

# aspire

ISSUE 01 | OCTOBER 2023

IN THIS ISSUE:

AU BY THE NUMBERS

—  
GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM

—  
FATHER SIRICO



Acton University  
Ms. Tímea Hegedüs  
Hungary

Acton University  
Mr. Tamás Felföldi  
Hungary

Acton University  
Mr. Zsolt Hegyes  
Hungary  
**STAFF**

**ACTON**  
INSTITUTE



*Spire* serves as a beacon of hope by sharing inspirational stories about Acton Institute’s supporters, scholars, and events to lift your spirit as together we build a free and virtuous society. To change hearts and minds—and the world—look forward and upward ... to the *Spire*.

4

A Message from Our President



6

Acton’s New Director of Research Is on a Mission



9

2023 Guardian of Freedom Award Winner: Salim Mattar



12

John Hern on Saving the World by Supporting Acton Institute



14

Father Sirico: Serving Acton Institute from Within and Without



16

Ways to Support Acton Institute & More

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The Acton Institute was founded 33 years ago out of the spare room of my Grand Rapids, Michigan, apartment in a down-and-out neighborhood. Like most start-ups, we bootstrapped it, working long hours with very few resources. Today, we boast an international staff of 40-plus superstars furthering our mission around the world, including an international office, and host thousands of participants at our conference events each year. Yet one thing has not changed: our mission.

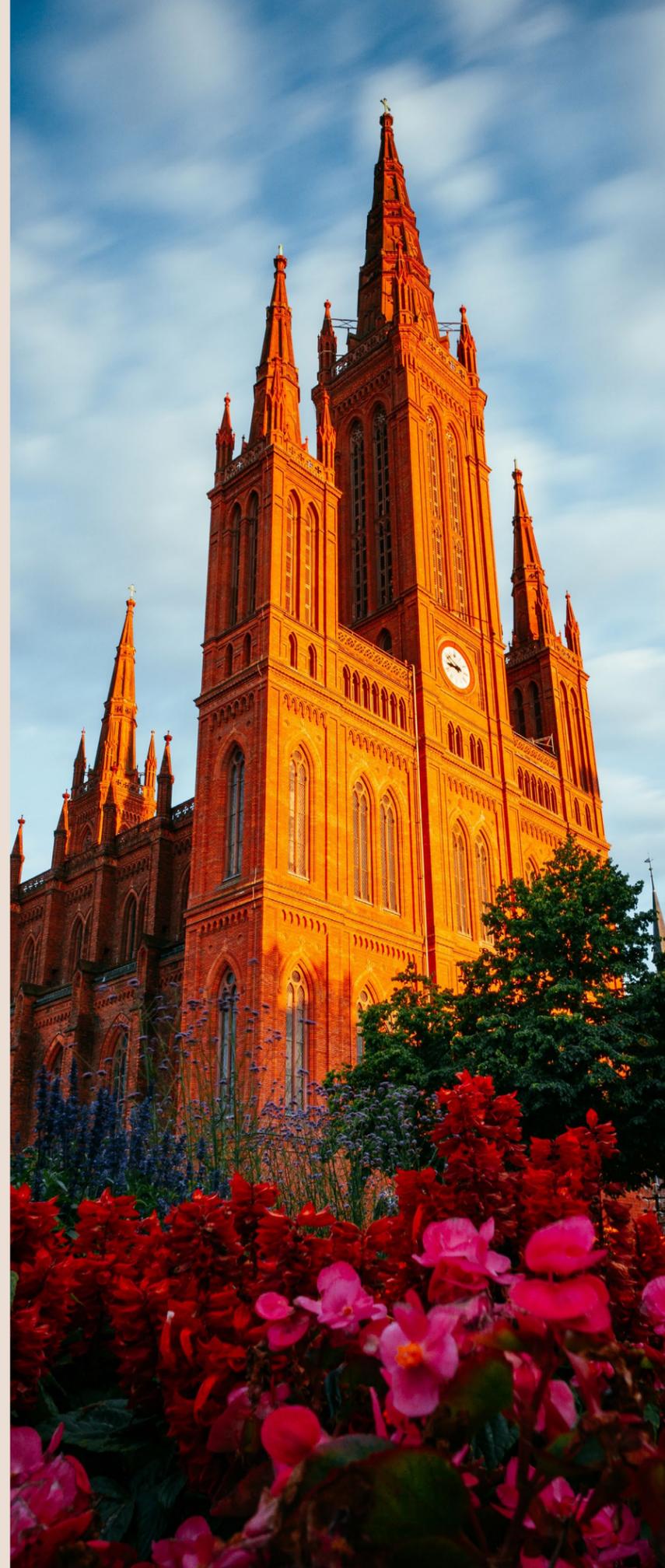
*Acton Institute's mission is to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.*

