



UVU Center for Constitutional Studies
Annual Report

For the Year 2024

UVU CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL STUDIES

Established in 2011, UVU's Center for Constitutional Studies (CCS) is a nonpartisan academic institute that promotes the instruction, study, and research of constitutionalism.

Through scholarship and teaching, the Center examines important constitutional issues found at the intersection of political thought, public policy, religion, law, history, and economics.

We employ a multidisciplinary approach to equip a new generation of citizens and leaders with a broad understanding of the ideas and practices critical to the perpetuation of constitutional government, ordered liberty, and the rule of law.

In 2021, the Utah legislature passed HB 327, entrusting CCS with the state's Civic Thought & Leadership Initiative (CTLI).

CTLI aims to develop the next generation of citizens and civic leaders by cultivating the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and virtues necessary for a just, free, and flourishing constitutional republic.



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About CCS



Senior Director's Message

Matthew Brogdon

Senior Director, UVU Center for Constitutional Studies

American prosperity, security, and liberty all depend on a strong federal union and a resilient constitutional order. But the Union and Constitution cannot be preserved without “a reverence for the constitution and laws,” as a young Abraham Lincoln observed amid the growing mob violence and civil unrest of the 1830s.

It is an opportune time to remember this fact. We are fast approaching the 250th anniversary of American independence. As Benjamin Franklin’s famous *Join or Die* cartoon captured so aptly, successful resistance to British rule rested on the strength of the fledgling American union.

Union was essential to the American strength of arms, to inspiring confidence in potential allies, and to ensuring that the result of the American struggle for independence would be an enduring constitutional republic rather than warring sectional factions.

In a decade-long struggle, the founding generation won independence by force of arms and then secured liberty and prosperity under the new Constitution. We have since striven to make our Union more perfect and to secure the blessings of liberty for more and more Americans. Our Constitution has endured and improved through political realignments, contested elections, economic depressions, civil wars and world wars because its foundations were sound.

The work of the Center for Constitutional Studies is driven by confidence that the Constitution can be now, as it has been in the past, a civic common ground. If we place it at the center of American civic education, we can cultivate a shared attachment to the Constitution we inherited and foster an intelligent and open civil discourse about how best to preserve and improve that inheritance.



People of CCS

- Matthew Brogdon** Professor, Larry H. & Gail Miller Senior Director of CCS
- Scott Paul** Executive Director of CCS and Constitutional Literacy Institute
- Verlan Lewis** David & Lauea Stirling Professor of Constitutional Studies
- Robert Burton** Tocqueville Professor and Director of the Civic Thought & Leadership Initiative
- Andy Bibby** Professor, Associate Director of CCS, Director of Federalism Index Project
- Troy Smith** Professor, Director of Master's Program in Constitutional Government, Civics & Law
- Brad Wilson** James Wilson Distinguished Visiting Scholar of Civic Thought
- Hank McIntire** Director of Communication
- Lisa Halverson** Civic Education & Research Fellow
- Eleesha Tucker** Constitutional Literacy Fellow
- Kiana McAllister** Quill Project Lead
- Autumn Christensen** Events Manager
- Paige Larsen** Senior Administrative Assistant

Learn more at uvu.edu/ccs/people/index.html





Year in Review

Master's Degree

Dr. Troy Smith (Ph.D., Political Science) joined CCS as the first faculty director of the MA and Professor of Constitutional Government, Civics & Law in the School of Education (SOE) at UVU. He comes to CCS from Brigham Young University–Hawaii, where he was a professor of Political Science for 19 years.

CCS and SOE welcomed the first cohort of 26 students in Summer 2024, with five intensive weeks of classes on the foundations of American constitutionalism, democracy, and liberty. Five research-track students spent four weeks at Oxford last fall working on their theses with mentorship from CCS partners. And 21 teaching-track students will complete their coursework at Pembroke College next summer.

On-Site Civics Training for K-12 Teachers

Expert teachers and scholars on the CTLI team—covering topics such as the U.S. Constitution, engaged citizenship, civil public dialogue, and the new Utah social-studies core curriculum—traveled across Utah to provide daylong instruction to K–12 teachers.

Attendees also received teaching resources developed by our partner institutions—*We the People*, Bill of Rights Institute, and the America250 Commission. In 2025, the program will also organize regional gatherings to reach more teachers.

Civic Educators Conference

CCS hosted its annual Civic Educators conference in November 2024. The theme was *Teaching the Declaration at 250: Founding Principles of Natural Rights and Civic Virtues*.

More than 100 secondary-education civic educators (public traditional, public charter, private, and homeschool teachers) attended for a day of instruction by top civics scholars and featured curriculum development workshops and primary-source discussions.

Constitutional Literacy Institute

The Center for Constitutional Studies at Utah Valley University hosted its annual summer Constitutional Literacy Institute June 24–28, 2024.

Nearly 50 elementary, middle-school, and high-school teachers received instruction and resources from top constitutional scholars and educators from across the U.S.

Presenters covered topics such as the Bill of Rights, the Constitutional Convention, separation of powers, slavery and civil rights, civility, the Quill Project, federalism, and lesson plans for teaching these concepts.

The course also attracted school and district administrators, who work to guide teachers and provide them what they need to teach more effectively.



Constitution Day 2024

CCS held its annual Constitution Day conference Sept. 17, 2024. Verlan Lewis and Hyrum Lewis, co-authors of *The Myth of Left and Right: How the Political Spectrum Misleads and Harms America*, discussed during their morning keynote address how a healthy two-party system contributes to the American constitutional tradition.

