disciplined and scrupulous inquiry? Who was against the need to protect academic freedom from ideologues who attempt to foreclose debate? Who didn’t want to see students treated fairly as individuals and not as tokens of political maneuvering? And who would oppose the need to maintain academic standards as the baseline of the university?

It all seems a little naïve now. Young academics who viewed the old standards of scholarship as an impediment to the task of improving society had been busy for a generation assembling something new out of the junkyards of European Marxism and existentialism and the novelty shops of French theory. They had combined these with American racial politics to create a workable rationale for jettisoning those “core principles” that NAS imagined unassailable. “Truth” is a fiction maintained by elites to oppress the dis-privileged. *Academic freedom* belongs only to those who speak for liberation. *Fairness* demands preferences for the



Peter Wood

formerly excluded. *Academic standards* must reflect the new epistemology of *difference*.

Stated this baldly, the ideology of the academic left has few self-confessed adherents outside its redoubts in English departments, Cultural Studies, and the various identity-group pseudo-disciplines. But it has gravitational force well beyond that. Its premises are now simply assumed in most universities and to dissent audibly from any of them is to mark yourself as a troublemaker. The most salient marker of the new orthodoxy is “commitment to diversity,” which is the approved way of saying willingness to use racial preferences to admit less-qualified minority students, teach them a watered-down curriculum, award them high grades, and otherwise arrange campus life to foreground minority-group solidarity. None of these actions can be reconciled with the traditional principles of higher education. Thus support for them yields a bright-line distinction between the old and the new. Other slightly less salient

bright-line distinctions are the need to accord women special status; the need to de-bunk America's founding principles; and the need to replace the emphasis on Western values with a view that encompasses other civilizations. The newest arrival among these litmus tests is "sustainability," the idea that human society needs to be radically transformed lest environmental catastrophe overtake us all. Like the other ideological bright-lines, sustainability admits of no rational or legitimate dissent.

Where does this leave NAS?

In January I was appointed NAS's new president. The task is a weighty one, since I am taking over from the organization's founder, Steve Balch. Successions always raise the question, "How much continuity, and how much change?" My answer: quite a lot of both. But I am starting from a point in history quite different from the one that Steve faced in the mid 1980s. It has been clear for a while that the dinosaurs lost the overall war. All of the Ivy League universities, top liberal arts colleges, and public colleges and universities are robot territory, with at most a handful of acknowledged dinosaurs. Dinosaurs can be found in greater abundance at some small sectarian colleges, a few private universities, and community colleges, but they are too few and too marginalized to have much influence on higher education overall. Moreover, the Dupont Circle organizations—the bodies that represent the interests of higher education to Congress and the public—are without exception creatures of the academic left.

About fifteen years ago, taking stock of the left's successful institutional domination of higher education, Steve responded with a strategy of fostering new "centers" on campuses across the country. The

idea was to plant small programs for the study of Western civilization, free institutions, the American founding, and the like in the hope that they would thrive and eventually provide a significant counter-balance. There are now almost forty of these centers. They represent a possible future for American higher education, provided they can survive in hostile territory. One of two key NAS contributions towards that goal was the passage last year as part of the renewal of the Higher Education Act of a measure that authorized the American History for Freedom Program, which would create a competitive grant program to support the sort of centers Steve has helped to establish. The program awaits funding through the Congressional appropriation process. The other NAS contribution towards securing the future for these campus centers was help in creating at the University of Illinois of a donor-advised fund with its own board. This looks like a promising way to ensure that contributions by alumni who wish to support centers actually get used for the intended purpose.

Steve frequently refers to these efforts as a "behind the scenes strategy." I intend to continue it, but I also have a ferocious, dinosaur-sized appetite to get NAS out in front. I want NAS to set the agenda for higher education reform in the United States. We face an entrenched system of mediocrity and things much worse than mediocrity, buttressed by complacency within the university and resignation by the general public. We can change that. Though we have no realistic prospect of restoring to the university as a whole the values of disinterested inquiry and liberal learning, we have very good prospects of igniting debate.

The current system doesn't rest

on principle, but on intimidation and enforced conformity. What is needed more than anything else is a voice that enunciates the smothered discontent within the faculty. NAS in its early days did just that and we need to do it again. Some of the issues remain the same, but we also need to give voice to new ones. High on my list are:


- The rise of student affairs and residence life as "co-curricular" elements within the university. This began in the early 1990s and most faculty members accepted it passively, not realizing the implications. It aims to redefine undergraduate education as less about what happens in the classroom and much more about social activism and transforming students into enthusiastic supporters of various ideological causes. It also shifts significant resources out of faculty-based instruction.
- The financial aid fiasco and spiraling costs. Higher education's only plan for coping with the world financial crisis is to multiply the number of students. This will almost inevitably accelerate the use of adjuncts as teachers and the rise of online education.
- Sustainability. The ascendant campus ideology, sustainability trumps even "diversity." Not everyone has caught on that sustainability isn't just about the environment. It is also a program of redistributive economics and "social justice," which in this case means a re-packaging of the whole program of the academic left.

How do we go about making ourselves heard on matters like these? We've already re-cast *Academic Questions* from being a quarterly miscellany to having

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The most encouraging event in higher education in California for some time was the recent establishment of the Center for the Liberal Arts and Free Institutions at UCLA. Comparable centers already exist in other parts of the country (notably the Madison Center at Princeton) but this is the first on the west coast. While the new Center has the support of a large group of scholars who make up its Advisory Committee, the key factor in its approval by the UCLA administration was the great skill and dedication of Professor of Law Dan Lowenstein, who conceived the idea, wrote an exceptionally well-formulated proposal, and shepherded it through a tough approval process. Professor Lowenstein will be its first Director. CAS hopes to see similar centers established throughout the UC system.

In 1996 California's proposition 209 amended the state constitution so that "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting." Since that time the University of California has taken a number of steps to reduce the role of objective factors (test scores, GPAs) in undergraduate admissions while increasing the latitude afforded by subjective judgments of individual file readers. The University's arguments in support of these changes never mention the desire to evade the provisions of proposition 209, but nobody seriously doubts that this is their real purpose. The most extreme of these measures was adopted during the 2008–09 academic year. Up to now, UC had guaranteed admission to one of its campuses to the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates as measured by GPAs and the SAT 1 and SAT 2. In addition to this, any student in the top 4 percent of his or her high school was also guaranteed admission. New admissions standards adopted this year radically change the admissions process. First, the SAT 2 is dropped. Second, the statewide guarantee of admission is now reduced to the top 9 percent of high school graduates, and the local high school guarantee is raised to the same 9 percent figure. Third, a large new pool of applicants has been created that are "eligible for review" though not guaranteed admission as the top 9 percent are. It is estimated that this new pool would bring the total number of applicants considered in some fashion for UC admission up to 20 percent of high school graduates. Essentially, UC is cutting its intake through objective factors from 12.5 percent to less than 10 percent of high school graduates, and giving itself the ability to pick about another 3 percent from a pool of three times that number by a process that will have no clear guidelines. One can guess that the racial composition of the incoming freshman class will change markedly, and that lawsuits will then begin.

