

Charter establishing

The Alexander Hamilton Center

known by its full title as

The Alexander Hamilton Center for the Study of Western Civilization

Established at Hamilton College

Fall 2006

(Revised 11/22/2006)

“It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force.” Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* # 1.

Preamble

In 1793 Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, endorsed Samuel Kirkland’s proposal to create a “Seminary of learning” to educate the children of Indians and white settlers in upstate New York. Hamilton agreed to serve as a trustee of the school, which in 1812 was chartered as Hamilton College. Himself the beneficiary of

rigorous training in the liberal arts at King's College (now Columbia University), Hamilton matured in a dynamic transatlantic world during a century that may well have generated the most bold and original political thinking in history. However much the founding fathers looked to the past to inform a new system of government, the creation of the United States, a democratic republic, represented a political innovation. A freedom loving people fiercely committed to the private ownership of landed property had created a government shorn of a monarch, an established church, and a hereditary aristocracy.

Hamilton stood at the center of the founding of the United States. Born on the Eastern Caribbean island of Nevis, the illegitimate son of a luckless Scottish merchant, the gifted and aspiring Hamilton arrived in New York a few years before the onset of the American Revolution. During the war, he quickly rose in the ranks. He served as an artillery officer and key aide to George Washington. His stature grew after independence. He not only participated as a delegate in the Constitutional Convention, but endorsed its handiwork unforgettably by composing the majority of the *Federalist Papers*. Thomas Jefferson, Hamilton's arch-rival, described the eighty-five essays as "the best commentary on the principles of government, which ever was written." Indeed, Hamilton's role in the ratification of the Constitution and his enduring contributions to the fields of law, economics, and politics helped ensure the very survival of that great experiment in popular government.

Mission Statement

A heritage, at its most basic level, speaks to the journey of persons from there to here. It identifies the signposts, monuments, and ruins left behind by human beings as

they sought individually and collectively to define who they are and what they aspired to be. The Alexander Hamilton Center for the Study of Western Civilization (AHC) proceeds under the premise that the reasoned study of Western civilization, its distinctive achievements as well as its distinctive failures, will further the search for truth and provide the ethical basis necessary for civilized life. The AHC aspires to create an educational environment of the highest standards in which evidence and argument prevail over ideology and cant.

A traditional liberal arts education relies on curricular disciplines to expose students to different ways of attaining knowledge. To borrow from the educator Richard Weaver: “The mere facts about a subject which may come marching in monotonous array, do not speak for themselves. They speak only through an interpreter . . . , and the interpreter has to be those general ideas derived from an understanding of the nature of language, of logic, of mathematics, of ethics, and politics. The individual who is trained in these basic disciplines is able to confront any fact with the reality of the freedom to choose.” Thus, for a serious liberal arts college, no more vital understanding of diversity exists than that which would promote intellectual diversity. The proper ends of education imply variegated approaches to the acquisition of knowledge and to the cultivation of intelligence. A liberal arts graduate, properly trained, should possess not only an enhanced capacity to distinguish between career and the good life, but the ability to manage with honesty and dignity the often conflicting claims imposed on adulthood by nature, society, and environment.

The great books of Western civilization conserve a distinctive intellectual and spiritual tradition. They have generated a timeless conversation, which, Alexander

Hamilton, as a liberal arts student and American citizen, participated in and notably elevated. Inspired by Alexander Hamilton's life and work, the AHC promotes excellence in scholarship through the study of freedom, democracy, and capitalism as these ideas were developed and institutionalized in the United States and within the larger tradition of Western culture. The central concerns of the AHC include:

1. The meaning and implications of capitalism, its genesis and impact; the role of markets, money, and financial institutions in economic growth; the importance of the rule of law and property rights in wealth creation.
2. The relations between economic freedom and political freedom; the construction of limited government; the rise of the modern, bureaucratic state and its impact on individuals and communities.
3. The nature and paradox of civil liberty; the compatibility of freedom with equality and of virtue with efficiency; the role of merit, distinction, and hierarchy in the formation of civilization.
4. The significance of natural law and natural rights in shaping Western political and legal culture; the common law tradition in the United States and the principles on which it is based.
5. The role of religion in American politics; the moral basis of democracy; separation of church and state.
6. The relation between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in the founding and evolution of the United States; notions of limited and divided government; the federal principle.

