A night-time aerial photograph of the Austin, Texas skyline. The city lights are reflected in the water of the Colorado River. A multi-lane highway bridge spans across the river in the foreground. The sky is a deep, clear blue.

Ai Austin Institute
For the Study of Family and Culture

Our purpose is to point people toward the truth about the human person, human sexuality, marriage, and the family. In a time of confusion and cultural fragmentation, the Austin Institute fosters serious reflection on what it means to live well. Since its founding in 2013, the Institute has served students at the University of Texas at Austin through programs that engage enduring human questions as they arise in experience. Our close and sustained presence among students places us in a unique position to recognize emerging cultural trends and intellectual errors and to address them directly and personally.

While the Institute initially only offered open conferences and public discussions, it has developed programs tailored to the needs of distinct audiences. Student programming now centers on questions of character, sexuality, relationships, and marriage and includes the Student Forum, a men's group for young men, and the Austin Institute Colloquia—public gatherings featuring guest speakers and extended discussion. To expand access and reduce barriers to participation, these programs are designed to welcome students at various stages of their academic careers and to encourage continued involvement through peer mentorship. Alongside this work, the staff of the Institute is researching the shift in sexual behaviors of the past decade.

MEET THE STAFF

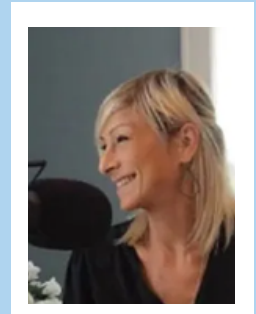
Mark Regnerus, Ph.D. **PRESIDENT**

Mark Regnerus is a professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin and faculty associate at the University's Population Research Center. He is an author of over 40 published articles and book chapters (as well as 4 books). His research is in the areas of sexual behavior, family, and religion.



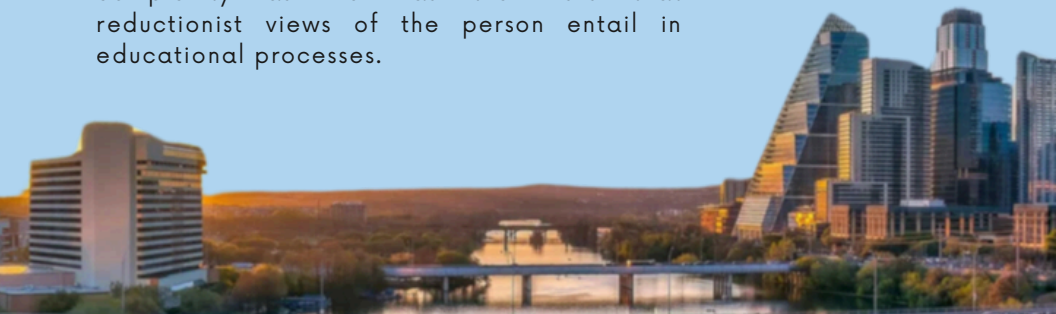
Marianna Orlandi, **Ph.D., Avv.** **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,** **DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC** **PROGRAM**

Marianna Orlandi holds a Ph.D. in law from the University of Padua, Italy, and from the University of Innsbruck, Austria, as well as a J.D. from the University of Padua. In 2019, she was a James Madison Associate Research Scholar and a lecturer in the Department of Politics at Princeton University.



María José Ruiz **González, Ph.D.** **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF** **CURRICULUM & EDUCATION**

Maria José Ruiz González holds a Ph.D. in curriculum & instruction from the University of Texas at Austin. Her research is concerned with understanding the human person in all its complexity as well as the risks that reductionist views of the person entail in educational processes.



Research



The Austin Institute's president is busy at work on a series of three studies broadly on marriage timing and household composition. These three projects utilize nationally-representative data to assess how popular same-sex marriage actually is, the composition of such households, and the future prospects for its coexistence with marriage as we have long known it. In addition to this, Professor Regnerus is reevaluating the thesis of his book *Cheap Sex* (Oxford, 2017), using new data in order to test how accurate its original findings and key claims remain. He launched an interview project with Polish Catholic couples to discern why one of the world's most Catholic countries is suffering similar low-fertility rates as its very different neighbors. Most recently, he is shaping a project on "Why Christian Divorce" and on the role of grandparents' care - and values - in the rearing of the youngest American generation.