The CAS analyzed these changes and the process through which they came to be adopted and issued a statement heavily critical of both. For example, CAS argued that the proposal to end the use of the SAT 2 contradicted all prior opinion and research at UC, and that the statistical support offered for this change was flawed; that major provisions of this proposal emerged suddenly in a meeting of the statewide UC Academic Council on 27 May 2008 and were approved immediately after being floated for the very first time; that the changes from 4 to 9 percent for eligibility in the local context and from 12.5 percent to 9 percent for the statewide guarantee did not arise from prior study and analysis but were simply figures plucked out of the air; and that the final plan was approved by the Council without input from the campuses. The full statement can be read on the CAS web-site: [www.calscholars.org](http://www.calscholars.org). 

topically-focused issues, with some of the best articles posted on our website. We have entirely re-invented the website, as Ashley Thorne explains in this newsletter. I have proposed to our board that we take the plunge and open our membership to people outside the academy who support our principles. In response to the economic downturn, we are adopting new approaches to fund-raising that are bringing NAS to the attention of new audiences.

But these approaches will work only to the extent that NAS in fact has a coherent and compelling critique of higher education. That's not exactly our historical profile. We have stood these many years as a stout defender of core principles and have been willing to provide a platform for many critiques written from many points of view. What we need now is a well-articulated case against the triviality, waste of talent, squandered opportunities, and illiberal spirit that reign in American higher education, *and* a case for better alternatives.

It may seem dinosaur-like to say it, but we know we are fighting not just for the integrity of the academy, but for the future of our civilization. It cannot long endure if the institution entrusted with passing on to each new generation its hardest-won knowledge, its best truths, and its noblest aspirations slumps into mere job-training and ideological pandering. Higher education these days treats those trusts with, at best, an ironic smile. But they continue to resonate deeply with educated men and women outside the academy. It is to them we must turn. 

Visit today:  
[www.NAS.org](http://www.NAS.org)

# Recap of NAS' 13th General Conference in Washington

Scholars and experts on higher education policy convened at the NAS's 13th General Conference from 9 to 11 January 2009 in what was one of our most insightful and engaging gatherings. The program, titled "The Changing Landscape of American Higher Education," touched on a variety of crucial issues in contemporary higher education.

**Steve Balch** opened the meeting, his first as chairman of the NAS, by looking back a generation to the first meeting in 1989 in New York. He declared that, with **Peter Wood's** selection to be his successor as president, institutionalization of the NAS had been completed and that it could look forward to a long and productive future. Dr. Balch went on to recount some of the NAS's successes over the years.

He then brought **Congressman Thomas Petri** to the podium to honor him for the work he did in enacting the American History for Freedom program—legislation that promises to be an important vehicle for higher education reform.

**Moderator Anne Neal** opened the initial panel of the conference, titled "The Changing Political Landscape of Higher Education." First to speak was Manhattan Institute senior fellow **Abigail Thernstrom**, assessing the significance of the election of a black



*Abigail Thernstrom at the NAS's 9 January 2009 general conference*

man as leader of America and the free world. This, she stressed, would help heal the psychological fissure that has tragically separated white and

black America.

Next to speak was president of The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education **Greg Lukianoff**, who began by listing the speech codes and restraints on free thought at the ample number of schools where FIRE has been obliged to intercede. He regretted that speech codes still proliferate. Mr. Lukianoff asserted that the law has not only been clearly decided on speech codes, but that college administrators can now be held personally liable for them.

**Terry Hartle** is Senior Vice President for Government and Public Affairs for the American Council on Education. He told of massive new higher education initiatives just passed by the 110th Congress covering procedures for student loans, the biggest expansion of the GI Bill since it was promulgated, and more than a thousand pages of the Higher Education Act reauthorization, all of which lay large and complicated requirements on the departments of Education and Veterans Affairs.

**Diane Auer Jones**, president and CEO of Washington Campus, applauded secretary of education Margaret Spellings for the emphasis she placed on higher education. But, she said, the Spellings commission report placed all the onus on institutions, and never worked to increase student responsibility for success in college.

Jones's suggestion to the Obama administration was to engage students more in their own development and offer other alternatives for those who are not comfortable in a college classroom.

The Friday afternoon session kicked off with Steve Balch bestowing the Barry Gross Memorial Award on **Carol Iannone**, long-time NAS board member and editor-at-large of the NAS journal, *Academic Questions*. In accepting the award, Dr. Iannone remembered Barry Gross for his courage in championing the power of reason. She lamented the diminishing of a lively and honest debate in college in the years since she'd been a student.



*Steve Balch bestows the Barry Gross Memorial Award on Carol Iannone*

Citing liberally from ancient philosophers, our keynote speaker, **Victor Davis Hanson**, eminent classicist and Hoover Institution fellow, chronicled the triumph of Western civilization and deplored the decadence and lack of will that now undermines it. Today, our history books blame World War II on America. Our universities teach moral equivalence, degrade our heroes, and have lost sight of those qualities that made Western societies the destination of choice for refugees from every corner of the world.



*NAS cofounder Herb London hands the NAS's Peter Shaw Memorial Award to conference keynote speaker Victor Davis Hanson*

Friday's program ended on a dramatic note with a debate on "The Meaning of Academic Freedom" between **Cary Nelson** of the

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University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, president of the American Association of University Professors and NAS president **Peter W. Wood**. The debate was moderated by **Professor Michael Krauss** of George Mason University Law School.

Professor Nelson complained of what he took to be absolutist rhetoric in the campaign by NAS and others against liberal domination of higher education. Among other matters, he defended the AAUP's 2007 report, *Freedom in the Classroom*, and the role of academic departments in determining what gets taught. Peter Wood responded with definitions of academic freedom: what it covers, on what is it based, and ought it be governed by power external to the university.



Cary Nelson

He cited specific cases of abuses and harked back to the AAUP's own 1915 Declaration of Principles, charging that there are too few protections from the ideological tyranny that today marginalizes many voices in the academy.

The Saturday morning panel, titled "The Changing Economic and Technical Landscape of Higher Education," began with **Herbert London**, NAS board member and president of the Hudson Institute, introducing **Andrew Gillen**, research director for the Center for College Affordability and Productivity. Dr. Gillen read the paper that would otherwise have been presented by Center Director **Richard Vedder** of Ohio University, who was unable to be present because of a family emergency.

