

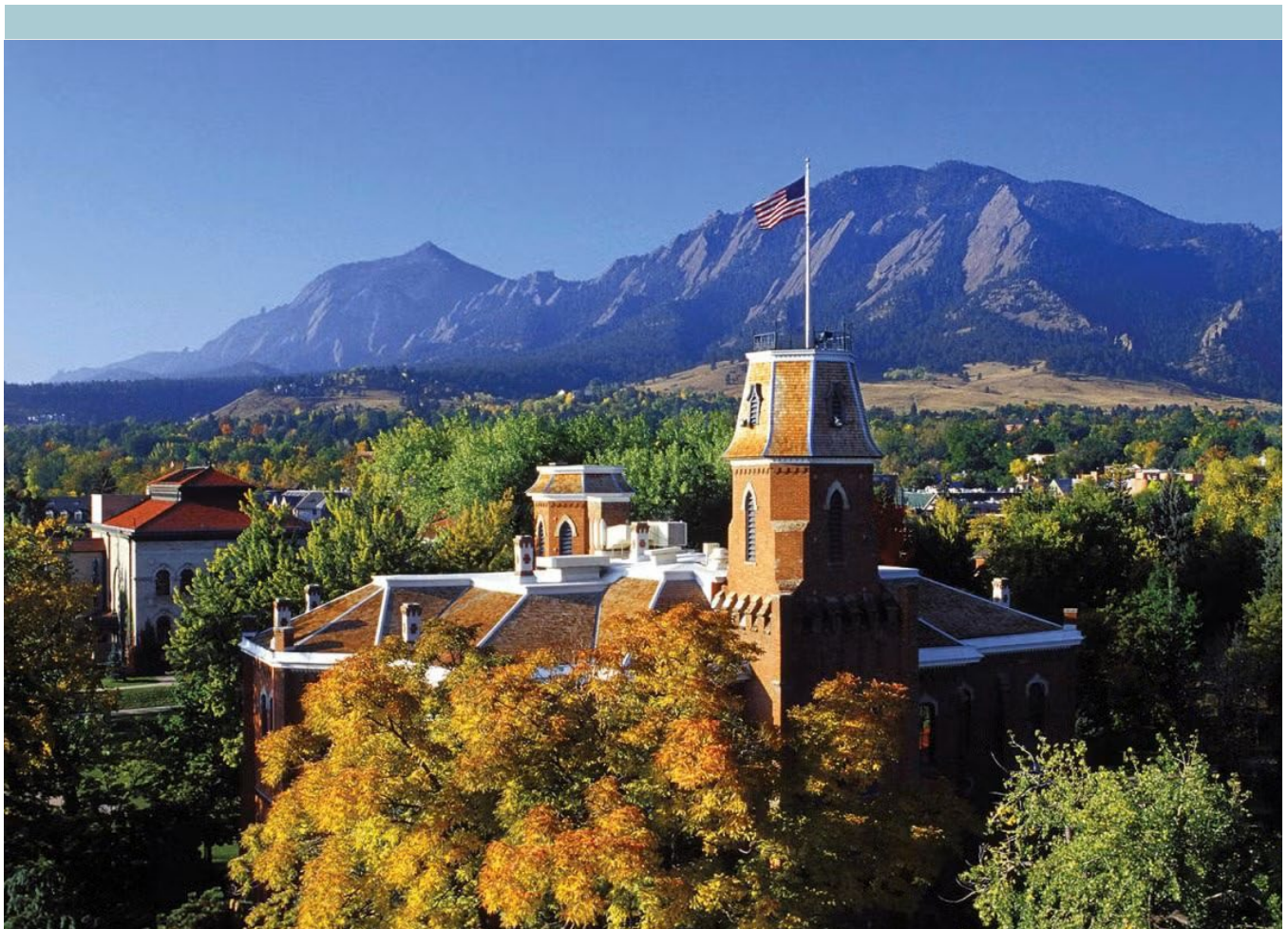


University of Colorado
Boulder

Director, Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

Leadership Profile

June 2026



Executive Summary

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) invites inquiries, nominations, and applications for the position of **Director of the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization**. The Director will be a distinguished scholar and dynamic academic leader who brings intellectual vision, collaborative instinct, and entrepreneurial energy to one of the nation's most highly endowed university-based centers dedicated to the study of Western civilization, civic culture, and free inquiry.

