



THE
CICERONIAN
SOCIETY

FALL SYMPOSIUM

October 22-24, 2026 in Holland, MI at the Haworth Hotel



Colleges and universities were once seen as *the* key institutions building, deepening, and transmitting knowledge, cultural literacy, and civic responsibility at the highest level. To say that Americans have grown skeptical of that vision would be an understatement. Distrust of universities is at record highs, and Americans doubt the value of a college degree even if they received one. Higher education has become hyper-bureaucratized and politicized, and campus mental health crises abound. Remedial education for woefully underprepared students has not abated, especially after COVID lockdowns, and artificial intelligence facilitates unprecedented levels of cheating and laziness. The long feared “demographic bomb” of too few college-eligible students for too many institutions has arrived, with accelerating closures, mergers, and program cuts. The number of American *men* in college, especially, has declined precipitously, as has their overall presence in the workforce. The list could go on.

We do not lack diagnoses for today’s crisis. It should also be clear by now that waiting for political leaders in Washington, DC or our state capitals to right the ship is a waste of time. With some important exceptions represented at this Symposium, the universities themselves lack imaginative leaders or the ability to reexamine key assumptions.

Furthermore, many Americans and their children still harbor a

narrow vision of higher education’s purpose, viewing a degree as little more than over-priced job training for careers that may or may not exist in the future.

What is needed is a compelling and hopeful vision for a way out of this mess. We need to take stock of what may be beyond repair, what needs to be restored, and where opportunities for innovation present themselves. Educators and scholars undoubtedly face daunting challenges, but despair is not an option. Too much is at stake for our generation and those to come.

It is our hope that this Symposium is just the beginning of a new stage in casting that vision and inspiring Christians and churches to take the lead in that future. Indeed, we believe that whatever the future of higher education looks like, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches should be at the forefront locally, nationally, and globally. Moral, intellectual, and civic formation is a lifelong process that we ought not leave to government schools, YouTube, podcasts, and algorithms.

Jesus Christ, after all, encouraged us as his followers – as his Church – to go and make *disciples*. We’re not simply trying to get social media followers, subscribers, and clients. We are to be disciples: persons inhabited by the Holy Spirit who point to the love, grace, and wisdom of our Lord in thought, word, and deed.

What might a renewed vision of education-as-discipleship look like? How might it differ from place to place and at different ages and stages of life? How might Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches actively participate in this renewal? What should tomorrow’s educational leaders be like? How do we confront the challenges presented by A.I. and other technologies? What does education-as-discipleship look like across generations and as populations decline? How does vocational education fit in this discipleship paradigm, and how do we inspire men to return to the classroom? How might changes in preparing students for college help with this renewal? Are these even the right questions?

Responding to all these questions and related issues will take time and many difficult conversations. As an independent, non-profit, scholarly organization the Ciceronian Society is uniquely positioned to facilitate this discussion well.

In this spirit, you are all encouraged to ask difficult questions, encourage one another, and use our brief time together as inspiration for whatever role you play in recovering an education grounded in the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Beyond the thematic focus, however, we also hope you’ll experience genuine intellectual friendship and no small amount of laughter. Perhaps you’ll be among the hundreds who have attended Ciceronian Society events and exclaimed,

“I’ve found my people!”

Finally, it is my personal joy and privilege to welcome you to the town I call home. Holland was founded in 1847 by Dutch Calvinist immigrants fleeing persecution and looking to start anew. To this day, Dutch traditions and heritage run deep in local faith, culture, art, food, festivals and more. Throughout the weekend, I hope you get a glimpse of the hospitality and beauty of West Michigan. Enjoy some craft beer, cheese, and baked goods, grab some *delftware*, take a test drive in wooden shoes, tour a windmill older than the United States, admire the autumn foliage, and witness an unforgettable Lake Michigan Sunset. Voel je thuis!

In Christ,
Josh Bowman
Executive Director
The Ciceronian Society



PANEL ABSTRACTS

2026 Fall Symposium Conference Schedule

The Haworth Hotel and Conference Center, Holland, MI
All times EST

Thursday, October 22

4:30 - 6:00 PM	Check-In	Lobby
6:00 - 8:00 PM	Dinner with remarks	Ballroom

Friday, October 23

8:00 - 8:15 AM	Welcome	Ballroom or RM 104
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*Same opening remarks in each room

8:15 - 10:00 AM	Session 1	
Rethinking AP and Dual Enrollment in a Brave New World		Ballroom

Soren Schwab, Classic Learning Test
Sarah Novlan, Classic Learning Test
Chris Anadale, Mount St. Mary's University
Rudy Hernandez, University of Missouri

Education and Christian Faith: Modern and Postmodern Controversies		Rm 104
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John Dewey and the Modernist Turn in Education
Dennis Durst, Kentucky Christian University