Dr. Vedder's paper argued that the creative destruction that prevails in American industry does not

operate with respect to our colleges and universities. Schools have been slow to adopt online solutions, and there has not been as much technological change in our institutions of higher learning as one might have expected. Dr. Vedder provided a list of developments that would be necessary to deal with contemporary economic reality, including, among others, increased teaching loads and a move away from tenure.

**Richard J. Bishirjian**, president and CEO of Yorktown University, also argued that new technology has generally failed to exert a strong influence on higher education. As a means of cutting costs, Dr. Bishirjian suggested that high schools should offer two years of college credit online, from which students would graduate into the last two years of college.

The final speaker was **Scott Jaschik**, editor of *Inside Higher Ed*, who challenged the contentions of previous panelists on Saturday morning. Jaschik asserted that "tons and tons" of technological changes were occurring in higher education. So much so, he said, that younger professors are often concerned that those who are evaluating them for tenure don't understand the process of education today. The revolution is predominately in traditional courses that incorporate online elements.

Following Saturday's banquet

luncheon was an awards ceremony. Steve Balch bestowed an NAS Humanities Award on **Bruce Cole**, the outgoing chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He praised Dr. Cole as a distinguished scholar who understood how the humanities operated as a source of national strength.



Bruce Cole is honored with NAS humanities award

Herbert London then bestowed the Peter Shaw Memorial Award on **Victor Davis Hanson**, who, in his acceptance speech, told how the lessons he'd learned as a farmer could be applied broadly in higher education.

Peter Wood then called American Civil Rights Institute chairman **Ward Connerly** a "citizen," in the best sense of the word, as he presented him with the NAS' highest honor, The Sidney Hook Memorial Award. In his acceptance address, Mr. Connerly said that, given the language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it's simply not logical for government to be in the business of classifying citizens according to race. He spoke of the need for several more state ballot



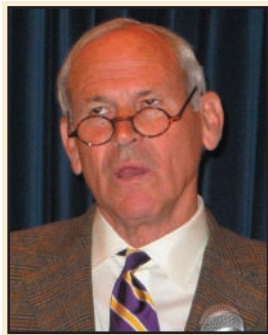
Sidney Hook Memorial Award laureate Ward Connerly

initiatives to take America beyond the preoccupation with skin color.

Following Mr. Connerly's acceptance remarks, Peter Wood delivered a warm encomium to founding NAS president and new

chairman Steve Balch. He followed Steve from Berkeley at the time of the Free Speech Movement through stints on the faculty of John Jay College to the founding of NAS in 1987 and up to the present. It is no small thing, Wood declared, to say that Steve always understood himself not as in service to an organization as much as in service to civilization.

**General Josiah Bunting**, former commander of the Virginia Military Academy, moderated the Saturday afternoon panel titled “The Military and Academe.” General Bunting regretted the current estrangement of the military from society and especially from higher education. He then welcomed three speakers to the podium, the first of whom, **Edward G. Lengel**, is associate editor of the Papers of George Washington.



*General Josiah Bunting*

Dr. Lengel talked about the documentary editing project, on which he works. The Papers of George Washington principally cover the Revolutionary War, he said, and General Washington, himself, considered his papers to be a national trust. Lengel said that his papers show Washington was a stickler for discipline for whom good relations between the military and civilians were crucial.

**Brigadier General Charles F. Brower, IV**, deputy superintendent of academics and dean of faculty at Virginia Military Institute, spoke next. He repeated the contention that antimilitarism and uneasiness with a standing army have a long history in America, and he stressed the need for soldiers not to respond by turning inward into a “self-righteous praetorian cocoon.”

The final speaker in the Saturday

afternoon panel, sociology professor **Allan A. Silver**, experienced the upheavals of 1968 at Columbia University, where he still teaches. Previously, he had worked to ban ROTC from campus. Now he presses for its return, but he identified three impediments to reinstatement: (1) The military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which transforms the dispute into an argument over civil rights, (2) The need for ROTC programs to fall under regular faculty authority over appointments and the awarding of credit, the issue that ostensibly caused its removal forty years ago, and (3) the need for the military to reconsider its policy of withdrawing from elite institutions in northeastern urban areas.

At the end of the day on Saturday, four breakout sessions met with the following titles: “From Locker Room to Laboratories: The Expansion of Title IX,” “School Reform: An Agenda for the New Administration,” “The Argus Project: Always Watching,” and “The American History for Freedom Act.” The sessions were well attended and interesting.

On Sunday, 11 January, **Velma Montoya**, former University of California Regent, introduced **Adam Kissel** as the first speaker on a panel titled, “Are the Dorms Being Politicized?” Mr. Kissel, the director of the Individual Rights Defense Program at the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, described the program of mandatory thought reform training at UDel as a usurpation of the educational prerogative of the faculty.

Next to speak was professor of education **Jan Blits**, one of the NAS

members at the University of Delaware who had played a key role in revealing the excesses of the residence life program there. The intent of that program was to “turn students,” and success was measured by how much students came to agree with their indoctrinators. Instead of fostering free and open debate, Res Life sought to control discussion and direct it, ultimately curtailing active thinking. Professor Blits told how the president of UDel had only reluctantly shut it down when the abuses came to light.

The final formal speaker on the Sunday morning panel was **John K. Wilson** of Illinois State University, founder of the Institute for College Freedom. Dr. Wilson criticized the Res Life program at U-Del, but only because it passed itself off as compulsory. Reflecting on the question, “Are the dorms being politicized?” his answer was, “sadly, no.” Political debate is what we want on campus, he said, and it should be promoted as much as possible, provided that it didn’t involve compulsion or coercion. Others on the panel and in the audience argued that indoctrination, like that at U-Del, prevented students from pursuing more educationally sound studies and debates.

After the final panel, Ward Connerly addressed the audience with inspirational observations drawn from his childhood. After warm applause, Chairman Steve Balch announced the NAS’ 13th general conference adjourned. ✎



## 2009 Annual NAS Membership Meeting

The election of new members to the NAS board of directors will be held during the annual membership meeting to take place at 10:00 a.m., Saturday, 31 October 2009, at the Hudson Institute, 90 Broad St., 20th Floor, New York, NY 10004.

The nominating committee of the current board has placed the following individuals in nomination for the term beginning 1 January 2010 and ending 31 December 2013.

