

**The Rockefeller Foundation
Bellagio Center**



The Rockefeller Foundation

Bellagio Center

The First 50 Years

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**The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center
The First 50 Years**

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President's Letter

The Rockefeller Foundation pioneered the frontier of global philanthropy nearly a century ago and continues to seek, shape, and support groundbreaking solutions to many of the world's most intractable challenges. The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center has remained essential to this mission since 1959, when Ella Holbrook Walker, the American Principessa della Torre e Tasso, offered the campus "for purposes connected with the promotion of international understanding," and Dean Rusk, the Foundation's president, exercised profound forethought in accepting her generous donation and embracing its enormous potential.

During the 50 years since, the Bellagio Center has cross-pollinated disparate traditions of expertise, inquiry, and innovation by hosting scientists and artists, theorists and practitioners, those who make policy and those who are affected by it. The Bellagio experience fosters dialogue and discovery, conversation and candid, robust exchanges of ideas. It infuses unorthodox, radical thinking into searches for solutions to critical social, political, health, environmental, and economic issues. It marries the fundamental functions of right brain ingenuity and left brain rationality. It brings people together from countries far and wide, challenging them to find common ground and push the boundaries of collective knowledge and action.

At the beginning of my own career, I was privileged to attend a seminal conference on stress and coping at the Center. This symposium helped bridge the previously partitioned fields of psychological and medical research and fashion one component of behavioral medicine, an entirely new academic discipline. Since assuming the Foundation's presidency,



Judith Rodin, 12th Rockefeller Foundation President, 2005 to present



Dean Rusk, 6th Rockefeller Foundation President, 1952 to 1961

I returned to Bellagio to complete a book, participate in one major global summit about the future of cities, and join another about the potential for eHealth technologies to lift millions out of poverty. On my initial trip back, I was greeted by Bellagio's first snowstorm in a decade, a meteorological reminder that the Center seems always to produce the unexpected.

Throughout its history, the Center served as backdrop for a number of meaningful advances. It was a launching pad for ideas that underpin modern systems of international finance. It was the staging ground for efforts to mobilize an agricultural revolution that saved a billion lives in Latin America and Asia. It was the setting for negotiations and agreements that make it easier for people suffering from HIV/AIDS and other devastating, deadly afflictions to access better vaccines and drugs, more efficiently, in more places. The list goes on.

The remarkable scholars and creators, economists and engineers, elected leaders and leading citizens who breathe life into the Bellagio Center's mission are selected from around the world, through a rigorous, competitive application process. This is designed to ensure that the campus encompasses the greatest possible diversity of viewpoints and voices, the widest array of perspectives and personalities, and that the consequent human chemistry catalyzes uncalculated, creative, collaborative thinking—linking slumdweller and urban financiers in an innovative, shared effort to expand affordable housing in developing countries, to mention one recent international example.

This brand of work is part and parcel of the Bellagio Center's commitment for the next 50 years. In all our efforts,

we will broker partnerships, helping individuals and institutions unite in synergistic alliance. We will help transmit, translate, and transform insights between and among disciplines and sectors. We will nurture innovation that reorients the way problem solvers understand both problems and resolutions. And we will help unleash human capacity across and within the many forms and forums of human enterprise.

Although it is impossible to capture 50 years of achievement in a few brief pages, this book provides a healthy sampling. It includes a compilation of essays written by some of Bellagio's more than 4,400 residents and 36,000 conference participants to date. It conveys accounts of the Bellagio Center's legacy: how it has influenced careers, transformed fields, amplified calls for—and accelerated causes of—progress. It illuminates the Center's grounds, the beautiful milieu in which the Center's work occurs. And it celebrates some of the fruits that those laboring at Bellagio helped reap.

During this period of great challenge and opportunity in communities around the globe, the work of the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center has never been more significant. Although no one can predict exactly which breakthroughs Bellagio's extraordinary residents and conferees will next make real, one thing is certain: They will envision and implement some of the next half century's most powerful ideas, just as they did during the last.