C.S. Lewis on Moral Education
Charlie Starr, Great Lakes Christian College

Silence and Scripture: Two Disciplines for Cultivating
Holy Attention in a Distracted Age
Nathan Babcock, Buchanan Christian Church

10:00 - 10:30 AM	Break
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10:30 - 11:45 AM	Session 2 - Plenary	Ballroom
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Higher Education in America: It's Worse than You Think
*Sponsored by the Heritage Foundation

Jonathan Butcher, The Heritage Foundation
Madison Marino Doan, The Heritage Foundation
Adam Kissel, The Heritage Foundation
Andrew Gillen, The Cato Institute

11:45 - 12:00 PM	Break
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12:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch (catered)	Ballroom
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2:00 - 3:15 PM	Session 3
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Roundtable: Re-imagining Paideia in Place		Ballroom
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Nick Ellis, Christian Halls International
Ron Jung, Christian Halls International
Jeffrey Bristol
Jason Jewell, Florida Board of Governors

Recovering the Vocation of Higher Education		Rm 104
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Facere, Agere, and Education: Self-Construction in an Artificial Age
Morgan Whitmer, American Academy of Catholic Women

Does Higher Education Require Colleges & Universities?
John C. Pinheiro, Acton Institute

Rethinking the College "Experience"
Anthony Bradley, Acton Institute; Kuyper College

3:15 - 3:45 PM	Break
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3:45 - 5:00 PM	Session 4
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More Than Just an Idea: Restoring Classical Education at its Roots		Ballroom
*Sponsored by Hillsdale College, K-12 Education		

The Scope of Hillsdale's Work: Why Only Brick and Mortar Schools
Can Save America
Julie Apel, Assistant Headmaster, Hillsdale Academy

Ordered for Freedom: The Architecture of a Classical Curriculum
Michael Burndt, Director of Curriculum, Hillsdale K-12 Education

Catching Fire: Sustaining a Revolution of Classical Education

Dr. Eric Coykendall, Senior Director of Resources, Hillsdale K-12 Education

The Teacher and the Student: The Human Work of Liberal Education

Dr. Kathleen O'Toole, Associate Vice President of K-12 Education, Hillsdale College

The Making of the Teacher, the Student, and the Citizen

John Peterson, Associate Director of Curriculum, Hillsdale K-12 Education

Read, Gather, Worship: A Curative Conversation with Student Scholars Rm 104

Moderated by Dr. Sarah Estelle, Hope College

Recovering the Art of Deep Reading: A Mission for Students and Educators

Shane Johnson, Hope College

A Christian Vision of Embodied Education

Lucinda James, Hope College

Hand In Hand: The Faith Integrated Life of the Mind

Walter Plymale, Hope College

Dinner is at the discretion of attendees.

There are a number of excellent restaurants in downtown Holland,
and nearly all are within walking distance of the conference center.

Reservations (*where available*) are recommended for those planning to gather
in groups larger than 6.

Would you like see a Lake Michigan sunset? Aim for Ottawa Beach at
Holland State Park or Tunnel Park. Many other options are available if you're
up for a drive or a hike. The sun sets around 6:49pm tonight (October 23).

Podcast and Newsletter

The Sower

Celebrating & discussing scholarship, activities,
and issues related to our core themes.

- Audio - released Sun evening
- Video - released Mon morning

Cicero On Duties

Read Cicero's writings alongside Ciceronian Society members. New Ep every Wed on YouTube



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Saturday, October 24

9:00 - 10:15 AM Session 5

Learning in an Artificial Age

Ballroom

Asimov's Guide to Education

Neva Hernandez, Kolbe Academy

An AI by Any Other Name...

Jared McBrady, Hope College

The Bare Minimum: Recovering Intellectual Asceticism in the Writing Process

Venanzio Petrarolo, University of St Thomas (TX)

The Idea of the University and Liberal Education in the 21st Century

Rm 104

Joshua Herring, Logres Institute

Sean Hadley, Logres Institute

Bryant Owens, Logres Institute

Jason Jewell, Florida Board of Governors

10:15 - 10:45 AM Break

10:45 - 12:00 PM Session 6 - Plenary

The Church and Civic Renewal: Theological Education for the Sake of the World

Rm 104

The Future of Theological Education and the Hope of Cultural Renewal

Stephen Presley, CRC

Formed for Faithful Witness: Insights from Early Christian Theological Education

Zach Hedges, Cedarville University

After the University: The Local Church as an Institution of Intellectual and Moral Formation

Tim Rosenberger, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit/The Ohio State University

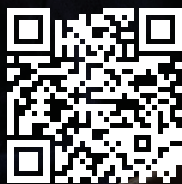
12:00 - 12:15 PM Concluding Remarks

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Spring Academic Conference



March 11-13, 2027
The Founders' Inn at Regent University
Virginia Beach, VA

Join us for the Ciceronian Society's premier annual event.
Registration is open to all and sponsorship opportunities are available.



THE CICERONIAN SOCIETY
Tradition, Place, and "Things Divine"

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