The University of Colorado Boulder is Colorado's leading public research university, transforming lives since 1876. As the state's flagship university and one of only 38 U.S. public research institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU), CU Boulder has proudly served Coloradans since the state's founding. Home to five Nobel Laureates since 1989, CU Boulder provides a strong return on investment by aligning efforts to achieve research and creative excellence, global sustainability impact, and the success of all students, faculty, and staff.

The Benson Center promotes the study of the intellectual, artistic, and political traditions that characterize Western civilization. Central to this mission is our commitment to fostering dialogue about fundamental values and controversial questions. The Center provides a forum for free inquiry and respectful open debate and promotes academic freedom and intellectual diversity.

At a moment of both opportunity and scrutiny for higher education, the Benson Center occupies a distinctive and important role at CU Boulder: fostering rigorous scholarship, undergraduate learning, and public engagement on foundational ideas, institutions, and values that have shaped Western societies and the United States. The next Director will build on the Center's momentum, strengthen its integration into the University's academic life, and advance CU Boulder's mission as Colorado's flagship public research institution.

The successful candidate will be an accomplished, tenured faculty member with a record of scholarly distinction and teaching excellence, as well as experience in administrative leadership. CU Boulder seeks a director who can lead with credibility and care, engage productively across differences, raise and steward significant philanthropic resources, and position the Benson Center as an indispensable contributor to campus life, student success, and public discourse.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

Role of the Director, Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

Reporting to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Director serves as the chief academic and administrative leader of the Benson Center and holds a senior endowed chair, rostered in an appropriate academic department within the College of Arts and Sciences. The Director provides strategic leadership, intellectual direction, and operational oversight for all aspects of the Center's mission, programs, and resources.

The Director is responsible for shaping and advancing the Center's academic vision; overseeing curricular and co-curricular initiatives; managing personnel, budget, and all other resources and operations; leading donor engagement and development efforts; and representing the Center to internal and external audiences. As both a campus leader and a public-facing intellectual, the Director plays a critical role in fostering open inquiry, academic freedom, and balanced discourse.

The Benson Center operates with an annual budget approaching \$2 million and supports a vibrant academic community. The Center engages 14 faculty fellows (internal CU Boulder faculty committed to the mission of the Benson Center), two Visiting Scholars in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP), two sabbatical scholars (faculty visiting on a fixed appointment term for either a semester or full year, depending on funding and preferences of the candidate), and two university staff, with approval to hire a third staff member in AY 2026-27. The Center also has 82 students enrolled across four courses.

As a member of CU Boulder's academic community, the Director is expected to teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels in their field of expertise and to engage actively in shared governance, interdisciplinary collaboration, and campus leadership. The Director serves as a principal advocate for the Benson Center while also operating with a university-first mindset, advancing the broader goals and values of the College of Arts and Sciences and CU Boulder.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The Director will join the Benson Center at a pivotal moment marked by renewed demand for civic education, intellectual pluralism, and thoughtful engagement with enduring questions in a rapidly changing social and political environment.

Key leadership opportunities and expectations include:

Advance a Clear, Compelling, and Forward-Looking Vision

The Director will articulate and pursue a unifying vision for the next phase of the Benson Center, one that builds on its strengths while adapting to the evolving landscape of higher education and public discourse. This includes setting strategic priorities that foster scholarship, teaching, and engagement without fragmenting the Center's core mission.