You may have received our publication *Acton Notes* in the past. This new publication, *Spire*, is replacing that periodical. When we visit the old towns of America and villages around the globe, what is it we see when the town first comes into view? Jutting above the roofscape of the village is a spire, often from a house of worship, pointing our eyes toward heaven. The Acton Institute encourages leaders to look up and see the spire—to rediscover the religious and moral principles that make up our economic and social way of life together. We are in the business of inspiring hope. The secular powers of this world can be coercive and constraining, but freedom is found in the light of truth. We thank you for joining us in our efforts to promote a free and virtuous society.

In this issue, we hope to inspire you by telling the stories of some of the amazing people who make our work possible.



**KRIS ALAN MAUREN**  
PRESIDENT





# Acton's New Director of Research Is on a Mission

"I never wanted to be anything else but a historian," says Dr. John C. Pinheiro, new Director of Research for Acton Institute.

Pinheiro joined Acton Institute in the fall of 2022, leaving Aquinas College—where he'd been a history professor for 18 years—to lead Acton's research team. His mission at Acton is clear: to illuminate the foundations of a free and virtuous society and the relationship between economic, religious, and political freedom.

A longtime follower and contributor to Acton Institute, Pinheiro describes his decision to leave his tenured teaching position to head its Research Department as the logical next step of his career. "I wrote an article for Acton, I spoke for them in the local lecture series, as well as at Acton University for over a decade, finally writing a book for Acton Institute in 2019. And so, as a historian at a church-based college, to me, [moving to Acton] was a fairly easy choice."

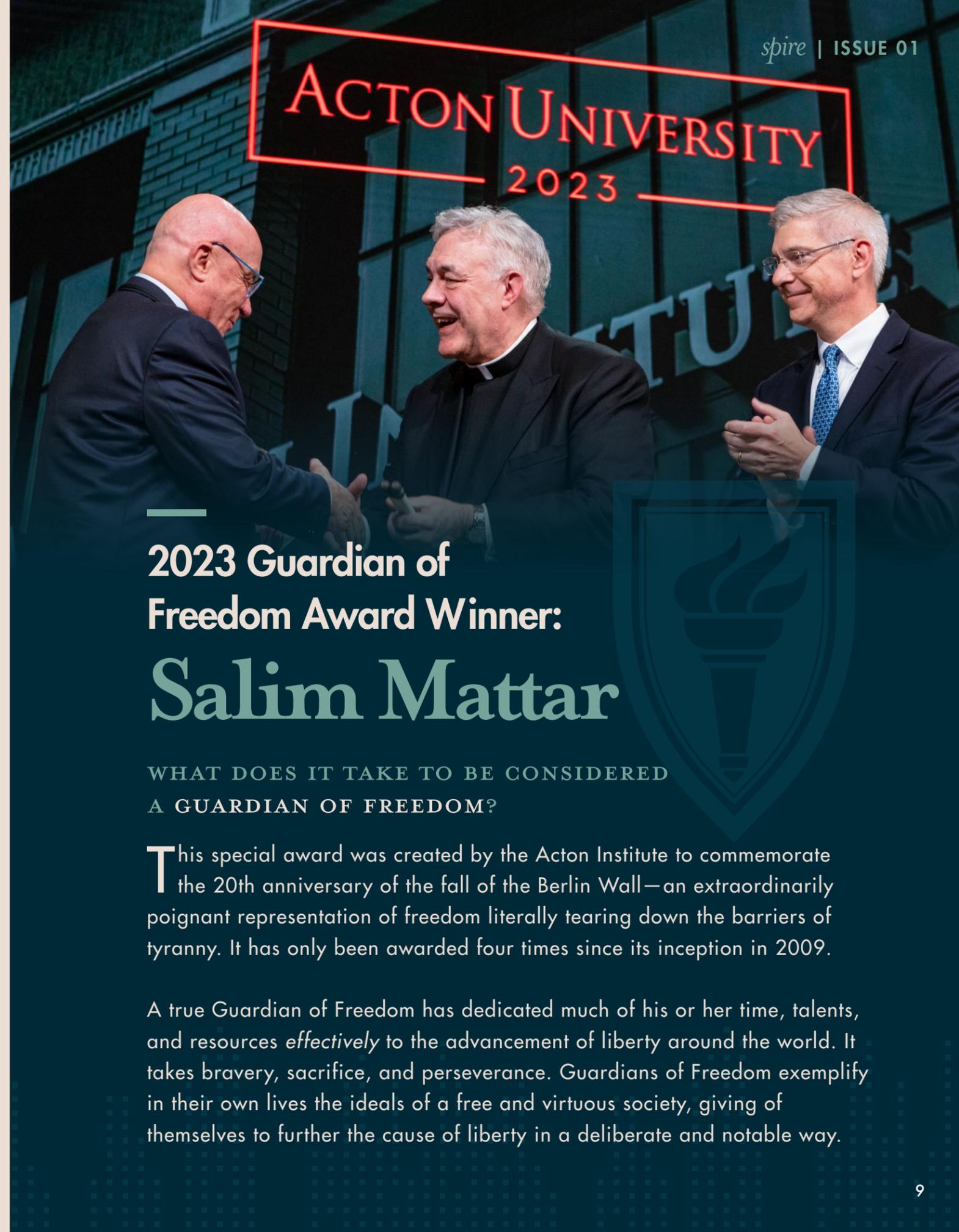
Pinheiro is devoted to Acton's ideals and his dedication to supporting the work of Acton through diligent academic research shines through. "Context really matters," Pinheiro explains. "And we want to be careful not to become ideologues where we talk all theory and don't ground things in reality."

