

Sine Institute of Policy & Politics

ANNUAL REPORT | 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR

Where the brightest minds engage to promote common ground and nonpartisan solutions

SINE INSTITUTE
of POLICY & POLITICS
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

7 years of Sine

On September 25, 2018, the **Sine Institute of Policy and Politics** launched at American University as a laboratory for university-wide collaboration and an incubator for policy innovation, convening the best and brightest minds to promote common ground and nonpartisan solutions.

38 Sine Fellows
12 Distinguished Lecturers
332 guest speakers

287 events attended by
15,378 people

7,334 social media followers
@AUSineInstitute

296 students have supported Sine's work:

186 Student Associates
80 Student Advisors
24 Student Research Advisors
6 Graduate Assistants

6 focus areas:
Politics
Government
Journalism
Nonprofits
Business
Academia

90k YouTube views reaching
64 countries on
6 continents

10M founding gift from **Jeff Sine** (SIS/BA '76) and **Samira Sine**

18,495 Youtube and Facebook livestream views

107 student and University cosponsors



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Introduction

American University's Sine Institute of Policy and Politics is a laboratory for university-wide collaboration and an incubator for policy innovation, convening the best and brightest minds in the public, private, academic, and nonprofit sectors, as well as journalism.

Convene, Communicate, Collaborate

Today's interconnected world offers an unprecedented opportunity to bring together experts, top scholars, and students in research and scholarship to analyze and address the nation's most pressing challenges in a way that promotes common ground and nonpartisan policy solutions. The Sine Institute has welcomed that opportunity in a defining era for our democracy and the world. American University's capital city location at the nexus of government, policy, advocacy, and a growing international business center connects diverse perspectives from around the world.

Committed to Lasting Change

Alongside world-class academics and research-experienced practitioners in international and domestic affairs, leaders in business, nonprofits, and government, and one of the most politically-active student bodies in the U.S., the Sine Institute convenes conversations that are intended to bring real, lasting change in policy and politics. The Sine Institute stands apart through its focus on the importance of civic participation and public service, the critical role of advocacy and research in crafting public policy, the contributions of Americans

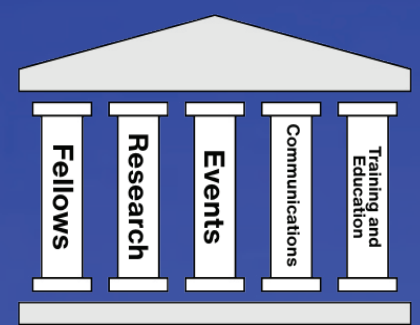
of all ages to the policy-making process, and the need for civil discourse as we work to bring needed solutions to the challenges we face and a brighter future for our nation and the world.

Areas of Focus

Drawing on their expertise in government, politics, academia, journalism, nonprofits, business, and other areas, Sine Institute Fellows uncover new policy solutions and problem solving methods informed by evidence and cross-sector perspectives. Each Fellow is asked to explore a timely aspect of policy and politics that will benefit from these dynamic conversations. In our interconnected world, policy changes at the federal level have significant consequences, crossing sectors and impacting international and national affairs as well as our local communities. This complex influence is at the core of the conversation topics discussed and debated by Sine Fellows.



Sine Institute Program Pillars



Fellows

This academic year, the Sine Institute welcomed a dynamic cohort of 2024–2025 Sine Institute Fellows, who brought diverse perspectives from across sectors and ideologies. This year’s Fellows led 12 interdisciplinary seminars, mentored 23 students, and contributed to shaping inclusive, solution-oriented conversations on critical national and global issues. Their expertise enhanced the Institute’s mission to bring change by bridging divides and fostering civil dialogue.



Research

Throughout the past academic year, Sine-supported research advanced innovative policy solutions through interdisciplinary collaboration. Projects focused on the intersection of technology, democracy, and equity, with notable work addressing AI and public trust, climate resilience policy, and disinformation. Several research findings were published in major journals and policy briefs, influencing both academic discourse and practical policymaking.



Events

Throughout the year, the Sine Institute hosted 25 events, including Fellow seminars, panel discussions, and policy roundtables. These gatherings featured thought leaders, journalists, activists, and policymakers and attracting over 5,600 attendees in-person and online. Topics ranged from advocacy and activism to changes in news media and realignments in American politics.



