



## David Brat's controversial, Randian-funded economics program

By [Danielle Kurtzleben](#)  
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David Brat's work at Randolph-Macon College gives one more clue to who he is. Aside from chairing the economics department, he is director of the BB&T Moral Foundations of Capitalism program. In this program, underwritten by the bank BB&T's charitable foundation and inaugurated in 2008, colleges teach a curriculum that promotes free-market economics, and notably, the ideas of Ayn Rand.

The [man behind the program](#), former BB&T chairman and CEO John Allison has described the curriculum as a way of helping [save America from economic decline](#):

Unless students (i.e., future leaders, teachers, professors, etc.) learn the principles that underlie a free society, the United States will continue to move toward statism and economic decline. The believers in "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" must retake the universities, or America will ultimately become a second-tier country with a dark future. That is the context in which BB&T began its program "The Moral Foundations of Capitalism."

Allison added that he was frustrated intellectuals had "dismissed" free-market economic ideas. This is no casual cause for Allison; he is the president and CEO of the Cato Institute and also sat on the board of directors of the Ayn Rand Institute, a think tank that promotes the objectivist writer's ideas. Allison adds in this article that Atlas Shrugged was usually included in the curriculum for the program.

According to Allison, under the program universities received \$50,000 to \$200,000 per year over the course of 10 years of teaching the courses.

Not that all universities happily accepted the BB&T money. The American Association of University Professors [has criticized](#) this sort of arrangement of payment in exchange for teaching a particular curriculum. With this in mind, some colleges started questioning how they accept these sorts of funds and how it might affect academic freedom, according to a 2010 AAUP article.

This isn't to say Brat is a Rand disciple himself. As Zack Beauchamp [wrote earlier tonight](#), the National Review wrote in a piece on Brat that while "isn't a Randian," he is influenced by her writings and philosophy and "appreciates Rand's case for human freedom and free markets."

**Corrected.** This article originally misstated the AAUP as the American Association of University Presidents.