That grounding in reality is one of the main responsibilities for Acton's Research Department and Pinheiro takes it very seriously. "Academic research ... undergirds what we would call public intellectuals who then go on to change institutions and the culture's and people's minds and opinions. But you need that bedrock, that foundation of the academic research first."

No stranger to Acton's programming, Pinheiro has participated in numerous in-person events organized by the Institute, such as Acton University, and is passionate about sharing the historic, anthropologic, and data-based grounding required for public intellectuals to effectively advocate for the kinds of policy changes that encourage a freer and more virtuous society.

*"Acton Institute is unique in the world. There's no organization like us that combines the kind of free market emphasis that you might find at Cato [Institute] or Atlas [Network] with an emphasis on humanity as created in the image and likeness of God and what that means for our behavior and for a free society and for a free economy."*

The historical evidence in favor of liberty is clear, but Pinheiro notes Lord Acton's cautionary reminder that "liberty is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization." Recording the history of liberty serves as the North Star for Pinheiro's research team as they set to work in the long, difficult mission to replace falsehoods about American history with restorative, evidence-backed truths. Their efforts provide the foundation upon which scholars, public intellectuals, and policy influencers can build the beacon of the free and virtuous society Acton Institute envisions for the world and to which anyone can look to for guidance.



## 2023 Guardian of Freedom Award Winner: Salim Mattar

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE CONSIDERED  
A GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM?

This special award was created by the Acton Institute to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall—an extraordinarily poignant representation of freedom literally tearing down the barriers of tyranny. It has only been awarded four times since its inception in 2009.

A true Guardian of Freedom has dedicated much of his or her time, talents, and resources *effectively* to the advancement of liberty around the world. It takes bravery, sacrifice, and perseverance. Guardians of Freedom exemplify in their own lives the ideals of a free and virtuous society, giving of themselves to further the cause of liberty in a deliberate and notable way.

2023 GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM AWARD WINNER (CONTINUED)

Acton Institute is honored to confer the 2023 Guardian of Freedom Award to Salim Mattar for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Brazilian people as well as the world.

Brazil is among the most populous countries in the world and has the largest economy in South America. So, when freedom there is threatened, it has an outsized impact on the rest of the world.