Communications

This academic year, the Sine Institute amplified its reach through strategic storytelling. Our website attracted over 18k viewers in the past year, and social media impressions grew by nearly 15% in the past academic year. Key campaigns highlighted the impact of Sine Fellows, featured timely policy insights, and promoted signature events. Enhanced digital tools allowed for broader community engagement and real-time dialogue.



Training & Education

Sine continues to empower the next generation of public leaders and has worked with nearly 300 students from across American University, providing involvement opportunities, policy workshops, immersive learning experiences, certification programs, and more. The Sine Student Scholars program expanded this year, offering enhanced mentorship, networking opportunities, and real-world problem-solving experiences that positioned students for leadership in public service and policy innovation.



A Message From Executive Director Amy K. Dacey

Dear friends and supporters of the Sine Institute:

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I share this year's Annual Report, highlighting the achievements and growth of the Sine Institute of Policy & Politics from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

At the Sine Institute, our mission has always been to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and inspire innovative solutions to the most pressing issues facing our nation and the world. This year, we made meaningful strides in deepening that commitment—expanding our reach, elevating diverse voices, and creating new opportunities for learning and collaboration.

One of the most powerful drivers of our work continues to be our students. From the very beginning, the Sine Institute has made student engagement a cornerstone of its mission, and this year was no exception. Our Student Associates brought fresh ideas and critical perspectives to our programs and events, while the Student Advisory Board played an instrumental role in shaping our strategic direction and ensuring that the student voice remains at the heart of everything we do.

The 2024 Sine Institute Poll offered students the opportunity to engage directly in the research process, exploring public opinion around democracy, trust in institutions, and civic engagement. The results not only sparked important conversations on campus, but also contributed to the national discourse on political participation and polarization.

Our signature Dialogue for Democracy event brought incredible energy to campus in July 2024. The event featured the leaders of the College Republican National Committee and the College Democrats of America in conversation on the key issues of the day. Throughout the conversation, these impressive young leaders agreed on many topics while disagreeing respectfully on others. By bringing together leading voices from across the political spectrum, the event fostered an honest, solution-oriented conversation that reflected the Sine Institute's core values of respect, inquiry, and impact. It was an incredible moment of civic learning for students and the broader community alike. We were also honored to welcome an extraordinary group of Sine Fellows, including former American University President Hon. Sylvia



Burwell, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad, and veteran journalist Tara Palmeri. Each Fellow brought distinct expertise and a deep commitment to public service, engaging directly with students through workshops, lectures, and small group discussions that will leave lasting impressions on our community. Additionally, we were privileged to host Distinguished Lecturer Jamal Mashburn, whose unique insights into the intersection of leadership, sports, and social impact added an exciting and multidimensional layer to our programming. Jamal's work with students emphasized the importance of adaptability, character, and long-term thinking - qualities we hope to instill in all who participate in Sine programming. Throughout the year, our gatherings continued to spark national dialogue - from forums on election integrity and climate resilience to our speaker series on the future of democracy. These events would not be possible without the collaborative spirit of our university community, the generosity of our supporters, and the dedication of our incredible staff.

As we look ahead, the need to foster civil dialogue and productive conversations between those with differing backgrounds, viewpoints and perspectives has never been greater. I remain inspired by all those who make our work possible, from students to other leaders, partners, and advocates. I thank them for being part of the Sine Institute's journey, and I am excited about what we will accomplish together in the year to come. Together, we are shaping a future defined not by division, but by dialogue, ideas, and action.