1. Professor Daniel Asia
2. Professor Gail Heriot
3. Dr. Laurie Morrow
4. Ms. Anne D. Neal
5. Professor Michael Schwartz
6. Professor Barry Smith
7. Professor Bradley C.S. Watson
8. Dr. Keith Whitaker

NAS members wishing to make additional nominations to the board must notify NAS secretary B. Nelson Ong in writing, no later than 19 September 2009. (Please address correspondence to NAS headquarters in Princeton). Nominating petitions must designate the number of the seat for which an individual is being nominated and include signatures of ten NAS members in good standing. ✉

## 2008 Annual NAS Membership Meeting

The election of new members of the NAS board of directors took place during the Annual General Membership Meeting at 10:00 a.m., Saturday, 6 December 2008, at the Nassau Inn, Ten Palmer Square, Princeton, NJ 08542.

The board's nominating committee placed the following individuals in nomination. By a vote of the members present, they were elected to be NAS directors for terms beginning on 1 January 2009 and extending until 31 December 2012. In addition, Ken Doyle was elected to fill the remainder of the unexpired term of board member Jeremiah Reedy, who had stepped down from the board earlier in the fall.

1. Professor Evelyn Avery
2. Professor Christina Jeffrey
3. Professor George W. Dent
4. Professor Michael I. Krauss
5. Dr. Barry Latzer
6. Professor Kenneth O. Doyle
7. Dr. Candace de Russy
8. Professor Philip Siegelman

## WWW.NAS.ORG: Remodeled Website Is Widely Popular

This June was one of the rainiest, coldest, cloudiest Junes in the Northeast on record. Here in New Jersey, we at NAS weathered the storms and waited out the gray days. Now that the sun has finally arrived—he may have simply wanted to be fashionably late—summer is at last in full force. Also beaming with all its might is our remodeled website, [www.nas.org](http://www.nas.org). With the transformation of our website over the last year, we feel a bit as if we have emerged from a gloomy June into a warm sunny day.

The last time we wrote in this newsletter about our website, it was to announce its extreme makeover last spring. Back then we saw the change as a chance to improve our public image. Now, just over a year later, we are thrilled at the increased publicity and new initiatives made possible by this website.

We publish new NAS articles every day, each one brightened by illustrations—which often tell their own story. Some articles are lengthy and scholarly, others brief and light-hearted. We range over all sorts of topics, from “critical global studies” to “beehive whacking” (on the tribulations of cracking down on plagiarism). Coming up with daily fodder for our ravenous beast makes us very attentive to academic news and responsive to the tips from readers. It pays off. We’ve broken some national stories. Since we launched the new website, nearly 300,000 unique visitors have browsed through our pages, and we’ve been mentioned, quoted, and linked in 160 news articles and blog entries. One of

them was a *Wall Street Journal* article and two were front-page *New York Times* stories.

Building new features into the site has also been a process. First we added a comments feature that allows readers to append their thoughts instantly to any of our articles. Our most commented article so far is “Rebuilding Campus Community: The Wrong Imperative,” a statement



we released last summer about the movement to use residence life for ideological “education.” Comments from one article frequently help furnish content for another. Mainly we

appreciate the opportunity to continue the conversation, extend the debate, and get feedback from our readers. And to enable them to stay up-to-date with what we’re doing, we implemented RSS feed as well as twitter updates of all our articles.

A curiosity is that despite our having a large national (and even international) readership, a fair number of NAS members have never visited the website. We assume that’s because they are too busy reading *The Republic* for the 45th time. But take a break guys. Plato won’t mind. In fact, you’ll find him on our homepage welcoming you in.

What can you find on our website? We listed some of the highlights in a recent posting, “400th Article” (you can find this by clicking “Browse NAS articles by topic, by special series, by college/university, by date” in the Announcements box on the homepage). If you want to see what NAS has written about, for instance,

the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, or what we have to say about sustainability, or which of our articles has the best rhymes—this directory is a good starting place.

On NAS.org you can also find new article series, such as *Academic Questions* Samples, Ask a Scholar, If I Ran the Zoo, and the Argus Project.

The *Academic Questions* samples feature two or three articles from each issue of the journal. An article we posted this spring, entitled “The Classroom Without Reason,” sparked an exchange that would not have happened had the article appeared only in a print version. We also posted an excellent article by Wendy Shalit on the campus “hookup” culture, as well as a lively interview with Tom Wolfe who chatted about his book *I Am Charlotte Simmons*.

“Ask a scholar” is an opportunity for our readers to pose to us their most burning questions—things like “Does science fiction count as literature?” and “Is Russia part of the West?” So far, we’ve fielded inquiries on literary interpretation, the meaning of new verbs such as “queering,” and why there are no seatbelts on school buses. We encourage all our readers to submit questions—and not the sort of thing that can be answered with a quick trip to Wikipedia. You may have wondered, for example, “Is the printed word on the brink of extinction?” or “How is the cell phone changing our culture?” or even, “Has Big Brother arrived?” Conjecture no more. Ask a scholar, and we’ll match up your question with an expert who knows.

As a lighter alternative to these hefty questions, we began a summer tradition based on Dr. Seuss’s beloved story *If I Ran the Zoo*. In Seuss’s rhymes, a young boy named Gerald McGrew dreams up new and unusual animals he would bring in to improve the contemporary (and boring) zoo. NAS’s version asks

readers to tell us how they would run the higher education zoo if they had the chance. What whimsical changes could they imagine? So far we’ve published articles by twenty-one would-be zookeepers, and to launch this summer’s series, NAS president Peter Wood performed a poem he composed about his dream zoo—a zombie zoo—on YouTube.

We have videos on our website of our national conference in January in Washington, D.C. Conference highlights include the debate between Peter Wood and AAUP president Cary Nelson on the meaning of academic freedom; and Victor Davis Hanson’s keynote address on defining Western culture. Our photo gallery documents the conference and Chairman Balch receiving two national awards for his work at NAS.

The new website also helps readers make contacts. We offer an index of forty “excellent programs” in American studies or Western civilization. Each one is based at a particular college or university; some are Great Books programs, some are free institutions centers, and some are academies for the study of the Constitution and democratic government. If you are looking to get connected with like-minded people, or if you’d like to find out which programs are closest to you, our Excellent Programs listing is a good place to begin.

Another resource is our Argus project. We launched Argus last summer to find people willing to “be our eyes” on campuses around the country. By means of a website-based survey, we recruited over seventy volunteers to help keep NAS

up-to-date on campus mischief. NAS in turn is able to bring attention to neglected issues in cases where faculty members, students, and administrators may fear retaliation for speaking out publicly. Since launching the initiative, we have published many articles based on leads from Argus volunteers. One discussed the “Safe Spaces” movement on campus; one exposed U Mass Amherst for offering college credit to student volunteers in the Obama campaign; and one was a first-hand account from an administrator who was told it would be difficult to find “another black woman to replace you.”

