Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This newsletter is written for all who have inquired about the mission and activities of the Center for Freedom and Western Civilization at Colgate University. It explains how we are working to change the intellectual climate of the Colgate campus and to restore the true meaning of liberal arts education as an education worthy of a free citizen and a free mind.

The Mission
The Center for Freedom and Western Civilization was established five years ago at Colgate University in order to support public discussion of the Western heritage of freedom and civilization. The Center also seeks to promote intellectual diversity by presenting “a conservative voice” in debates about important issues of the day.

The public response so far has been tremendous because of the growing sense that our universities are unbalanced – that we no longer have a genuine exchange of ideas where all sides are fairly presented on the great issues of American politics and the great books of the Western tradition.

Colgate’s Center for Freedom and Western Civilization is one of many centers and institutes that have been created recently on our college campuses to restore genuine liberal arts education and to challenge the prevailing political correctness. Similar centers now exist at Princeton, Duke, Emory, Michigan State, Brown, Georgetown, and nearby Hamilton College. They are part of a growing movement led by ACTA (the American Council of Trustees and Alumni) to restore balance and integrity to American higher education.

Charter and Organization
Colgate’s Center for Freedom and Western Civilization was formally created by a written charter of the college president that is renewable every three years. The current charter provides for a governing organization headed by a director, a faculty advisory board of Colgate professors, and alumni advisory board of supporters and donors.

The faculty advisory board includes Colgate professors Stanley Brubaker (political science), Michael Haines (economics), Douglas MacDonald (political science), Alice Nakhimovsky (Russian and Jewish studies), Alexander Nakhimovsky (computer science), and Joseph Swain (music). It meets regularly with the director, Robert Kraynak (political science) to plan and coordinate events.

The alumni advisory board includes Hallie Bailey ‘00, Monica Crowley ‘90, Peter O. Hanson ‘55, Richard L. Stone ‘81, and Dennis C. Vacco ‘74.

Speakers and Events
The Center has sponsored many exciting speakers and events which have provoked important debates on campus. Here are some highlights with accompanying pictures and news articles.

Spring 2009:
March 26, 2009: Gingrich spurs lively dialogue in jam-packed Chapel. Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House of Representatives, moved from lecturer to town hall host Thursday night as he initiated a vigorous dialogue with students and community members who filled every available seat and lined the aisles of Memorial Chapel.

Gingrich argued that we have begun a new era in American politics with the Obama administration and we need to begin a critical discussion about whether it is leading us in the right direction or the wrong direction and whether America is heading for prosperity or decline. Gingrich said America is in a very dangerous place with an economic situation not seen in 80 years. No one has a clue on how to address the crisis, he said, including members of Congress who are "culpable, not capable."

Striking a populist tone at times, Gingrich advised audience members to view the recovery efforts with caution. "Don't assume that the lessons learned in the last forty years apply. We're in the early stages of fundamental change. You have to go back to first principles because you don't have a road map to help you."

Spring 2008:
Feb. 7, 2008: “American Conservatism and the Challenge of Edmund Burke.” A lecture by Professor Robert P. Kraynak of Colgate University explaining the relation between Burke’s political thought and various strands of right-of-center thinking in America. The event was the inaugural lecture of the Edmund Burke Society of Hamilton College and was co-sponsored by the newly created Alexander Hamilton Institute at its new headquarters at the Alexander Hamilton Inn, Clinton, NY. See the website for the AHI – www.theahi.org

March 12, 2008: “Feminism and the War against Boys.” A lecture and discussion with Christina Hoff Sommers of the American Enterprise Institute on her critique of feminism for its negative effects on boys and girls. Co-sponsored with Women Studies and the College Republicans.

By Brittany Messenger '10

George Will, a Pulitzer Prize-winning conservative journalist and author, used an impressive array of facts, his sharp wit, and several well-timed baseball references to illustrate the state of politics today.

April 1, 2008: “Leo Strauss and the Art of Esoteric Writing”
A lecture by Professor Arthur Melzer of Michigan State University on the influential scholar Leo Strauss and his impact on scholarship and politics.  Co-sponsored with the Humanities Colloquium.

April 14-15, 2008: Military and Defense Appreciation Week:
“Military and the Academy: ROTC at Colgate?”

As a result of Center efforts and student participation, Colgate University has restored an Army ROTC unit in conjunction with the Syracuse University ROTC program.

Fall 2006:

Michelle Malkin and Ruben Navarrette Jr. take part in a debate on immigration at Love Auditorium.  (Photo by Luke Connolly '09)

Ruben Navarrette Jr., columnist for the Washington Post and frequent CNN commentator, and Michelle Malkin, syndicated columnist and Fox News Channel contributor, may not see eye to eye on a lot of issues, but they do agree that illegal immigration is a huge problem in the United States.