HOW THE AUSTIN INSTITUTE TRANSFORMS

"The Austin Institute has been a wonderful resource for both me and my friends at UT. I have attended many events run by the Institute, including the Men's Group and the Thursday night colloquiums. The Men's Group, titled "The Road to Integrity," has focused on questions of modern masculinity, such as what it means to be virtuous, the state of the dating and marriage markets, and the nature of the sexual revolution. Here, I am given free rein to speak my mind without fear of being canceled, and to engage with topics that most of my peers are not interested in considering. The Thursday night colloquiums have introduced me to brilliant work and professors at UT. These seminars have been deeply intellectually stimulating, and I have been able to make good friends who share my core values through interacting with the Institute. My time at UT has been greatly improved by the Austin Institute."

- H.G., PhD student in Mathematics, The University of Texas

"Through the institute's monthly colloquia last semester, I was exposed to new perspectives on culture, literature, and law by academic and professional experts. Most of all, I encountered a welcoming community that fosters intellectual growth, open dialogue, and the development of character. I am grateful to have found the Austin Institute, which has meaningfully shaped my personal and academic growth throughout my college career."

- C.A., Undergraduate Senior, The University of Texas

"The Religiosity in the Age of Individualism seminar implanted new ideas into my brain which changed the way I viewed the world and seeped into my conversations outside of school. The readings from Tocqueville brought into light aspects of 'the air we breathe,' so to speak, the foundational cultural currents that are so ubiquitous we fail to notice them and never question them: ideas like the assumption that individual expression is always an inherent good, or that the freedom to choose what you want will always make you happier. Tocqueville's perspective, coming from the radically different social structure of France, helped me to appreciate America's unique cultural character from an outsider's eyes, and reconsider the value of what he suggests the antidote to individualism is religion, as a way to help individuals transcend themselves. I had been aware of the perils of our atomistic society, but had never thought about it in comparison to a feudalist structure, without which there is no constant struggle for upward mobility or fear of losing one's status when it is tied to family inheritance and land. Overall, Professor Wolf's seminar was a stimulating and respectful forum to address large-scale ideological issues with political implications."

- M.R., Undergraduate Freshman, University of Austin

"The conversation helped me to appreciate the historical complexity of modern ideologies and that simple narratives do not suffice to explain how the modern culture has developed, something beneficial for me in particular as an undergraduate student. This event was a highlight of my academic semester, as it has given me questions that I suspect I will ponder for a long time."

- W.S., Alumnus of The University of Texas, Graduate Student at LMU Munich

Programs & Events



We profoundly trust in education, we are committed to constructive dialogue, and we believe that **community is necessary** for personal and intellectual growth. We believe in the effectiveness of a one-on-one approach to education, which uses both dialogue and community, takes place in person, and **aims for long-lasting fruits** rather than credentials to **lead to true human flourishing**.

We organize public **lectures, interactive seminars, reading groups**, and meals where **professors and researchers converse with our students** and answer their questions in the welcoming and very real environment of a home.

At Stumberg Hall, the home of the Austin Institute, weeks are filled with meetings and philosophical discussions. Our doors are open to all **who seek the truth**. We welcome them always with the hope of seeing them walk away ready to **courageously share the truth**.



Besides the content that we are unafraid to present and discuss, in 2020, we also launched a podcast: **What We Can't Not Talk About**. Its goal—as hinted by the title—is precisely that of refocusing our listeners' attentions to topics that, no matter how debated or divisive, are central to human flourishing.

The name of the show is in honor one of our senior fellows, Professor J. Budziszewski, and one of his most famous books on natural law and on its undeniable truth: **What We Can't Not Know**.



THE AUSTIN INSTITUTE COLLOQUIA



The Austin Institute's Colloquia is a nexus for anyone in Austin seeking to hear and engage with ideas. It is an intersecting point for fathers, mothers, professors, physicians, engineers, financiers, lawyers, and students to speak as interlocutors in a collective dialogue about any topic within the expertise or experience of a speaker. More than a lecture series, the Colloquia is an event wherein diverse disciplines converge and unexpected connections are made. The Colloquia address a need for serious and meaningful discussion on contemporary and perennial contentious questions – the kind of discussion that is organic in and essential to civic life.

“Mr. Sutton's colloquium was particularly profound to me because I was reminded through his story of the way that a life of seemingly distinct experiences can tie together so neatly with a shift in perspective.

So often, I think I see my own moments of struggle, or growth, in the light of the chaos and uncertainty that marks a narrow frame of reference. In hearing Mr. Sutton present compartmentalized parts of his life, it was evident that he would not have been the same speaker without each moment, and the talk served as a beautiful reminder of the perfect plan that is life.”