Deepen Integration Across CU Boulder

Strengthening trust, collaboration, and visibility across the campus is essential. The Director will proactively work with faculty, department chairs, deans, central administration, and other academic units such as the Center for Humanities and the Arts to position the Benson Center as a valued academic partner and contributor to undergraduate education, interdisciplinary research, and student engagement. The Director must be a visible, accessible leader who is present on campus, engaged with students and colleagues, and committed to Boulder and Colorado.

Expand Academic and Undergraduate Impact

The Director will support and grow innovative academic initiatives, including undergraduate civics programming, interdisciplinary offerings such as Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE), Faculty Fellows programs, visiting scholars, and the potential development of majors or minors anchored in Western intellectual traditions.

Expanding Civic Engagement and Impact

The Director will scale the Benson Center's outreach and engagement across local and national audiences. At the state and community level, the Director will serve as a visible ambassador for the Center, strengthening relationships across Boulder and Colorado. On a national scale, the position enables leadership within the broader civic education movement in the United States.

Model Intellectual Leadership and Inclusive Dialogue

The Director will foster a culture that welcomes diverse viewpoints and engages disagreement with seriousness, civility, and intellectual rigor. The role requires comfort navigating controversy, the ability to lead through persuasion rather than posture, and a commitment to dialogue over dogma.

Lead External Engagement and Philanthropy

As an external ambassador for the Benson Center, the Director will cultivate relationships with donors, alumni, scholars, policymakers, and community partners. Effective stewardship of a significant endowment and thoughtful donor engagement are central to the role.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

CU Boulder seeks a Director who embodies intellectual distinction, leadership maturity, and relational strength. The ideal candidate will demonstrate many of the following qualifications and qualities:

Academic and Professional Credentials

- Advanced academic credentials with an earned doctorate or terminal degree.
- A distinguished record of scholarship and teaching in a relevant field such as history, classics, political science, philosophy, or economics that would warrant a tenured faculty appointment (associate or full professor) within the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Demonstrated interdisciplinary engagement and public-facing scholarship.

Leadership and Strategic Capacity

- Demonstrated leadership experience required to lead and strengthen a nationally recognized academic center, for example: leadership of a department, center, institute, think tank, or comparable organization.
- Ability to conceive, articulate, and execute a strategic vision.
- Strong organizational, financial, and administrative and personnel management skills.
- Demonstrated ability or clear potential to engage successfully in fundraising and donor relations.

Interpersonal and Communication Strength

- Collaborative, transparent leadership style aligned with shared governance.
- Exceptional communication and listening skills.
- Capacity to build trust across ideological, disciplinary, and institutional boundaries.
- An appreciation for shared governance and institutional context.

Personal Attributes

- Commitment to academic freedom, intellectual diversity, and free inquiry.
- Intellectual humility, resilience, and sound judgment.
- Entrepreneurial mindset balanced with institutional awareness.
- Genuine enthusiasm for the Benson Center's mission and for leadership in a public research university.

About the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization

Overview

The [Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization](#) is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Colorado Boulder, one of the nation's leading public research universities and a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU).

Established in 2006 as the Center for Western Civilization, the Center was later merged with the Visiting Scholar on Conservative Thought and Policy initiative in 2014 to foster intellectual diversity on campus. In 2019, the Center was renamed the Bruce D. Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization in honor of the University of Colorado System President Emeritus in recognition of his leadership and support. According to the Benson Center [2024 – 2025 annual report](#):

The Center supports research grounded in the Western intellectual tradition, with particular emphasis on the ancient and modern worlds, the formation and history of the United States, and the distinctive contributions of the Mountain West and Colorado to the American experiment. It promotes balanced discourse, welcomes diverse viewpoints, and seeks a broad range of perspectives on philosophical, political, and economic questions. The Center is committed to intellectual rigor while providing a venue for exploring the nation's intellectual, cultural, and political foundations.