7. The role of private associations in a free society, their role in mediating between state and individual; the lines between private and public in a democratic society.
8. The nature of republics, democracies, and empires; realism and idealism in the practice of United States foreign policy; the role of the United States in world affairs.
9. Justice as a central concern of government; government as a potential threat to justice.
10. Modes of leadership; rhetoric and communication in the effective performance of leadership.

If an insular college campus ever truly existed, its time has passed. Indeed, the AHC rejects as dangerous the pretense that campus life should be immured from the outside world. The AHC welcomes public scrutiny as well as public interest. Although the AHC recognizes as its primary responsibility the education of Hamilton College undergraduates, programming will seek to engage a much broader community of informed citizens, including high school students and teachers, alumni, trustees, and political officials. The creation of an outside board of academic advisors comprised of distinguished scholars from different disciplines will help ensure scholarly integrity and help chart the direction of the center's programming. A board of overseers comprised of faculty, trustees, alumni, and institutional leaders will ensure transparency and accountability *not only to the Board of Trustees of Hamilton College but to the public as well.*

Programs

The AHC will sponsor annual lectures, colloquia, and conferences centered on annual thematic programming. Hamilton College, since its founding almost two centuries

ago, has earned a reputation for excellence in undergraduate education. The AHC will enhance that tradition by awarding annually a junior residential fellowship to a gifted doctoral candidate or post-doctoral scholar whose scholarship pertains to one or more of the triad of ideas--freedom, democracy, and capitalism--to which the AHC is devoted. It will also award an annual residential fellowship to a distinguished senior scholar who has published significant work on one or more of these subjects. The AHC will present an annual award for excellence to a Hamilton undergraduate who has written an essay related to the meaning of freedom. Each year several Hamilton College juniors will be awarded stipends to support research in subject areas related to the mission of the AHC.

Alexander Hamilton Prize

The AHC will honor its distinguished namesake by awarding annually a substantial prize to the author of the most outstanding work of scholarship on Alexander Hamilton, the founding of the United States, or the period of early American history in which Alexander Hamilton made his enduring contributions to the intellectual, economic, and political life of the United States. Nominated works will be judged on erudition, originality, analysis, and style. Additional information about the prize and the selection process can be obtained by contacting the Executive Director of the AHC

Governance

The AHC will be governed by a Board of Overseers, Executive Director, Executive Council, and Academic Advisory Council *subject to the authority of the Hamilton College President and Board of Trustees.*

Board of Overseers

The Board of Overseers of the AHC will consist of nine members. They will be drawn from the Board of Trustees of Hamilton College, Hamilton College alumni, Hamilton College faculty, and institutional and educational leaders from outside the Hamilton community. The faculty founders of the AHC will choose the nine charter members of the Board of Overseers in consultation and with the approval of the ***President and Board of Trustees of Hamilton College***. [Dean of the Faculty of Hamilton College.] Approval will not be withheld without [cause] ***a public explanation***. The Dean of the Faculty will sit ex officio on the Board of Overseers as a non-voting member. One member of the Board of Overseers will be a member of the Hamilton College faculty (not including the Executive Director of the Center) who serves on the Executive Council of the AHC.

The Board of Overseers will consider legal and financial issues, including fundraising, ***which will be carried out in consultation with the Hamilton College development office***. [and] ***The Board*** will exercise oversight and supervision to ensure that the AHC fulfills its mission. By a vote of at least seven of the nine members of the Board, it will nominate an Executive Director of the Center. The Board will present the nomination to the [Dean of the Faculty of Hamilton College] ***President and Board of Overseers*** for approval, which will not be withheld without [cause] ***a public explanation***. The Director will serve a three-year term of office (renewable).

. By majority vote, the Board of Overseers will choose a chairman. The chairman will call members to meet on an annual basis and at other times according to the discretion of the membership. Members of the Board of Overseers will serve

staggered three-year terms (renewable). By majority vote, members of the Board will fill vacant seats *subject to the approval of the President and Board of Trustees*.

The Alexander Hamilton Center is entitled to the same academic freedom as that of a college professor in teaching and research. The Board of Overseers of the AHC ensures that its policies and operation comply with the resolutions of the Trustees of Hamilton College and their fiduciary responsibilities. The founders of the AHC recognize that violation of those resolutions, disregard of those responsibilities, or deviation from the center's scholarly mission as clearly defined in the charter may result in the removal of the AHC's executive director from his office by the president of Hamilton College and the Board of Trustees or the discontinuance of the center's funding by the College or both. This provision of the charter is irrevocable.