A recent can of worms we discovered and have tracked on our website is a case of bold political bias in a policy at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University—Virginia Tech, that is.

We’ll leave it to you to read about the university’s efforts to use a “diversity” litmus test on faculty members. To find our articles on Virginia Tech, just type “Virginia Tech” into the search box on the homepage.

Our days of withdrawing into the shadows are over. With our new website we have stepped into the bright rays of public engagement. So join us in the sunlight, where we are in hot pursuit of accountability and integrity in higher education. Visit our website, [www.NAS.org](http://www.NAS.org), and help us bring the facts to light. ☞



NAS

## Virginia Association of Scholars Holds Annual Meeting

The Virginia Association of Scholars (VAS) met on Saturday, 18 April 2009, at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville. The two guest speakers were Greg Lukianoff, president of the The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), and Peter Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars (NAS), the parent organization of the VAS.

Lukianoff discussed the mission of FIRE and described several cases with which he has dealt. He pointed out that while the majority of faculty who have been mistreated because of their political views have been conservative, violations of individual rights have been committed against faculty all across the political spectrum.

Wood described the history of the NAS, and discussed the role it should play in higher education in the future. He also brought out the difficulties engendered by the current emphasis by university administrators upon "diversity" in academia.

There was considerable discussion of the situation at Virginia Tech, where there is a move afoot within the administration to make commitments to and active support for "diversity" litmus tests for hiring, promotion, and tenure of faculty. The group decided to monitor closely the ongoing developments at Tech. Problems at Virginia State University were discussed briefly. ☞

## Report on the Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Association of Scholars

The Wisconsin Association of Scholars held their annual meeting in Madison on Thursday, 2 July 2009. The campuses represented were the Universities of Wisconsin in Madison, Milwaukee, and Whitewater, and it was recognized that some effort would be required to attract more participation from other campuses in the system as well as from the colleges and universities outside the state system.

The first item on the agenda was recognizing a continuing debt to the Bradley Foundation for their support of the WAS. Among the ways in which that contribution could be put to use was the creation of a Web site that would reflect the current activities of the association, as well as furnish a platform for comments about issues to do with higher education in the state. Due to the changes in state policies (and the reflection of national issues here), there was some reluctance to include statements by members that could rapidly become out of date. Instead, once the Web site is in place, the WAS hopes it can blend up-to-date observations with somewhat longer-lasting essays.

One topic of general interest to those present was the issue of accreditation and its connection with assessment. Most of those teaching have found themselves devoting sizable chunks of

time to devising instruments for assessment outside the ordinary classroom environment. In particular, as visits by accrediting bodies loom on the horizon, questions of assessment can take precedence over issues of teaching. David Mulroy, treasurer of the WAS, felt that UW-Milwaukee would be an appropriate choice for examining whether there should have been more consideration before a program from the American Association of Colleges & Universities called Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) was adopted. There's also the possibility of discussing the issue of governmental supervision of accrediting bodies, especially when the government withdraws the right to accredit, but that may be the making of another program.

Information, gathered after a Wisconsin State Supreme Court ruling in favor of WAS that data on UW-Madison admissions were subject to the open records law, is being analyzed by the Center for Equal Opportunity, and there is some suggestion that a report will be due out this fall. Litigation on the issue of scholarships limited by race has not been making any progress, although the lawyer for former WAS president Marshall Osborne continues to work on it. ☞

## Meeting of the Ohio Association of Scholars

The Ohio Association of Scholars held its annual meeting on 3 October 2008 at the Faculty Club of the Ohio State University. At the afternoon program the members discussed several matters, including the announcement of the new Comprehensive Equity at Ohio State ("CEOS") Program. CEOS, funded by the National Science Foundation, fixes a numerical goal for 30 percent of the 80 faculty hires expected in the next five years in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at OSU to be women. Of these women, fully 25 percent are to be drawn from specified minorities. The members agreed to draft a statement expressing concern over the use of implicit quotas and to urge steps to avoid race and gender discrimination in the implementation of the program. Our guest speaker, Steve Balch, discussed the current condition of and future plans for the NAS. He then gave a talk on the creation of independent programs in academia in order to improve viewpoint diversity and to enhance attention to academic fields that have been slighted in recent years. Following the afternoon program the members reconvened for dinner. ☞

# Minnesota Association of Scholars

Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes (actually 11,842 lakes of more than ten acres surface area) but it is also a place where academics thrive and students can get a good education. There are schools offering coursework on-line, and some with a strong physical presence, those which are vocational, and others that are technical, as well. The NAS has traditionally focused its attention on the traditional college and university and traditional faculty members but as another Minnesotan (Bobby Dylan) said, "...the times, they are a-changin'."

To meet new goals, the Minnesota Association of Scholars, aligned with the National Association, is opening its membership to others, who are truly interested in scholarship and want to reform higher education by increasing intellectual rigor. The MAS is looking for members who will encourage rational and civil discourse, free speech, and the elevation of our culture and heritage as the foundation of good academics in a free society. The MAS intends to modify its by-laws to extend membership privileges to such persons, including students.

A vehicle for bringing more open and rational discourse to Minnesota campuses has been the Tocqueville Center for Academic Freedom, with its home near the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, but increasingly interested in extending

its services throughout the state. We experimented with extending the Center to other locations to serve our academic goals more widely. Last fall the MAS brought Bay Buchanan to the campus to talk about "Feminism and the Elections." This was essentially intended to be a look at the progress of women in politics and the role of traditional feminism in reshaping the electoral process.

During spring 2009 the MAS hosted a talk by Christina Hoff Sommers, who asked "Why Aren't There More Women in Science and Technology?" She spoke first at the College of St. Catherine, a Catholic liberal arts college for women. Afterwards she was the keynoter at the Annual Membership Banquet and then gave a public presentation in the McNamara Alumni Center at the University of Minnesota. At both locations the dialogue was open, questions were stimulating, and attendees were excited about their intellectual involvement with a nationally known speaker.

Challenges for the coming year will be to continue to increase membership, to solidify the base of the Tocqueville Center, to actively involve other campuses at both public and private institutions, and to reform higher education, making it the market place of free ideas. ☞

## Pennsylvania Association of Scholars Meets

The Pennsylvania Association of Scholars met on 1 April 2009 in the Student Union at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. It began with a colloquium led by Dr. Peter Augustine Lawler, who is Dana Professor and Chair of the Department of Government and International Studies at Berry College in Rome, GA. Dr. Lawler spoke on the subject of academic freedom in higher education. He is an editor for numerous scholarly journals and was also a member of President Bush's Council on Bioethics. He has written or edited 12 books, and is currently working on *Homeless and at Home in America*.