A.I., MS in Mechanical Engineering,
UT Austin, Class of 2027

THE STUDENT FORUM



The Student Forum gathers students across disciplines for discussions on the questions that sit at the heart of civic life – religion, politics, science, ethics – yet are often avoided or treated divisively. Led by an expert and grounded in assigned readings, each meeting asks students to do something quite simple: listen to one another and think carefully about the ideas that are posited. The readings are not chosen to confirm what students already believe but to challenge and deepen their notions.

What distinguishes the Forum is that students from every field belong in the room. A pre-med student and an economics major will read the same passage and reach similar conclusions with disagreement along the way – and that is precisely the point. The students ought not leave having gathered mere information or another opinion, but rather having truly learned through serious intellectual engagement with ideas and fellow interlocutors.

In so doing, the Forum revives a tradition of intellectual exchange that shaped the modern world and remains essential to personal, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

THE GOOD LIFE READING GROUPS

It is no mystery that, once **out of school**, young professionals must grapple with **deeply troubling existential questions**. Having spent their college lives, and perhaps even their postgraduate years, focusing on skills, titles, and credentials, they often find themselves totally **unequipped to approach work, leisure, and love** with the success they dream of and long for.

Usually living far from home and in cities where they have neither roots nor long-time friends, they rarely find intellectual communities that help them navigate the difficult and fundamental questions and challenges ahead of them. Most of them, sadly, end up trapped in **algorithms that will be feeding them mainstream answers**. These are rarely as nuanced—let alone as truthful—as those that a flourishing life demands. Some of them will be fortunate enough to find the mentorship they need within religious and political communities. These, however, cannot substitute true, organic, and naturally diverse communities such as the neighborhood or one's extended family. Their doors, moreover, are not always open to all those who are searching.

Since 2020, the **young professionals living in Austin** have been more fortunate than most. They've been offered the chance to participate in our Good Life reading groups and to become part of a group of people seeking the truth.

THE GOOD LIFE READING GROUPS

At least twice a month, the Austin Institute hosts meetings that are tailored to professionals' needs. It aims to help young (and less young) people navigate their private and public lives with discussions of all those realms of life that neither school nor family prepared them for.

Since 2020, we have done this by adopting **non-fiction** books that deal with all sorts of contemporary issues to help us have conversations that are meaningful and never ideologically driven.

Among the books we read are "**The Crisis of Modernity**" by Augusto del Noce, "**Feminism Against Progress**" by Mary Harrington, "**The Unbroken Thread**" by Sohrab Ahmari, "**Lost in the Chaos**" by R.J. Snell, and "**No Apologies: Why Civilization Depends on the Strength of Men**" Anthony Esolen.

Whenever possible, we invite the authors of our books to join us for conversations—in person or online, which makes the whole experience even more exciting and meaningful.



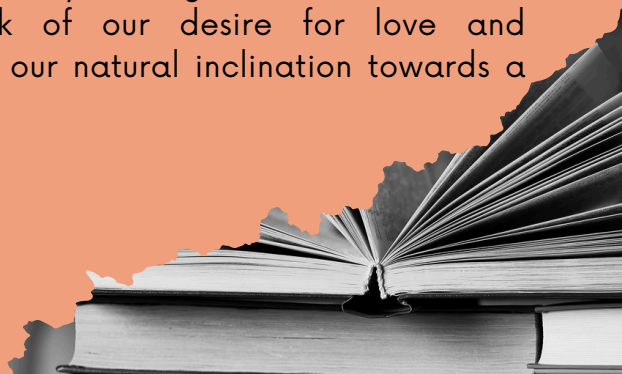
THE GOOD LIFE READING GROUPS

Starting in the **summer of 2024**, we decided to read some good ole **fiction** together as well. The idea was widely appreciated, as was the one of bringing older and younger professionals together.

Intergenerational insularity and isolation of today is preventing the natural transmission of wisdom—as well as common sense—which shapes and preserves a culture. Often by no fault of their own, parents do not spend enough time talking to their children: not about **what it means to be a moral agent**, or why getting married and having kids is more than a rite of passage. Similarly, they have less time to listen to and learn what it truly means to have **matured in a new millennium**: one where leisure is equated with sloth, volunteering has become a resume item, and dating happens via a screen.

In a world where **grandparents** are now often charged with educating grandchildren who seem to be living in a different planet, we hope that we can be of service.