Structure of the Board of Overseers

1. The Board of Overseers of the Alexander Hamilton Center (AHC) will be a self-perpetuating board whose nine members serve for staggered terms of three years. An overseer is elected by a majority vote of the current members, and can be reelected to serve a sequence of terms.
2. The charter members of the Board will be appointed by Professors Bradfield, Ambrose, and Paquette (the faculty founders of the AHC) with the approval of the [Dean of Faculty] *President and Board of Trustees* of Hamilton College, who will not withhold approval without [cause] *an articulated explanation*.

3. The nine charter members of the Board will be organized into three classes of three overseers each, as follows:

Class A: The three overseers in Class A will serve an initial term of *two* years. At the end of their second year in office, the then current members of the Board (including members of Class A) will elect successors to the overseers in Class A. These successors will serve a term of three years. At the end of their terms, the then current members of the Board will elect successors for a term of three years.

Class B: The three overseers in Class B will serve an initial term of *three* years. At the end of their third year in office, the then current members of the Board (including members of Class B) will elect successors to the overseers in Class B. These successors will serve a term of three years. At the end of their terms, the then current members of the Board will elect successors for a term of three years.

Class C: The three overseers in Class C will serve an initial term of *four* years. At the end of their fourth year in office, the then current members of the Board (including members of Class C) will elect successors to the overseers in Class C. These successors will serve a term of three years. At the end of their terms, the then current members of the Board will elect successors for a term of three years.

4. With the beginning of the fifth year, and continuing every year thereafter, each member of the Board will serve a term of three years. The terms will be staggered so that three of the members will finish their terms at the end of each year.

5. The diagram below specifies the dynamics of membership on the Board, from the first year of operation through the tenth year. As stated above, the Board reaches a steady state of staggered terms of three years each beginning with the fifth year.

A: Designates the three charter members of Class A

A': Designates the successors to the three charter members of Class A

A'': Designates the successors to the three members of Class A', etc.

B, B', and B''; and C, C', and C'' are analogous to their counterparts A, A', and A''.

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1/3 of members A'''	A	A	A'	A'	A'	A''	A''	A''	A'''
1/3 of members B'''	B	B	B	B'	B'	B'	B''	B''	B''
1/3 of members C''	C	C	C	C	C'	C'	C'	C''	C''

Beginning in the fifth year, the terms of one-third of the overseers expire each year.

Executive Director

The Executive Director must be a full-time member of the Hamilton College faculty. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board, may appoint an Associate Director. By unanimous vote, the Board of Overseers may amend the charter of the AHC *subject to the approval of the President and Board of Trustees*.

The Executive Director, the chief programming officer of the AHC, will provide an annual written report on the activities of the AHC to the Board of Overseers and to the [Dean of the Faculty] *President and Board of Trustees* of Hamilton College. The Board of Overseers may, at its discretion, forward this report to the principal funding sources of the AHC, together with comments on the Executive Director's report. The Board will monitor the activities of the AHC and issue a written review of its operation every three years. The [Dean of the Faculty] *President and Board of Trustees* of Hamilton College will receive a copy of this review. Both the Executive Director's annual report and the Board's three-year reviews will discuss the expenditure of funds and other financial matters. The Executive Director's report will provide specific information regarding the work of the junior residential fellow and the visiting senior scholar, undergraduate activities, and other initiatives (speakers, conferences, colloquia) sponsored by the Alexander Hamilton Center.

The Executive Director will attend all meetings of the Board of Overseers and will report to them on the operations and programming of the AHC.

Executive Council

The faculty founders of the AHC will serve as charter members of the Executive Council. It will have the authority to expand membership to include other faculty members at Hamilton College, although the number will not exceed seven. The Executive Council will help in the planning and implementation of programs and will serve as a channel through which Hamilton faculty can support the center's activities. Members of the executive council will serve at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Academic Advisory Council

The Academic Advisory Council will consist of at least twenty distinguished scholars and public intellectuals. They will support the scholarly work of the AHC by helping to chart an intellectual course consonant with its mission. The Executive Director will, for example, solicit members of the Advisory Council for recommendations about the scholarly initiatives that the AHC might undertake, about how best to explore particular themes during an academic year, and about speakers who should be invited to campus. Members of the Advisory Council will serve three-year (renewable) terms. The Executive Director of the AHC in consultation with the Executive Council will appoint members to the Advisory Board.

Founders:

Robert Paquette

James Bradfield

Douglas Ambrose

For Hamilton College:

Joan Hinde Stewart, President

Joseph R. Urgo, Dean of Faculty