Dr. Lawler put forth the provocative thesis that the best preserves of academic freedom are religious institutions. In such places, he argued, there is a genuine openness to the possibility of transformation. Secular universities attempt to indoctrinate their students with the view that there are only questions, but no answers. Religious institutions allow for the commitment to certain answers, which paradoxically entails taking inquiry seriously. In a sense, claiming that one text is sacred leads the student to take texts themselves seriously.

The evening concluded with a PAS dinner at which ideas were discussed for future events. While funds are needed to make this a yearly tradition, the hope is to build off these humble beginnings and generate more involvement among PAS members. ☞

## Are You Moving?

If you are moving, changing your e-mail address, or switching jobs, please let us know! Many times, our members relocate and forget to provide us with a new address. Without that information, it is difficult to send the copies of *NAS Update* or *Academic Questions* that are due to you.

# NAS

## Spring Events Held by the New York Affiliate

The NY Association of Scholars was active in spring, holding four lectures at homes on Riverside Drive and Fifth Avenue in New York City. On 15 February, Frederick Fierstein, poet and psychoanalyst spoke on "Cultural Change, and How It Is Happening." Paula Fichtner, former chair of the Brooklyn College History Department, addressed the membership on 22 March on "The Other Orientalism: The Hapsburg Empire and Islam." On 26 April, Mark Krikorian, executive director, Center for Immigration Studies, spoke on "Mass Immigration vs. Modern Society." Finally, on 24 May, Yale Kramer, of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, described "The Political Methods of the Left." ❧

## National Capitol Association of Scholars Meeting

At the last meeting of the Washington, DC chapter of NAS, William Craig Rice spoke on "New Arguments for Great Books Education." In attendance were faculty and staff from local universities and colleges as well as members of DC think tanks, NGOs, and government agencies. The meeting took place last fall on 22 September at the home of A. Graham Down, coordinator of the DC chapter of NAS. Dr. Rice was director of the Division of Education Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities,

Dr. Rice first reviewed the traditional arguments for the Great Books Educational Curriculum. According to classical authors such as Quintillian, a curriculum of this type builds a "noble" character. For Matthew Arnold study of the classics made it possible to introduce knowledge of important ideas to a wide audience. For others a Great Books Curriculum aids the mastery of complex and difficult concepts necessary for "faculty discipline." More recently it has been suggested that the Great Books curriculum presents a forum for addressing the major questions of human life in a non-religious context.

Rice himself proposed that the Great Books curriculum be extended to the major works of non-Western cultures. Study of these works has the obvious benefit of allowing an entrée

into distinctively "other" cultures and at the same time provides a basis for a new appreciation of our own great works. An example of such a curriculum might be a course structured around an analysis of Eastern and Western texts of what constitutes good government. Potential courses could delve into: What is the good life? What are the Limits of Scientific Understanding? Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Good and Evil? Dr. Rice concluded by noting the high level of interest on the part of students in Great Books Curricula. Courses on the Great Books are invariably oversubscribed, he said.

Lively discussion followed Rice's talk. Those present commented on the lack of coherence in the undergraduate curricula of most colleges and universities, the ritual arguments for a form of multiculturalism devoid of any real engagement with non-Western cultures, the problems of career specialization by faculty and students alike to the neglect of a curriculum that shapes minds rather than careers. Comments were also made on the ability of a Great Books curriculum to address many of these issues together with its established capacity to create cross generational dialogue between alumni and current students. ❧

## Old Issues of AQ Needed

We would like to rebuild the office's stock of back issues of *Academic Questions* – covering the first five volumes. If you have such numbers and have no use for them, we would be pleased if you could consider sending them to us.

freedom belongs to the people of America, who, through a variety of corporate bodies ranging from legislatures to boards of trustees, bestow it upon university and college faculties. Unlike the freedom of speech, academic freedom has no title to being a natural right. Nor, despite some judicial meanderings, does it properly fit within the Constitution.

Academic freedom is neither a natural nor a constitutional right, because it doesn't solely pertain to individual conscience or agency. It involves instead an authority that employs other people's resources—students, taxpayers, and donors, and it is exercised in particular institutional settings for particular institutional purposes. The fiduciaries of students, taxpayers, and donors—legislators and trustees—confer it upon academics for the pursuit of specific intellectual goals, namely the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge—"truth" if you'll allow me the use of what is, academically speaking, often regarded as a naïve term.

Now if you boil this academic freedom down to its essence, what do you find? That it consists of something extraordinary. Academic freedom gives professors what no other professional group, however expert, enjoys. It gives them freedom from oversight by those to whom they would in every other case be accountable, the representatives of the people who pay their bills. No one else working within an institution has this immunity, be he a soldier, a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, or whatever. Well-run institutions understand that they mustn't micromanage, but all expect to be able to direct, evaluate, and correct the activities of the professionals who work for them. None could function otherwise. Universities are the great exception.

So why have professors been given this unparalleled license? It was originally part of a deal whose terms have, unfortunately, been largely forgotten. But the deal had a code name that, once uttered, will bring those terms back into the clear light of day: "science"!

When the organization that today purports to be academic freedom's chief defender, the American Association of University Professors, was founded back in 1915, it made absolutely no bones about the nature of this deal. Its founding statement asserted that "the claim to freedom of teaching is made in the interest of the integrity and of the progress of scientific inquiry; it is, therefore, only those who carry on their work in the temper of the scientific inquirer who may justly assert this claim". What did this mean specifically? In the words of the statement, nothing less than that the professor should:

1. "Gain his conclusions through competent, patient, and sincere inquiry"
2. Set them forth with "dignity, courtesy and temperateness of language"
3. In dealing with controversial matters, "set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators" and
4. "not... provide students with ready-made conclusions, but... train them to think for themselves".

In other words, without methodological rigor, disinterestedness, objectivity, sobriety, intellectual respect, and the repudiation of anything suggestive of indoctrination, no deal would exist, no academic freedom obtain. The first champions of academic freedom appealed to the public's recognition of science's

unique and awesome powers to better man's estate, and asked to be left alone so long, and only so long, as they pursued their work, whatever its subject matter, in the spirit of science.

That was 1915. Where are we now?


We're now in a world

- where professors of literature commonly set themselves up as social theorists to expose America's alleged racial and sexual inequities—so much for competence;
- where fields like social work have preordained conclusions about the questions they research and teach—so much for sincere inquiry;
- where eighty-eight Duke professors rushed to judgment about presumed innocent, in fact innocent, university students on the basis of racial stereotyping—so much for dignity, courtesy, and temperateness; and
- where academic programs openly proclaim themselves as instruments of advocacy and activism—so much for divergent opinions and thinking for oneself.