The Center is among the most highly endowed academic centers of its kind and occupies a distinctive position at CU Boulder and nationally. It serves students, faculty, and the broader community through coursework, public lectures, research initiatives, visiting scholars, and interdisciplinary programming. The Center promotes balanced discourse that engages both liberal and conservative viewpoints, maintaining a wide range of ideological, economic, and philosophical perspectives at CU Boulder.

Mission and Vision

The Benson Center promotes the rigorous study of the intellectual, political, artistic, and cultural traditions of Western civilization and their continuing influence—particularly on the ideals and institutions of the United States.

The Center is committed to:

- Free inquiry and academic freedom
- Intellectual rigor and scholarly excellence
- Engagement across a wide spectrum of political, economic, and philosophical perspectives

Its vision is to serve as a premier academic venue for serious inquiry into enduring questions of liberty, equality, justice, and civic responsibility.

Values

- Academic freedom and open debate
- Intellectual diversity and pluralism

- Excellence in scholarship and teaching
- Civic engagement and public responsibility
- Dialogue rooted in rigor, respect, and integrity

Governance

The Benson Center is supported by an Executive Committee made up of faculty, a highly engaged external Advisory Board, and a dedicated staff and Faculty Fellows program. The Board serves as a strategic partner and ambassador for the Center, with the Director maintaining academic leadership and operational authority in close collaboration with university leadership.

Visiting Scholars Program

The Center offers opportunities for the Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy (VSCTP) and Sabbatical Fellows. Positions are announced on the Benson Center website each year as funding becomes available.

[Visiting Scholars in Conservative Thought and Policy](#) (VSCTP) come from academic, military, media, or policy communities. They teach a load commensurate with their field and offer public lectures, public seminars, and informal discussions with students and the public. While on campus, the visiting scholar brings in prominent members of the conservative intellectual community from around the country for a day at CU Boulder.

The Benson Center invites applications for sabbatical researchers to visit and serve as [Sabbatical Fellows](#) on an ongoing basis. Faculty in fields or with sabbatical projects related to conservative programs, projects, and/or activities of the Center are eligible to apply. Though it is assumed that Sabbatical Fellows will spend much of their time conducting their own research, the Center would expect them to participate in bi-weekly faculty seminars and other activities.

Undergraduate Fellows Program

The aim of [the Undergraduate Fellowship and the Freytag Fellowship](#) is to foster an active and flourishing intellectual community of undergraduate students at the University of Colorado Boulder dedicated to Western tradition, exposure to a wide range of political and other views, and critical reflection on the social and philosophical questions of our time. All CU students - including incoming freshmen and transfer students - are welcome to apply for either or both Fellowships regardless of major, personal background, or political perspective.

Additional Links of Interest

- [Upcoming and Past Events](#)
- [Grants and Fellowships](#)
- [Free Mind Podcast](#)
- [Benson Center Library](#)

About the University of Colorado Boulder

Overview

The University of Colorado Boulder is Colorado's leading public research university, transforming lives since 1876. As the state's flagship university and one of only 38 U.S. public research institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU), CU Boulder has proudly served Coloradans since the state's founding. CU Boulder serves more than 38,000 undergraduate and graduate students and employs more than 8,000 faculty and staff.

With eight colleges and schools offering more than 90 degree programs and 4,000 academic courses, it is home to world-class faculty who deliver high-impact learning opportunities while also originating innovative research and creative work.

Home to five Nobel Laureates since 1989 and the only university to send space instruments to every planet in the solar system, CU Boulder provides a strong return on investment by aligning efforts to achieve research and creative excellence, global sustainability impact, and the success of all students, faculty, and staff.

What Makes Us Boulder

Defining Our Mission, Vision, and Institutional Priorities

Our mission is to serve as the [state of Colorado's comprehensive graduate research university](#) with selective admission standards, offering a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs.

Our vision is to transform lives in service to a just and sustainable world.