Project Afghanistan

The Center continues its support for Project Afghanistan by providing funds to the director, Prof. Alexander Nakhimovsky of Colgate’s computer science department and Colgate alumnus Mike Smith ’70.  They are building computer systems and English language software for the University of Kabul and putting Western university courses on DVD’s for the Afghan students.  They also are developing English language materials for an economics course at the University of Kabul based on Milton Friedman’s television series, Free to Choose.

Professor Nakhimovsky is also carrying out an NEH-funded project "The History and Ethnography of Pashtuns: A Searchable Database of Annotated Documentaries and other Multimedia." The Pashtuns are the largest tribal alliance in the world and live along the Afghanistan - Pakistan border (while only a fraction of Pashtuns are Taliban, most Taliban are Pashtuns). The project will help to better understand these people, some of whom protect Osama bin Laden and wage war on Afghan, American and NATO troops in Afghanistan.
Awards and Scholarships

This is the fifth year that the Center gave out the Richard L. Stone ’81 Civic Freedom awards at commencement weekend. Last year, it was given to Daniel Fichtler ’08 for his work in political theory and constitutional law, and Jennifer Frey ’08 for her outstanding work with Prof. Brubaker on constitutional law. This year, the Stone Award was given to Olivia Offner ’09 for her courageous journalism as co-editor of the Colgate Maroon-News and articles on ROTC, gay marriage, and affirmative action. These students received plaques and scholarships for $2500 each and corresponded with their benefactor, Richard L. Stone ’81.

In conjunction with the development office and Mr. Peter O. Hanson, ’55, The Center has established the Hanson Scholarship for a Colgate undergraduate who shares the philosophy of the Center for FWC and/or is interested in studying free-market economics at Colgate. It was given this year to Alan He ’12.

Future Plans

Future plans are to continue the successful speakers program by inviting scholars and political leaders on important topics such as: David Blakenhorn (“The Future of Marriage”); Michael Medved (“Hollywood vs. America: The Culture Wars”); Roger Kimball (“The Death of Modern Art?”); Daniel Pipes (“The Search for Moderate Muslims”), Ron Paul (“The Return to Limited Government and Constitutional Freedom”), and former UN Ambassador, John Bolton (“Foreign Policy in the Age of Obama”). The Center is planning a conference on the work of the great scholar who died last year, Samuel Huntington; the conference will be a retrospective of his work and influence on political science and his book, The Clash of Civilizations.

In addition, the Center will be working with the newly created PPE Institute (Politics, Philosophy, and Economics) on co-ordinating events for their theme for the year, “Liberal Democracy and Its Limits.” We will be co-sponsoring a visit and lecture by Gary Kasparov, the Russian chess champion and leading political opposition figure to Putin’s authoritarian government in Russia.

We will also continue Project Afghanistan (including bringing Afghan scholars, exchange students, and movie makers to America) and continue promoting a more positive image of the American military and ROTC on campus. We will seek to bring a post-doc teaching fellow associated with the Center, continue the civic freedom awards and public relations among alumni, and create new links with centers at other campuses, especially the Alexander Hamilton Institute at Hamilton College.

Public Relations and Media

The Center for Freedom and Western Civilization has received considerable media attention, both locally in the Colgate Scene and nationally in various journals, including the Chronicle of Higher Education, The New York Sun, Real Clear Politics, City Journal, the Weekly Standard, and the Manhattan Institute.

Colgate’s Center is also part of a larger movement of center-building featuring the Western heritage of freedom and classical learning – at universities such as Princeton, Brown, Emory, Colorado, Hamilton College, Penn State, Duke, Claremont, Chicago, and Texas. Articles in the Wall Street Journal and the Chronicle have covered this growing movement on campuses across the country.

The national organization called ACTA (the American Council of Trustees and Alumni) led by Anne D. Neal has been established, and it links together the many new centers and spreads their message of restoring intellectual balance and defending classical liberal arts education. Colgate’s Center received a grant for $5000 from ACTA, donated by Colgate alumnus, Joseph Woodward.

The Center also received grants from the Weiler Foundation and the Rockwell Foundation for operational activities.

On April 4, 2008, I was invited to give a presentation to the Colgate Board of Trustees Meeting, at the invitation of Board Chairman, Chris Clifford, and President Rebecca Chopp. The topic was “Intellectual Diversity at Colgate: The Center for Freedom and Western Civilization,” and I believe the presentation was received positively by the Board.

Gifts to the Center

If you have not already contributed to the Center, please consider giving a gift to Colgate that is earmarked for the Center by an accompanying letter. The office of development welcomes these gifts, and they will help us continue the battle of ideas at Colgate University and other institutions promoting the ideals of true liberal arts education.

With best wishes,
Robert P. Kraynak
Professor of Political Science and
Director, The Center for Freedom and Western Civilization