

Council for Transformative Enterprise – “Flourishing Through Progress.”

The Council promotes transformative enterprise (“progress”) through thoughtful, broad-based discourse. Besides providing material comforts, transformative enterprise can enable human flourishing: Individualistic and competitive as well as organized and collaborative, striving for progress helps unify and civilize human societies. Its reaffirmation is vital at a time when public discourse often disdains progress or is dominated by destructive diatribe.

Yet, trumpeting the virtues of progress is not enough. Thoughtful promotion requires understanding a complex, ever-changing process that siloed scholarship and doctrinaire commitments can obscure. We therefore promote discourse across many disciplines and scholarly communities and between abstract thinkers and active doers.

Unlike think tanks, we promote no ideology or public policies. We will provide a crucible for ideas that, then expressed by individual discourses, will speak for themselves. The crucible will also help form an epistemically diverse community that is thoughtfully but not blindly committed to progress.

We are inspired by the now defunct Center on Capitalism and Society, that the late Edmund Phelps (who won a Nobel in economics in 2006) had started in 2001. Unlike Phelps’s Center, however, we place more emphasis on a sympathetic understanding of scientific, technological, and artistic advances than on reforming economics.

The Council will be entirely virtual, operating without a budget or staff. It will instead rely on partnerships with established like-minded organizations (starting, and possibly on a continuing basis with the Rhodes Trust at Oxford). The Council and its partner organization(s) will jointly sponsor annual conferences hosted by a rotation of institutions and centers interested in understanding progress.

Our conferences will be small, serious, and resolutely apolitical. Moreover, while acknowledging the interaction of scientific, technical, and artistic progress with questions of equality, social justice, property rights and so on, our conferences will not make such questions their main target. There are abundant venues for such questions; there is no gap for us to fill.

Concretely, the Council and Rhodes will host [an inaugural conference in August 2027 on “Human Flourishing Through Progress?”](#)^{*} and a 2028 conference on “Organizing and Financing Technological Advances.” Subsequent conferences could cover more specific influences on progress¹ or mark anniversaries of landmark advances.²

^{*} Christia Freeland, the head of Rhodes, and Don Gogel, the lead donor to the Council, will serve as co-chairs of the conference.

While annual conference will be our flagship activity, the Council and its partners could eventually start a publication program (including working papers, conference volumes, and reviving *Capitalism and Society*) and educational projects.

Funding Support and Membership Disclosures (as of May 2026):

[Don Gogel](#), who has been a “hand’s on” supporter of prominent civic institutions, particularly in medical research and health care, is the Council’s lead donor. Don has committed to funding five annual conferences @ \$250,000 per conference. Paul De Rosa and Amar Bhidé (who also took the lead in organizing the Council) have contributed approximately \$250,000 and \$270,000 respectively.

More than 50 distinguished thinkers and doers have agreed to join the Council. Membership is free and in the interest of maintaining a low profile, not actively publicized. However, this policy may change if the non-disclosure of members becomes controversial.

Notes:

¹ Conference topics after 2028 could include the role of individuals (“Do ‘exceptional’ individuals matter?”), legal systems, social and religious beliefs, long-distance trade and migration, foundational technological advances (such as steam and electrical power, telegraphy, telephones, the internet, and genetic engineering), and the media and creative arts.

² Anniversary conferences could mark Pasteur’s rabies vaccine, the trans-Atlantic wireless cable, Marconi’s radio transmission, the eradication of polio and smallpox, Timothy Berners-Lee’s web browser, and the launch of the iPhone.