Institutional Priorities

Fostering the Success of All Students, Faculty, and Staff

Student Objectives

- Make CU Boulder a destination of choice for all learners.
- Ensure early access to support and community.
- Coordinate academic success efforts across student populations.
- Prepare students for successful careers and alumni engagement.
- Develop flexible academic pathways to meet demand and ensure degree value.
- Transform the digital student experience by implementing learner lifecycle constituent relationship management.

Faculty and Staff Objectives

- Make CU Boulder a destination workplace across career paths.
- Prioritize mattering and community-building among all faculty and staff communities.
- Encourage accessible, inclusive, high-impact health and well-being and professional growth opportunities.

- Strengthen faculty compensation and enhance the competitiveness of faculty salaries, benefits and career development pathways.
- Enhance the competitiveness of staff compensation, including the total value of staff salaries and benefits.

Scaling Research and Creative Work Excellence

Objectives

- Advance high-impact, innovative research, and creative work.
- Promote collaborative and inclusive research and creative work ecosystems internally and externally.
- Pursue societal impact and public engagement of research and creative work.
- Develop internal funding mechanisms that promote interdisciplinary collaborations.

Achieving Global Leadership in Sustainability Impact

Objectives

- Expand sustainability-focused academic programs across the curriculum.
- Harness research expertise to address sustainability issues locally, nationally, and globally.
- Operationalize campus sustainability initiatives across carbon reduction scopes 1, 2, and 3.
- Elevate the visibility and outcomes of CU Boulder's sustainability leadership.
- Directly assist statewide communities and commercial interests to help make "Colorado the most sustainable state in the U.S."
- Define and fund priority sustainability initiatives through internal and external sources.

Aligning Our Resources and Infrastructure to Our Mission

Objectives

- Foster operational excellence and shared equity leadership.
- Enhance financial sustainability by optimizing and stewarding resources.
- Advance global initiatives to enhance institutional impact, collaboration, and visibility.
- Foster a unified approach to public safety to build a safer and more resilient campus community.
- Align our physical and technological resources to cultivate a vibrant learning community.
- Strengthen CU Boulder's statewide impact through coordinated, inclusive, and data-informed outreach.
- Align campus strategic events under a coordinated approach that enhances the impact of events and external partnerships.
- Optimize compliance to meet campus needs while fostering data-informed decisions that balance risk, innovation, and speed.

- Advance Colorado Athletics as a key contributor to CU Boulder's mission at this dynamic time in intercollegiate athletics.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado's flagship university, honors and recognizes the many contributions of Indigenous peoples in our state. CU Boulder acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute, and many other Native American nations. Their forced removal from these territories has caused devastating and lasting impacts. While the University of Colorado Boulder can never undo or rectify the devastation wrought on Indigenous peoples, we commit to improving and enhancing engagement with Indigenous peoples and issues locally and globally.

We will do this by:

- Recognizing and amplifying the voices of Indigenous CU Boulder students, staff, and faculty, and their work.
- Educating, conducting research, supporting student success, and integrating Indigenous knowledge.
- Consulting, engaging, and working collaboratively with tribal nations to enhance our ability to provide access and culturally sensitive support and to recruit, retain, and graduate Native American students in a climate that is inclusive and respectful.

Creating Supportive Environments

Creating and supporting campus environments where everyone matters and all can thrive is not the responsibility of a single campus unit, but of the entire campus community. Our collaborative work must form a solid foundation for all we do: **teaching, research, development, leadership, mentorship, supervision, innovation,** and **service**. Building on [shared equity leadership](#), academic and administrative units are creating action plans to support student, staff, and faculty success.

Shared Governance

The Boulder Faculty Assembly (BFA) is comprised of elected and appointed representatives from the CU Boulder Faculty Senate. Members also include campus liaisons representing CU Boulder Retired Faculty Association, C.U. Student Government (CUSG), Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG), CU Boulder Staff Council, chairs of the Boulder college/school faculty councils, and an ex officio member from Academic Affairs.

