“OUR MISSION IS TO HELP PEOPLE MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT ISSUES THAT IMPACT THE FREEDOM TO LIVE THEIR LIVES.”
“In Cache National Forest, a short drive from Strata, are magnificent stands of my favorite trees — quaking aspen. Each tree in an aspen stand is actually a stem sprouted from a shared root system. This system nourishes and brings stability to new shoots so they can become tall, strong, and vibrant additions to an interconnected and living forest.

Roots, shoots, and trees are metaphors for what we do at Strata. Our root system is composed of the principles of reason, human flourishing, individual rights, and limited government. We sprout new shoots with each new student, policy report, academic journal article, curriculum, and conference. Our students grow and develop along with the ideas we research and promote. Our ultimate goal is to promote opportunity and prosperity.

You will see as you look through this report, Strata has become an academic research center where (mostly undergraduate) students are deeply embedded in everything we do. They are part of our projects from conception to completion. They are becoming the next generation of thought leaders.

Our day-to-day work is to develop ideas, evaluate policies, provide educational materials, and to publish our products widely. We are nourished and guided by those foundational principles that form our root system. We are sprouting and growing because of the support from so many who believe in what we do and how we do it. We would love for you to join us.”

Randy Simmons
FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- Reason
- Human flourishing
- Individual rights
- Limited government

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- More knowledge
- Greater freedom
- Better decision making
- Confident students
- Intellectually curious people
- Culture of liberty
- Bridging the gap between academics and everyday people

1985
Institute of Political Economy
Founded with Randy Simmons as director. Students from all levels come together to conduct research based on Simmons’ time spent at Dept. of the Interior.

1990
Chris Fawson joins USU faculty. Fawson and Simmons work to expand undergraduate courses, serve on thesis committees, and produce IPE research. The two continue to collaborate today.

2003
IPE research capabilities continue to expand, linking generations of students with mentors. Ryan Yonk joins the IPE team as a graduate assistant before completing his PhD at Georgia State University.

2012
Simmons, Fawson, and Yonk organize Strata based on an intergenerational commitment to providing practical research opportunities for USU’s students

2016
Strata continues to set the pace for integrated research with more than 70 students working on research projects, academic publications, conferences, workshops, seminars, and professional development.
Research is, and always will be a fundamental element of Strata’s continued success. We consider it our job to ask the difficult questions, and to approach these questions with unbiased intellectual curiosity. Our research projects are selected to address emerging questions and topics on the forefront of energy and environmental research. All of these projects are meticulously peer-reviewed to provide accurate, honest, and reliable information. The academic freedom to explore issues that raise questions about popular opinion is of tremendous value to us. We believe that good policy research has the power to change people’s lives for the better. We challenge conventional ways of looking at energy and environmental policy to promote human flourishing.

### Project Process:
- Project Scoping
- Initial Research
- Outlining
- Drafting
- Team Edits
- Director Edits
- Peer Review
- Copy Edits
- Fact Check
- Director Final Approval

### Project Highlights

1. **Renewable Portfolio Standards - Pennsylvania**
   - *How Pennsylvania’s laws to regulate “renewable” power production increase costs for electricity consumers.*

2. **The Unseen Costs of Electricity**
   - *Identifies the seen and unseen cost of producing electricity from coal, natural gas, and renewable sources such as wind and solar.*

3. **Manufacturing Yellowstone**
   - *Explores changes in federal management regimes in Yellowstone and how these regimes affect the park’s ecology.*

4. **Ethanol & the Renewable Fuel Standard**
   - *Analysis of ethanol subsidies in “Corn Belt” counties and how they actually reduce average incomes in those counties.*
RESEARCH REPORTS 20

NOTABLE INTERVIEWS ON THE LARS LARSON SHOW, STEVE GRUBER SHOW, ENERGY MATTERS, AND THE JOHN FREDERICKS SHOW

13 RADIO APPEARANCES

SEVENTY-SIX OP-EDS CO-AUTHORED BY STUDENTS

RESEARCH TOPICS
- The Unseen Costs of Electricity
- Reliability of Renewable Energy
- Ethanol & the RFS
- Renewable Portfolio Standards
- Economic Impacts of Fracking Bans
- How Good Intentions Backfire
- Manufacturing Yellowstone
- 111(d) Power Plan Rule
- Value of a Statistical Life
- Endangered Species Act