Mattar co-founded and built a highly successful car rental company, but he has not slowed down. After reading the free-market principles of people like Adam Smith and Friedrich Hayek, he knew that Brazil's government and society were on the wrong path.

Mattar decided to use not only his money but also his entrepreneurial talents to found Instituto de Formação (IFL), a think tank that trains and forms "independent leaders who seek to obtain knowledge and, mainly, to put into practice leadership, entrepreneurship and excellent management based on values of economic, intellectual, and political freedom."

Thanks to Mattar, IFL now has more than a dozen chapters. Between IFL and the other 120 classical liberal institutions he supports, he is changing Brazil. President of the Santa Catarina IFL chapter, Pedro Fernandes, estimates that hundreds of thousands of people have been affected thanks to Mattar's efforts and dedication to freedom.

**"Acton Institute's work rests on the assumption that ideas are powerful,"**

said Kris Mauren, president of Acton. "They are powerful forces put into the hands of leaders that can transform our societies and the world. Salim Mattar is an example of someone who encountered these ideas of liberty and it transformed his thinking. It inspired his activities—not only through business but in remaking civil society and politics in Brazil."

The promise of liberty is a light in the darkness. When it grows dim, a Guardian of Freedom steps up to brighten it for generations to come.



To learn more about the Guardian of Freedom Award & Salim Mattar, visit [acton.org/guardian](https://acton.org/guardian).

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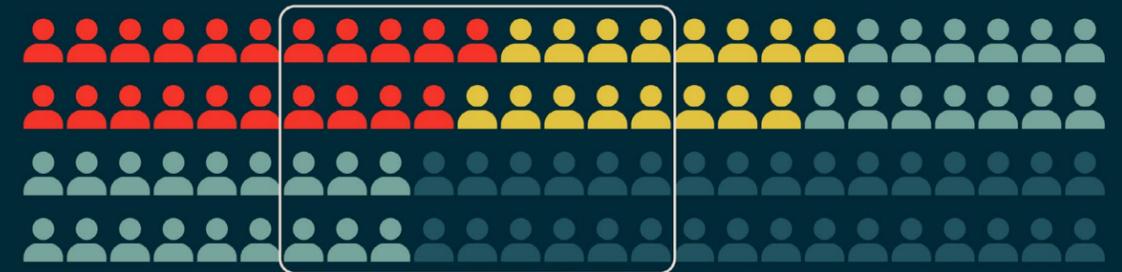
## ACTON UNIVERSITY 2023

BY THE NUMBERS

between online and in-person

# 1,500+

PARTICIPANTS



21% STUDENTS

16% CHURCH LEADERS

31% EDUCATORS

36% OF ATTENDEES WERE UNDER THE AGE OF 35



90+ COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



79 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS REPRESENTED



88 LECTURES OVER 4 DAYS

ARK HILL

# John Hern on Saving the World by Supporting Acton Institute

John Hern spent his entire professional life doing the things that needed to be done. When he stepped down as CEO of his law firm after 19 years of tremendous growth, Hern decided it was time to focus on the things he felt like he'd been putting off: pursuing his longtime dream of creating music and making the world a better place for everyone.

Of all the ways he could allocate his charitable resources, Hern chose Acton Institute as his vehicle for improving the world: "Promoting human flourishing—is there anything better than that?" Hern adds, "Acton has the courage to say *how* they're going to promote human flourishing. And that's through individual rights and liberties."

The annual Acton University is a favorite project of his. Hern has attended two of the events in person and describes them as "an absolutely phenomenal experience." He notes especially the intellectual and demographic diversity found at the event.

Hern also appreciates how Acton University does more than just talk about academic ideas. As a retired CEO who is passionate about the study of leadership, he avidly supports how "Acton promotes stewardship and leadership in a very effective way."

Hern's support of Acton University goes further than simply words. He has pledged to match, dollar for dollar, all donations made to the new Alumni Investors program. Alumni Investors is a group of Acton alumni who donate a monthly gift to help financially support first-time attendees come to Acton University.