The University of Colorado Boulder Faculty Senate is part of the CU System Faculty Senate as outlined in Regent Law and defined in the CU Faculty Senate Constitution. While at many universities, the term "faculty senate" is used to describe the elected members of their shared governance body, as outlined in Regent Law and defined in the CU Faculty Senate Constitution. At CU, the term "faculty senate" is used more broadly and encompasses all enfranchised faculty members.

Leadership

Ann Stevens, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



Ann Stevens is the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. As the chief academic officer, she leads the University's academic mission, overseeing all elements of research, teaching, and the student and faculty experience at the University. She oversees the recruitment, development, and promotion of faculty, deans, and other academic leaders, and coordinates academic planning with budget preparation and capital development needs. She works collaboratively with the deans, faculty, staff, and students in the exercise of shared governance for the Boulder campus. Her appointment as provost began in July 2025.

Her research interests include the incidence and long-term effects of job loss, connections between economic shocks and health, and poverty and safety-net dynamics. Stevens' research has been supported by numerous grants from foundations and federal agencies and is widely cited, placing her in the top 4% of economists worldwide.

From 2019 to 2025, Stevens served as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and professor of economics at the University of Texas at Austin, where she held the David Bruton, Jr. Regents Chair in Liberal Arts and led a team of faculty and staff that grew sponsored research funding in the college by 50% in five years. In the undergraduate area, Stevens expanded career services and research opportunities for students and oversaw significant growth in undergraduate enrollment.

From 2003 to 2019, Stevens was a professor of economics at the University of California, Davis, where she also served as the founding director of the Center for Poverty Research, Chair of the Department of Economics, and Interim Dean of the Graduate School of Management.

Stevens received her Ph.D. in economics from the University of Michigan and her undergraduate degree in economics and political science from American University.



Boulder, Colorado

Located in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, about 25 miles northwest of Denver, Boulder is the 12th-largest city in Colorado, with a population of approximately 105,000. Residents enjoy more than 300 days of sunshine a year and an impressive variety of recreation, shopping, dining, cultural, and entertainment choices.

At the foot of the mountains, outdoor activities abound, including hiking in the landmark Flatirons with more than 60 parks and 155 miles of hiking trails open to the public. Boulder is also a biking mecca: there are four bikes for every one person, 300 miles of dedicated bikeways, mountain biking trails, a 29-acre free bike park, cycling clubs, and more.

Downtown Boulder offers shops, restaurants, and street performers on the Pearl Street Mall, as well as the Boulder County Farmers Market in the warm summer months. A strong arts community, with galleries, museums, musical performances, and more, provides entertainment rich in culture.

From the Rocky Mountains to an engaging downtown, Boulder is ranked as the number one college town by Universities.com and offers something for everyone.

For more details about Boulder, visit: www.bouldercoloradousa.com.

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are welcome. Applications should include, as two separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. Please submit applications through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at www.wittkieffer.com by selecting the "Become a Candidate" button. For full consideration, all materials should be received by August 14, 2026.

This search is being led by Maya Holt-Brockenbrough, Ph.D., Suzanne Teer, and Bronwen Bares Pelaez, Ph.D., of WittKieffer. Nominations and inquiries may be directed to Maya Holt-Brockenbrough, Ph.D. (mayahb@wittkieffer.com) and Bronwen Bares Pelaez, Ph.D. (bbarespelaez@wittkieffer.com).

The Benson Center Director includes \$90,000 in annual compensation for the Director role, in addition to the base academic-year faculty salary of \$175,000-\$220,000, depending on the discipline of the joint appointment. Potential research support, course releases, and relocation assistance available, subject to University policy.

Commitment to Job Application Fairness: Applicants are not required to provide age or age-related information and may redact information related to age, date of birth, or dates of attendance at or graduation from an educational institution from any submissions during the initial application process.

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to building a culturally diverse community of faculty, staff and students dedicated to contributing to an inclusive campus environment. We are an Equal Opportunity employer, including veterans and individuals with disabilities.