And what do the representatives of academe have to say about all of this when questions are raised by the public? They say it all falls under academic freedom. They say each field must be left to determine its own standards. They cry McCarthyism. They say, in the words of one of their leading lights, Stanley Fish, "your opinions aren't worth listening to".

When they say these things, how should the public reply? It should remind the professoriate that it has academic freedom on loan. It should

remind public university faculties that there is no taxation without representation, and that if they are not accountable for their scholarly opinions, they are certainly accountable for their academic principles. It should insist that the spokesmen for American higher education place the interests of scholarship above the interests of scholars, and not content themselves with being the mouth-pieces for one more self-serving group. It should demand of the lead organizations of academic life, most especially the American Association of University Professors, that they reaffirm that academic freedom is conditional, and that the conditions are nothing less than scholarship and teaching of rigor, probity, and disinterestedness. And it should let the entire academic community know that it will continue to be watched closely—that the price of academic freedom is eternal vigilance by all concerned, within academe and without.

Only when higher education knows that its conduct is being watched and measured, that adherence to its principles is taken seriously by the general public, and that its immunities depend upon the public's confidence, will it regain the willpower to live up to its demanding ideals. 

## Email Listservs on Education from the NAS

**N**AS members who are not already subscribed might be interested in two Listservs—NASNET and AADAP-L—that are moderated by Tom Wood.

(1) NASNET, a free, moderated email list, is a project of the National Association of Scholars. (It was, until very recently, called CASNET, the email list of the California Association of Scholars.)

NASNET provides a free news and views service to NAS members who do not themselves have the time to follow developments in higher education as closely as they would like. Its primary purpose is to keep subscribers apprised of news and views that are important or of interest, whether they are consonant with NAS perspectives or not. Thus, the postings do not necessarily represent the views of the NAS or the moderator. It is, however, a service that appears to be much appreciated by subscribers.

NASNET is a relatively high volume list. Every week or two a fairly lengthy digest of articles gets posted, consisting of links and brief excerpts. In addition, a few standalone pieces are posted every day or two, particularly when the articles are timely.

Almost all the articles that appear on the NAS web site get posted to NASNET, either as independent standalone pieces or as links in the weekly or biweekly digests.

NASNET currently has over 200 subscribers.

You can view recent posts to NASNET and join or leave the list by visiting—

<http://home.ease.lsoft.com/archives/nasnet.html>

(2) AADAP-L, a free, moderated email list, is a project of Americans Against Discrimination and Preferences (AADAP), a 501(c)(3) organization concerned with issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and affirmative action.

AADAP-L evolved from a fax list that served the campaign for California's Prop. 209 (California Civil Rights Initiative). AADAP, the organization, was formed in 1996, shortly after the passage of Prop. 209 in California, to promote the principles embodied in that amendment to the California State Constitution. Tom Wood and Glynn Custred, two members of the NAS and the CAS (California Association of Scholars), were the co-authors and official proponents of that initiative.

As in the case of NASNET, the purpose of the Listserv is to keep subscribers abreast of relevant news and views in the subject area. People working on the 209 campaign were as interested in what the media were saying about the opponents as they were in what the media were saying about them. To some extent, this wide-ranging interest continues to inform the selection of postings to AADAP-L. That is, like NASNET, postings are not limited to those the moderator and subscribers might be expected to like or agree with.

AADAP-L is now a lower-volume Listserv than NASNET, and consists entirely of occasional stand-alone pieces. AADAP-L focuses on developments that change or might change the law, such as the Ward Connerly-sponsored statewide initiatives and news and views on race, gender, and affirmative action involving legislatures and the courts.

AADAP-L currently has over 200 subscribers.

You can view recent posts to AADAP-L and join or leave the list by visiting—

<http://home.ease.lsoft.com/archives/aadap-l.html>



Please remember us when you are writing or updating your will.

A bequest made to the National Association of Scholars will help us continue to champion reasoned discourse and intellectual freedom in higher education for years to come.



# AFFILIATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

## ALABAMA

President: Michael S. Loop  
University of Alabama at  
Birmingham  
924 18th Street South  
Birmingham, AL 35294  
205-934-6751  
loop@uab.edu

## ALASKA

President: Judith S. Kleinfeld  
759 Cranberry Ridge Road  
Fairbanks, AK 99712  
907-457-8691  
Kleinfel@alaska.net

## ARIZONA

President: Danial I. Asia  
University of Arizona  
5230 Apache Hills Trail  
Tucson, AZ 85750  
520-203-1660  
520-529-0531/fax  
asia@u.arizona.edu

## ARKANSAS

President: Sandra Stotsky  
202 Graduate Education Bldg  
University of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
479-575-7282  
stotsky@aol.com

## CALIFORNIA

President: John Ellis  
144 Bay Heights  
Soquel, CA 95073  
831-476-1144  
john.ellis@earthlink.net

## COLORADO

President: Charles L. King  
2870 Duke Circle  
Boulder, CO 80305  
303-499-7547  
cking130@gmail.com

## CONNECTICUT

President: Jay A. Bergman  
Department of History  
Central Conn. State University  
Post Office Box 4010  
New Britain, CT 06050-4010  
860-832-2811  
860-667-9499/home fax  
bergmanj@ccsu.edu

## DELAWARE

President: Jan H. Blits  
University Honors Program  
219A Willard Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, DE 19716-5699  
302-831-1649  
302-831-6058/fax  
JBlits@udel.edu

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

President: A. Graham Down  
4000 Cathedral Ave., NW  
Number 152B  
Washington, DC 20016  
202-333-8258  
agdown@msn.com

## FLORIDA

Acting President: Michael D. Grimes  
Miami-Dade College  
School of Justice  
11380 N.W. 27th Avenue  
Miami, FL 33167-3495  
305-237-1411  
mgrimes@mdc.edu

## GEORGIA

President: Ann Hartie  
Philosophy Department  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA 30322  
404-727-0105  
ahartie@emory.edu

## HAWAII

President: James Roumasset  
Department of Economics  
University of Hawaii at Manoa  
514 Saunders Hall  
Honolulu, HI 96822-2281  
808-956-7496  
808-956-4347/fax  
jimr@hawaii.edu

## IDAHO

President: Scott Yenor  
Dept. of Political Science/SSPA  
Mail Stop: 1935  
Boise State University  
1910 University Drive  
Boise, ID 83725  
208-426-2388  
syenor@boisestate.edu

## ILLINOIS

President: Jonathan J. Bean  
37 Pine Lane  
Murphysboro, IL 62966  
618-453-7872  
618-453-5440/fax  
jonbean@siu.edu

