



# Commercial Republic Initiative

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ture of creativity, about the institutions behind innovation, the things that actually allow people to be creative, and to be creative in regard to science, commerce, and legal precedent that can lead to more innovative directions.”

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Professor and project director John Zumbrennen emphasized the importance of building links across campus. “Most of what we’ve seen so far is connections between the sciences and what is sometimes called the ‘digital humanities’. I think there is a real opportunity for us to step in and build some networks with the historical humanities. Our goal again is to think about the connection of science and political thought at the American Founding, and the Atlantic Enlightenment more broadly.”

Steven Bilakovics of UCLA noted that the university’s efforts “aim to continue the long tradition of exploring the intellectual history, as well as the ethical architecture, of the Constitution and the institutional infrastructure of commercial society. We want to study the rise of commercial society in western thought and to examine the economic, legal, and political institutional transformations.

Bilakovics was clear about his program’s ambitions: “We really want to build this Commercial Republic Project into a regional hub.”

Professor Steven Smith, co-director of the Yale Center for the Study of Representative Institutions, said he hopes the Yale project will help “provide links to either the law school or the economics department.”

And Professor Laura Beth Nielsen of Northwestern spoke of new or revived courses offerings made possible through this initiative. “We’re going to be able to offer courses including constitutional law, politics of the American Revolution, creation of the Atlantic World, and legal and constitutional history of America from 1850 to the present.”



From left: Professors Steven Smith, Christena Nippert-Eng, John Zumbrennen, Steven Bilakovics and Bernhardt Trout field questions regarding the Commercial Republic Initiative at the 2013 Annual Miller Summit on Higher Education.