In the afternoon session, a panel discussed the Utah Legislature's effort to roll back the Utah Supreme Court's decision altering the initiative process and the proper role of direct democracy in constitutional self-government.

First Amendment Conference

In March 2024, CCS hosted its First Amendment conference, *Some Assembly Required: Freedom of Association and the Right to Assembly*. Sessions focused on Founding-era debates over the right to peaceable assembly and current questions about freedom of association in education, campaign finance, and charitable giving.

Distinguished Visiting Scholar

In Fall 2024, CCS welcomed Dr. Brad Wilson as its first James Wilson Distinguished Visiting Scholar in Civic Thought. He comes to CCS from Princeton's James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions and serves as a trustee of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation.

CTLI Nonresident Fellows

Six scholars and education leaders from across Utah have been selected as the initial cohort of CTLI Nonresident Fellows.

Among these are Ralph Hancock, Brigham Young University; Savannah Eccles Johnston, Salt Lake Community College; Jim Moss, former chair of the Utah State Board of Education; Leah Murray, Weber State University; Bradley Rebeiro, Brigham Young University Law School; and Robert Ross, Utah State University.

Selectees will collaborate with and support CTLI initiatives from K–12 teacher professional development to reearch to public events.

Visible Hand Project

The Visible Hand project, organized by Eleesha Tucker, Constitutional Literacy Fellow at CCS, has begun offering nonpartisan, civic education to Utah business leaders and their employees. Providing instruction are CCS team members Matthew Brogdon, Verlan Lewis, Robert Burton, Lisa Halverson, and Eleesha Tucker. Bob Allen, dean of UVU's Woodbury School of Business, has also led classes.

Learners with Littles

Also led by Eleesha Tucker, this effort brings parents/guardians and children to UVU campus to learn about America's Founding through discussion and age-appropriate activities.



Year in Review

New Podcast: 'This Constitution'

Co-hosted by Savannah Eccles Johnston and Matthew Brogdon, *This Constitution* is a podcast that equips listeners with the knowledge and insights to engage with the political questions of our time. Find it on Apple, Spotify, YouTube, or the podcast platform of your choice.

Federalism Index Project

The Federalism Index Project's mission is to assist educators, state leaders, and ordinary citizens to better understand and appreciate the significance of federalism in the overall structure of the United States Constitution. It unites rich academic literature with new technology, modern data-visualization techniques, and scholars who can help make the drama of American federalism accessible.

Learn more at federalismindex.org.

Oxford Study Abroad

Twenty-one students from UVU attended study-abroad courses held at Pembroke College, Oxford, in July–August 2024.

During their two weeks in the UK, 11 students took the Civic Thought and Leadership course taught by David Connelly and Hank McIntire, while the other 10 studied the Foundations of Constitutionalism with Nicholas Cole and Robert Burton.

Quill Project

In early 2024, the National Archives awarded a \$350,000 grant to UVU's Center for Constitutional Studies to expand its student-led digital modeling of state constitutions.

With that funding our Quill research assistants and Eric Zachary Wood Assistants are documenting deliberations on state constitutions adopted from 1848 to 1864. For America250, Quill is modeling the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the work of the Second Continental Congress.

The Quill Project was created in 2015 by Dr. Nicholas Cole, Pembroke College, Oxford, to enhance understanding of foundational legal texts such as the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions by researching and modeling the context within which constitutional conventions made their decisions.

American Heritage Speaker Series

Established in 2023, AHSS brings eminent scholars to UVU campus to speak to students and faculty on constitutional and historical issues.

Speakers in 2024 included Justin Dyer, University of Texas–Austin; Joshua Dunn, University of Tennessee; Hyrum Lewis, Brigham Young University–Idaho; Paul Carrese, Arizona State University; James Ceaser, University of Virginia; and Brad Wilson, Princeton University.



K-12 Civic Education

2024

2023

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|
| • Teacher-training hours | 3,822 | 2,391 |
| • K-12 students impacted | 57,000+ | 53,000 |
| • Utah school districts served | 29 of 41 | 23 of 41 |

Impact

UVU Campus

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| • Students in CCS GE courses | 1,121 | 1,080 |
| • Students Admitted to MACGCL | 27 | NA |
| • Undergrad Quill Assistants | 22 | 17 |
| • Undergrad Tocqueville Fellows | 12 | 8 |
| • Students in Oxford Study-Abroad | 21 | 26 |
| • CCS Nonresident Fellows | 6 | NA |

Utah Community

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| • Parents/Children in LWL | 81/166 | NA |
| • Visible Hand project | 1,500 | NA |
| • Attendees at other CCS events | 3,700+ | 6,500 |





America 250

America250

Beginning in 2024, in partnership with the America250 Utah Commission and others, CCS launched a decades-long program to further Utahns' understanding of the American Founding. Between now and 2026, it will celebrate the Declaration of Independence and its principles of human equality, natural rights, and constitutional self-government.

Beyond 2026, we will carry this focus forward with commemorations of the formation of the Union and Founding-era state constitutions (2027–2034), the Constitution's drafting and ratification (2035–2039), and the Bill of Rights (2039–2041).

Some highlights of upcoming America250 events at CCS:

- Public Speaker Series: Spring 2025–Fall 2026
- Declaration master class with CCS faculty & partners
- Quill Model of the Declaration
- 2024 Civic Educators Conference – Teaching the Declaration at 250: Natural Rights & Civic Virtue
- 2025 First Amendment Conference – A Revolution in Religious Liberty: Declaration to the First Amendment
- 2025 Constitution Day Conference – George Washington's Constitutional Statecraft: Citizen Soldier to President
- More events in 2026...



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