



# The Founders and the Idea of a National University: Constituting the American Mind

By *George Thomas*



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This book examines the ideas of the founders with regard to establishing a national university and what those ideas say about their understanding of America. It offers the first study on the idea of a national university and how the founders understood it as an important feature in an educational system that would sustain the American experiment in democracy. Their ideas about education suggest that shaping the American mind is essential to the success of the Constitution and that this is something that future generations would need to continue to do.

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**The Founders and the Idea of a National University: Constituting the American Mind** By George Thomas **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"George Thomas exposes the error of two widely held views about the American founding fathers: that they were committed chiefly to a set of decisional procedures, not to a specific way of life, and that they thought 'checks and balances' would secure good government without the need to cultivate a competent and public-spirited leadership community. This well-written book is a major contribution to American constitutional thought."

Sotirios A. Barber, University of Notre Dame

"George Thomas understands the potential of a constitution for constituting a people. He also understands what is essential for realizing this potential. All of this is evident in *The Founders and the Idea of a National University*, a superbly illuminating study of an unrealized component of constitutional design that through his efforts may yet contribute to the sustaining of the American political order."

Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn, University of Texas, Austin

"The reasons why many founders favored a national university, and the reasons why many others resisted one, reveal profound tensions in American hearts over nationalism and localism, reason and religion, and democracy and wisdom. George Thomas delineates and analyzes those tensions in ways that shed fresh light on past and present American challenges and opportunities."

Rogers M. Smith, University of Pennsylvania

"George Thomas's *The Founders and the Idea of a National University* is much more than a historical narrative. It is a work of civic art ... [it] shows us eloquently that the American experiment is not self-sustaining. Our Constitution and way of life were set in motion by an earlier generation that understood that institutions and laws do not make a people. The future of America depends - as it has always depended - on the hard work of citizenship, and citizenship in a self-governing nation requires education in, and dedication to, the principles that instill vigor and spirit into the life of the nation."

Colleen A. Sheehan, Claremont Review of Books

#### About the Author

George Thomas is Associate Professor of Government at Claremont McKenna College. He previously taught at Williams College. Thomas is the author of *The Madisonian Constitution*, as well as numerous articles and essays on American constitutionalism in journals such as *American Political Thought*, *Constitutional Commentary*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *the Review of Politics*, and *the American Interest*. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Huntington Library, and he is the recipient of the Alexander George Award from the American Political Science Association.

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