From Jane Austen to Evelyn Waugh, we read works of literature that speak of our desire for love and belonging, as well as our natural inclination towards a greater Good.



ROAD TO INTEGRITY: MEN'S GROUP



The Austin Institute's Men's Group—The Road to Integrity—began in the fall of 2023 to give undergraduate, graduate, and professional men a space to read, reflect, and speak frankly about what it means to become a good man in the current moment of history. Topics range from the nature and practice of courage, to the importance of an intellectual life, to the complexity of male-female friendship.

It is among very few male-only programs dedicated not to mere professional networking or self-advancement but to something ancient and more necessary: the cultivation of wisdom, sound judgment, and good character. Young men, especially students, have not only praised the group but asked for more, signaling a need and demand for this kind of formation and the kinds of friendships developed.



Programming by the Numbers:



2,240 HOURS IN 5 YEARS



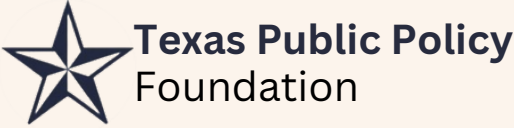


Our Students Have Attended:

The University of Texas
Baylor University
Drake University
Biola University
The University of Dallas
The University of St. Thomas
The University of Navarre
Hillsdale College
Wyoming Catholic College
Princeton University
Notre Dame University



Our Partners



WheatleyInstitute



**St. Mary
Cathedral**



CENTRO STUDI
ROSARIO LIVATINO



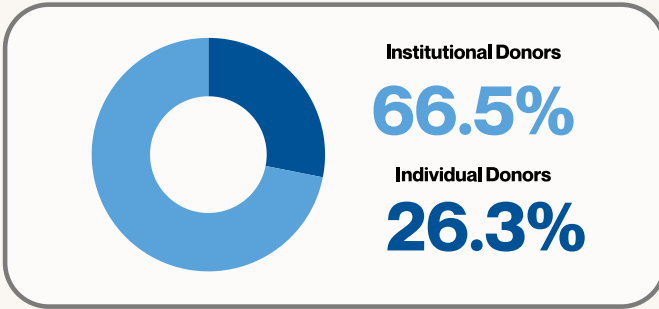
**University
of Austin**

Financial Report



Financial Metrics

Revenue Breakdown: At the end of the 2024 Fiscal Year, \$946,965 was entrusted to the Austin Institute, 66.5% came from institutional donors and 26.3% from individuals who generously chose to contribute.



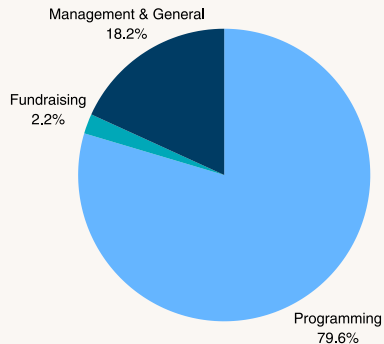
Expense Breakdown: Of the \$770,599 in expenses, 79.6% fueled programming, 18.2% supported management and general operations, and 2.2% went to fundraising. There was a 6.8% increase in programming expenses from FY 2024 to FY 2025. By directing 79.6% of every dollar to programs, the Austin Institute maximized the impact of the donors' generous contributions.

Programming Expenses



▲ \$39k

6.8%



Metrics Continued

In the 2025 fiscal year, \$68,631 was paid in honoraria and contracted services to external scholars, speakers, and professionals who directly supported Austin Institute programming.

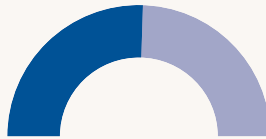
Program Honoraria &
Contracted Services



\$68,631

IN THE 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Over the past 6 years, the Institute's expenditures have grown by 51.3% from \$509k to \$770k. With the help of your contribution, we have more programs better suited to reach different audiences in Austin and beyond.



▲ **51.3%**

6 Year Expenditure Growth

Financial Transparency

The Austin Institute received Financial Transparency Approval from Excellence in Giving, affirming our commitment to financial accountability and responsible stewardship. This independent evaluation assures our donors that their contributions are managed with excellence and integrity.



Since 2021, The Apgar Foundation has helped advance our mission, providing sustained financial support for our undergraduate student programming. We are grateful for their generous commitment to our work.



"Expanding Horizons and Preserving Traditions"

Platforms & Media



What We Can't Not Talk About



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 Austin Institute
For the Study of Family and Culture