With gratitude,
Amy K. Dacey
Executive Director
Sine Institute of Policy & Politics
American University

2024-2025 Academic Year in Review



September

9/12 - The Sine Institute presents “What’s Next: An Inside Guide to the West Wing” with actors Melissa Fitzgerald and Mary McCormack

9/17 - The Sine Institute and The Hill present “What’s America Thinking? Young Voters of Today, Political Leaders of Tomorrow” a set of discussions on the Sine Institute’s 2024 poll of Young Americans

9/25 - The Sine Institute hosts a discussion on the 2024 U.S. elections with Korean journalists at the East-West Center’s 2024 Korea-US Journalists Exchange

9/27 - Sine Institute 2024 Distinguished Lecturer Jamal Mashburn discussion and Sine Institute Student Roundtable events

9/27 - Amy Dacey speaks at American University Family Weekend panel: “Presidential Election 2024: Expecting the Unexpected”

November

11/6 - The Sine Institute cohosts and Amy Dacey serves as emcee at American University’s Unity Dinner

11/12 - The Sine Institute presents a Civic Life Series event: “What Just Happened? Voting is Over - What Did We Learn From Election 2024?”

11/19 - Spring 2025 Sine Institute Fellows Announcement

11/19 - The Sine Institute presents: Civic Life Series event: “What Happens Next? The Presidential Transition of Power”

July

7/22 - The Sine Institute presents its first nonpartisan Dialogue for Democracy event: “Modeling Civil Discourse with Gen Z.”

8/1 - Amy Dacey speaks at the “Australian Women in DC” panel discussion

August

10/11 - Amy Dacey speaks at the Athens Democracy Forum in Athens, Greece

10/7 - Amy Dacey meets with Mayor Sadiq Khan

10/7 - Amy Dacey speaks at election briefing at the Tony Blair Institute

10/7 - Amy Dacey speaks at My Life My Say Youth Panel

10/21 - AU President Alger’s “The Civic Life” series kick-off event

10/29 - The Sine Institute presents The Civic Life Series: “What Happens After Election Day: How the Electoral College Works.”

12/7 - 2025 Sine Institute Student Associate Orientation

December

October





March

3/5 - Amy Dacey moderates the “Advancing Social Justice through Policy, Politics, and Philanthropy” panel hosted by the American University Women’s Network

3/6 - 2025 Sine Fellow Sylvia Burwell: “The Reality of November 2024: Is a Realignment Happening Right Now in the US?” featuring AU Professor Dr. Liz Suhay

3/12 - Amy Dacey leads panel discussion at AU School of Public Affairs Key Leadership Conference: “Consensus in Complex Times: Uniting Teams for Lasting Public Service Impact”

3/19 - 2025 Sine Fellow Nadia Murad: “Who Can Influence the End of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) in the World?”

3/25 - 2025 Sine Fellow Tara Palmeri: “The Red-Pilling of Silicon Valley: How Tech Billionaires Turned on Democrats and Helped Deliver Trump a Victory”

3/28 - Inauguration of 16th American University President Jonathan Alger

3/31 - 2025 Sine Fellow Nadia Murad: “Using Your Voice to Advocate for the Issues and People You Care About” (Career Conversation)

January

1/26 - Strategy discussion with 2025 Sine Student Advisory Group

2/4 - 2025 Sine Fellows Welcoming Event and Panel Discussion

2/6 - 2025 Sine Fellow Nadia Murad: “My Story: The Power of Personal Stories and the Role of Activism”

2/10 - 2025 Sine Fellow Tara Palmeri: “Changing Media: How Podcasters and Influencers Became the Message”

2/18 - Amy Dacey speaks at AU School of Public Affairs “Advocacy, Policy and Legislation Industry Week” about working on political campaigns

2/20 - 2025 Sine Fellow Sylvia Burwell: “What is a Realignment?”

2/26 - 2025 Sine Fellow Tara Palmeri: “A Democratic Reckoning: How Democrats Lost the Blue Wall” (featuring U.S. Representative Brendan Boyle)

4/1 - The Sine Institute cohosts the first Immigration Initiative Pilot Program event: “Immigration and the Trump Administration’s First 100 Days”

4/2 - 2025 Sine Fellow Sylvia Burwell discussion with U.S. Senator Tim Scott: “What Comes Next? The New Look of Policy and Politics Over the Next Four Years” (held at Hart Senate Office Building)

4/7 - 2025 Sine Fellow Tara Palmeri: Career Conversation

4/9 - 2025 Sine Fellow Nadia Murad: How to Avoid Retraumatization of Survivors, Shame, and Stigma

4/17 - 2025 Sine Fellow Sylvia Burwell: Career Conversation

4/22 - Sine Institute Student Celebration

4/24 - The Sine Institute cohosts the second Immigration Initiative Pilot Program event: “Immigration in Focus: Insights from Community Partners and Policy Experts”

February

April





2025 Sine Institute Fellows



Nadia Murad (CAS/BA '24)

President and Chairwoman, Nadia's Initiative; Nobel Prize Laureate

Nadia Murad is a leading advocate for survivors of genocide and sexual violence. Her Sine Institute Seminar Series, "Activism and Accountability," details her story of her captivity at the hands of ISIS, as well as her activism and her work to both advocate for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) worldwide and hold perpetrators accountable.