ARTICLE MENTIONS 27

MENTIONED IN:
- THE WASHINGTON POST
- FORBES
- US NEWS & WORLD REPORT
- NEWSDAY
- SALT LAKE TRIBUNE
- THE HILL
- THE DAILY CALLER
- INSIDE SOURCES
- MORNING CONSULT
- BUSINESS RESEARCHER

2016 YEAR IN REVIEW // 4
Our goal is to introduce more students than ever to the principles of reason, human flourishing, individual rights, and limited government by bridging the gap between theory and practice. To these ends, we develop classroom resources and curricula for K-12 and Higher Education that equip educators to impact a new generation of scholars, policymakers, and professionals. To supplement this approach we host conferences designed to refine curricula, foster academic discussion of our most basic principles, and develop a network of intellectually curious, engaged partners for future collaboration. Strata students are embedded in the planning and execution of these conferences, exposing them to broader conversations about our founding principles. We also provide seminars and daily support to Strata’s student employees by teaching and encouraging engagement with the history of free societies.
Strata’s academic publishing program extends the reach of our research by publishing in scholarly journals and books tied to the policy research conducted at Strata, as well as timely and important original academic research. Through these efforts we hope to affect conversations about our research topics, especially in the areas of energy and environmental policy, in both popular and academic venues.

Strata’s approach to conducting research is unique. Strata academic fellows, along with the students we are cultivating, produce policy reports, publish op-eds, testify at legislative hearings, and then produce academic articles and books. This process means our work is timely for popular consumption, while also having the grounding of solid peer-reviewed publications. We engage immediate policy questions while also influencing a wider academic community.

**PUBLICATON HIGHLIGHT: NATURE UNBOUND**

*More than a critique of false assumptions and flawed policies, Nature Unbound offers bold principles to help us rethink environmental objectives, align incentives with goals, and affirm the notion that human beings are an integral part of the natural order and merit no less consideration than Earth’s other treasures. Ultimately, nothing less can succeed in our efforts to restore natural resources and revitalize our social and political ecosystem.*
FOSTERING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

All students at Strata are encouraged to produce individual or group research projects in addition to the projects they do on their teams. Intellectual curiosity is embraced and fostered in our unique environment; students from all levels have ready access to mentors and opportunities to present their research. We continue to invest in individual research projects because of the value they add to our research process.

STUDENT RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT: RYAN LEE

Ryan Lee’s analysis of the impacts of federal policies on the nuclear energy industry found that the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 was rooted in public misperception and has stunted the growth of nuclear energy in the United States for more than three decades. Ryan presented his research at the 2016 annual conference for the Association of Private Enterprise Education. We look forward to seeing Ryan’s continued work as he pursues a Master’s of Science in Geophysics at Boise State University.

EVOLUTION OF A STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT: MICRO-HYDRO

April 2013
As an undergraduate researcher, Megan Hansen presented her research on Logan City’s micro-hydroelectric turbine project at the Association of Private Enterprise Education’s annual conference.

December 2013

June 2016
Based on research from her project, the article was eventually published as an academic piece in the Energies Journal.
The Effects of Poor Regulation on the Nuclear Energy Industry

Overview
Bad legislation based off public misconceptions has left the nuclear energy industry at an impasse. Expansion of the current nuclear industry is at a standstill and innovation is stymied. The U.S. is handicapped while other nations rely heavily on nuclear energy.

Methods
We conducted a textual analysis of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 to understand the purpose of the Act, as well as the analysis of other legislation pertaining to Yucca Mountain.

Private studies including The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Energy Future: Report to the Secretary of Energy were also used in the analysis.

Conclusions
- Nuclear energy in the United States has long been at a disadvantage due to burdensome legislation.
- Legislation prevents the development of a nuclear waste recycling program.
- The NWPA failed to develop a comprehensive waste disposal plan.
- The lack of a waste disposal plan creates strong public opposition towards the development of nuclear energy.