*Making Acton's programs such as Acton University as accessible as possible deeply aligns with Hern's and Acton Institute's belief in "the dignity of every human being."*

To learn more about  
**Alumni Investors**, visit  
[acton.org/investors](https://acton.org/investors).





## Father Sirico: Serving Acton Institute from Within and Without

Followers of Acton Institute are well acquainted with Fr. Robert A. Sirico. He co-founded Acton in 1990 and was its president until November 2021. Despite shifting his role to president emeritus, Fr. Sirico is hardly slowing down.

In addition to his continued work at Acton Institute, Fr. Sirico also founded the St. John Henry Newman Institute ([jhni.org](http://jhni.org)) in 2021. The Newman Institute seeks to revitalize Catholic education by promoting Catholic classical curricula and reverent liturgy. He is also completing an international book-and-lecture tour promoting his newest book, *The Economics of the Parables*, which is currently being translated into Portuguese and Spanish.

“I’ve gone from driving a stick shift to an automatic but at the same speed, if not faster,” he quips about his current workload.

With co-founder and now-president Kris Alan Mauren at the helm of Acton, Fr. Sirico remains highly involved with the Institute. While he is no longer in charge of its day-to-day management, he still contributes by speaking at events, writing articles, and communicating with supporters. As he holds dual citizenship with the United States and Italy, Fr. Sirico is also enjoying the opportunity to invest more time in Acton’s offices in Rome.

Fr. Sirico is adamant that Acton Institute’s mission is too important to let it wander astray. “Acton’s mission is more important than ever,” he says. “The assumption that a central government power can and should solve all our problems is pervasive and pernicious. There is just as strong an impulse to submit to governmental authority as there is, for us, to resist it. And this happens among both conservatives and progressives.”

That tendency to bend to authoritarianism, to concentrate power, to let a government decide for others what is right and what is wrong is why Acton’s work remains so important. Those at the Institute embrace the responsibility to educate others about these truths, to rigorously defend them to a skeptical audience, and to exemplify them through personal action.

Acton’s president emeritus has full faith that Mauren, his friend and co-founder, will keep Acton Institute on the path of integrity and upright work. “I have incredible faith in Kris’s leadership. He is acknowledged as one of the finest leaders in our industry. By sticking to our principles at the beginning, we are set up for future success. I’m excited about that kind of integrity.”

*Fr. Sirico’s dedication to the principles of a free and virtuous society serves as an example to the entire organization as it strives to spread the message and be a beacon for others to look to in times of doubt.*



# ACTON *Legacy*

After providing for loved ones, please consider adding Acton Institute to your estate planning, helping to ensure the long-term success of the work you already support. We appreciate your support and want to make the gift as effective & beneficial for you as it is for us.

In addition to supporting our shared mission of defending a free and virtuous society, gifts may provide additional income for you and your loved ones, and potentially reduce income or estate taxes. You can make a planned gift with cash, appreciated assets (stocks, bonds, and real estate), personal property, and life insurance.

For more details and contact information, please visit [acton.org/legacy](https://acton.org/legacy) or scan the QR code.



ACTON UNIVERSITY



## ACTON UNIVERSITY

SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 24-27, 2024

Come *build the foundations* of freedom and explore the intersection of *faith and free markets* at Acton University!

To learn more or to register, visit:

[UNIVERSITY.ACTON.ORG](https://UNIVERSITY.ACTON.ORG)

## Praise for Acton University



"I have attended many conferences in my time serving in the Wyoming Senate, but **nothing compares to Acton [University]**. I really enjoyed taking a deep dive into the intellectual and philosophical elements of free markets and conservatism and left Grand Rapids feeling 100% rejuvenated spiritually and mentally. It was truly a blessing to attend Acton."

-STATE SENATOR BITEMAN

**"Acton is one of the best things that has ever happened in my life."**

-FR. ESSIEN

**"I cherish the experience I had with Acton University. Absolutely fantastic!"**

-RANDY B.



**"The knowledge & inspiration gained during this conference will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors and contribute significantly to my personal & non-profit growth & impact."**

-LISA S.

"As a result of attending Acton (University), I feel better equipped to address the issues that matter, and not unnecessarily demonize the 'other side,' as easy as that can be to do. Acton truly articulated Aristotle's statement: **'It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.'**"

-KAYLA K.



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