## INDIANA

President: Robert H. Heidt  
School of Law, Rm. 263  
211 South Indiana Avenue  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, IN 47405-7001  
812-855-7272

812-855-0555/fax  
heidt@indiana.edu

## IOWA

President: Donald P. Racheter  
600 N. Jackson  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641  
319-385-3462  
319-385-3799/fax  
racheter@limitedgovernment.org

## KANSAS

President: Marsha L. Frey  
Department of History  
208 Eisenhower Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506-1002  
406-251-2000  
785-532-7004/fax  
mfrey@ksu.edu

## KENTUCKY

President: Monica J. Kern  
Department of Psychology  
220a Kastle Hall  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY 40506-0044  
859-257-6842  
859-323-1979/fax  
harris@pop.uky.edu

## LOUISIANA

President: William F. Campbell  
3914 Broussard Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
225-927-2042  
225-922-9959/fax  
wcampbell14@cox.net

## MAINE

President: Michael Palmer  
Department of Political Science  
University of Maine — Orono  
5754 North Stevens Hall  
Orono, ME 04469-5754  
207-581-1879

207-581-4856/fax  
michael\_palmer@umit.maine.edu

## MARYLAND

President: Duane C. Ellison  
Department of History and  
Political Science  
Humanities Building, Room 263  
Montgomery College—  
Rockville Campus  
51 Mannakee Street  
Rockville, MD 20850-1199  
301-251-7286  
301-251-7278/fax  
208760@comcast.net

## MASSACHUSETTS

President: Douglas Sears  
Assoc. Provost/Assist. to Pres.  
Boston University  
One Sherborn Street  
Boston, MA 02215  
617-358-1360  
dsears@bu.edu

## MICHIGAN

President: Paul Moreno  
78 W. Lynnwood Blvd.  
Hillsdale, MI 49242-1962  
517-607-2578  
pmoreno@hillsdale.edu

## MINNESOTA

President: Terrence F. Flower  
Dept. of Physics  
College of St. Catherine  
2004 Randolph Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
651-690-6598  
651-690-8657/fax  
tflower@stkate.edu

## MISSISSIPPI

President: Frank Glamser  
36 Summer Place  
Hattiesburg, MS 39402  
601-264-2975  
fglamser@earthlink.net

## MISSOURI

President: Dean Monahan  
2021 Steven Drive  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701  
573-334-6976  
dmonahan@semo.edu

## NEBRASKA

President: Edward A. Rauchut  
Bellevue University  
1000 Galvin Road South  
Bellevue, NE 68005-3098  
402-293-3701  
402-293-2035/fax  
erauchut@bellevue.edu

## NEVADA

President: David S. Fott  
Department of Political Science  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
Post Office Box 455029  
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5029  
702-895-4187  
dfott@unlv.nevada.edu

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

President: James Tucker  
50 S. School Street  
Unit 1  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
603-430-2838  
603-862-1814  
jetucker@hopper.unh.edu

## NEW JERSEY

President: George Zilbergeld  
24 Ellis Street  
Freehold, NJ 07728  
732-431-1047  
zilbergeld@mail.montclair.edu

## NEW MEXICO

Coordinator: Greg Butler  
MSC 3BN  
New Mexico State University  
PO Box 30001  
Las Cruces, NM 88003  
505-522-3931  
505-646-4935  
gbutler@nmsu.edu

## NEW YORK

President: David Gordon  
History Department  
CUNY – Bronx Community College  
University Avenue  
and West 181 Street  
Bronx, NY 10453  
718-289-5658  
dmgordon@mindspring.com

**CITY UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW YORK CHAPTER**  
Chair: Dorothy Lang  
Business Dept., 3N-219  
CUNY-Staten Island  
2800 Victory Blvd.  
Staten Island, NY 10314-6600  
718-982-2927  
cunyas@earthlink.net

## NORTH CAROLINA

President: Robert Rosthal  
P.O. Box 4846  
Greensboro, NC 27404-4846  
336-299-3873  
336-299-7932/fax  
rrosthal@aol.com

## OHIO

President: George W. Dent, Jr.  
School of Law  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cleveland, OH 44106-5409  
216-368-3311  
216-368-2086  
george.dent@case.edu

## OKLAHOMA

President: Andrew C. Spiropoulos  
Oklahoma City University  
School of Law  
Oklahoma City, OK 73106-1493  
405-521-5801  
405-521-5089/fax  
aspiropoulos@okcu.edu

## OREGON

President: Michael Kellman  
Department of Chemistry  
University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403-1253  
541-346-4196  
541-346-4643/fax  
kellman@uoregon.edu

## PENNSYLVANIA

President: Michael P. Krom  
617 Chestnut Street  
Latrobe, PA 15650  
724-805-2844  
michael.krom@email.stvincent.edu

## RHODE ISLAND

President: William Felkner  
14 High Street  
Ashaway, RI 02804  
401-474-1893  
401-427-0286/fax  
billfelkner@cox.net

## SOUTH CAROLINA

President: Christina Jeffrey  
801 Palmetto Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29302  
864-948-1297  
jeffreycr@wofford.edu

## TENNESSEE

President: James Summerville  
Independent Scholar  
208 McCreary Hgts  
Dickson, TN 37055-1217  
866-828-3388  
mapheus@prodigy.net

## TEXAS

President: Robert Koons  
Waggener Hall, C3500  
University of Texas  
Austin, TX 78712-1180  
512-471-5530  
512-471-4806/fax  
koons@mail.utexas.edu

## UTAH

President: Royal Skousen  
Department of Linguistics and  
English Language  
4037 JFSB  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT 74602  
801-422-3482  
royal\_skousen@byu.edu

## VERMONT

President: Laurie Morrow  
15 Deerfield Drive  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802-229-9208  
lpmorrow@msn.com

## VIRGINIA

President: Cary Stronach  
2241 Buckner Street  
Petersburg, VA 23805-2207  
804-732-8993 (home)  
804-896-1168 (cell)  
cestronach@comcast.net

## WASHINGTON

President: Alex Myrick  
1014 South 120th St.  
Seattle, WA 98168  
206-901-0647  
myrick\_4@msn.com

## WEST VIRGINIA

President: Robert K. Griffith  
Department of Basic  
Pharmaceutical Sciences  
School of Pharmacy,  
Box 9530  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV 26506  
304-293-1481  
304-293-2576/fax  
rgriffith@hsc.wvu.edu

## WISCONSIN

President: Thomas L. Drucker  
801 East Clay Street  
Apartment C-3  
Whitewater, WI 53190  
262-472-5173  
druckert@uww.edu

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS  
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