1 out of 3 Americans live within 50 miles of nuclear waste

Used Nuclear Fuel in Storage

Waste in the U.S.
CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION

To prepare them for the professional world, our student employees are deeply involved in all our processes from policy analysis and curriculum design to accounting, operations, and communications. We use an apprenticeship model where students are able to work closely with professional staff to carry out our mission and learn relevant, marketable skills. Since many of our students come to us without an education in the foundations of a free society, we facilitate that education through seminars, reading groups, and guest lectures. Our results: high performing, capable, and confident individuals.

HOW OUR STUDENTS HAVE GROWN

Kayla Harris  
*Project Director, Ballotpedia*  
*Lucy Burns Institute*  
*Seattle, Washington*

Kelsey Richardson  
*Associate PR/Content Manager*  
*The Summit Group*  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

Jordan Lofthouse  
*PhD Candidate*  
*George Mason University*  
*Fairfax, Virginia*

Lindsey Ellertson  
*Private Equity Research Manager*  
*Gerson Lehrman Group*  
*Washington, D.C.*
100+ students employed by strata in 2016

Top Majors:
- Economics: 31%
- Political Science: 11%
- Finance: 11%
- English/PR: 11%
- International Business: 9%
- Marketing: 6%

Different Majors: 63

Number of Student Employees Year Over Year:
- 2012: 15
- 2013: 17
- 2014: 49
- 2015: 62
- 2016: 69

Year in School:
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Senior
- Junior
- Graduate Program

37 Professional Development Subjects

70 Student Research Presentations

11 Conferences Attended by Students

33 Student Research Projects

11 Conferences Attended by Students
BUILDING A NETWORK OF SCHOLARS

Just like an aspen grove that spreads throughout a forest, we expand the network of energy and environmental scholars by finding young talent and connecting them to a powerful network of more experienced scholars. We have committed to the continued funding of five PhD candidates from institutions across the country, and we are searching for more talent to support in the future. Quarterly summits, beginning in October 2016, will bring current PhD Fellows together with industry, policy, and academic experts invested in promoting liberty in the energy and environmental sector. These meetings will culminate with a final summit scheduled for May 2017.

All gatherings have been specifically designed to create networking opportunities for these talented scholars while cultivating new ideas in the pursuit of better research. Here they are empowered to pursue research interests and form connections that will last for years to come. We’re optimistic that this talent network, through the foundational resources we provide, will continue to grow and diversify for generations.

SUMMER 2016 VISITING SCHOLARS

Art Denzau, PhD
Utah State University
Research Specialty: Natural resource-dominant economies

Susan Dudley, MS
Director of the George Washington University Regulatory Studies Center
Research Specialty: Regulation
States where educators use Strata curricula

- Templeton Curricula
- American Government Curricula
- Templeton and American Government Curricula

Strata Contacts

- PhD Candidate
- Collaborative Scholars
HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR YEAR

$5.6 MILLION OPERATING BUDGET

26 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES THROUGHOUT 2016

103 STUDENTS THROUGHOUT 2016

2017 PROJECTS
• Renewable Portfolio Standards in 10 Additional States
• Environmental Policy Toolkit
• Nuclear Energy: Potential Energy and Obstacles to Development
• Energy Poverty
• Economic Impacts on Fracking Bans

2017 ASPIRATIONAL PROJECTS
• Electric Cars
• Drilling Permit Leasing on Federal and State Lands
• Offshore Wind Energy
• Pipeline Permitting Regulations
• Federal Management and CO2 Emissions from Forest Fires
STRATA ACADEMIC FELLOWS
Randy Simmons, PhD
Ryan Yonk, PhD
James Harrigan, PhD
William F. Shughart, PhD
Ryan Bosworth, PhD
Tyler Brough, PhD
Art Denzau, PhD
Susan Dudley, MS
Brian Mannix, MPP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Derek Johnson, Board Chairman
Angela Redding
David Butterfield
Christopher Fawson
Siri Terjesen

STUDENT EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS
Kayli Flitton, Undergraduate, Utah State University
Camille Harmer, Undergraduate, Utah State University