Tara Palmeri (SOC/BA '08)

Former Lead Author, Politico Playbook; Former White House Correspondent, ABC News; Host, The Ringer's "Somebody's Gotta Win" Podcast, Author, "The Red Letter"

Tara Palmeri is an experienced and respected political journalist based in Washington, D.C. Her Sine Institute Seminar Series, a 2024 Postmortem: A Democratic Reckoning, the Podcast Campaign, and the Red Pilling of Silicon Valley" featured three recordings of Tara's podcast with prominent guests on the 2024 election, changes in media, and the latest in U.S. politics.



Hon. Sylvia Burwell

Former Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Former President, American University; Former Director, Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Sylvia M. Burwell is American University's 15th president and the first woman to serve as president. President Burwell is a broad-ranging, effective leader who has served at the highest levels of government, philanthropy, and academia.





2024 Sine Distinguished Lecturer: Jamal Mashburn

On September 27th, 2024, college basketball star and NBA legend turned business owner, investor, and Sine Institute 2024 Distinguished Lecturer Jamal Mashburn helped kick off American University's 2024 Family Weekend with a lecture and discussion with the AU community. The conversation was moderated by Bloomberg's Jason Kelly and covered Jamal's journey in athletics and business, his support network of family, friends, and coaches, his current endeavors, and changes he's seen in the world of professional sports.

Jamal is the founder and principal of Helen Holdings. A former NBA All-Star with a notable 12-year career spanning the Dallas Mavericks, Miami Heat, Charlotte Hornets, and New Orleans Pelicans, Mashburn has evolved into a successful investor, entrepreneur, and business leader. He has strategically assembled top-tier executives and mobilized capital across various sectors, including the media, sports and entertainment, tourism and hospitality, real estate, F&B, waste management, and finance. is recognized for his expertise in financial analysis and international negotiations, particularly within the automotive sector.



Jamal is a frequent speaker at Fortune 500 events. He is also dedicated to philanthropy, having established the Mashburn Scholarship Fund at the University of Kentucky. Through the MAP Foundation and Mashburn Family Foundation, he supports at-risk youth with mentoring and scholarships. Jamal holds a Doctorate of Humanities from the University of Kentucky.

The event also featured a Sine Institute Student Roundtable between Mashburn and students from schools across AU who were invited to sit down to discuss life, careers, and professional sports.





2024/2025 Guest Speakers

U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC)

U.S. Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R, NY-11)

Melissa Fitzgerald - Actor, *The West Wing*; Co-Author, *What's Next*; Director of Strategic Engagement, AllRise

Terence Samuel - 2023 Sine Fellow, Editor-in-Chief, USA Today; former Executive Editor, National Public Radio (NPR);

U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle (D, PA-02)

U.S. Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D, MA-04)

Jonathan Alger - 16th President, American University

David Marchick - Dean, AU Kogod School of Business

Elizabeth Johnson - Chief of Staff, U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney

Polson Kanneth (SOC/BA '05) - Executive Director of Washington Special Events and Booking, CNN

Courtney Hope Britt - Chair, College Republican National Committee

Teddy Schleifer - Reporter, NYT; Co-Founder, Puck

Carolyn Salvador Avida - President, College Democrats of America

Michael LaRosa - Partner, Ballard Partners; former Press Secretary, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden

Mary McCormack - Actor, *The West Wing*; Co-Author, *What's Next*

Anita Kumar - Head of Standards and Practices, Politico

Simone Monasebian - Chief Program Officer, Sanctuary for Families

Betsy Fischer Martin - Executive Director, American University Women and Politics Institute

Antoine Sanfuentes - Media Consultant; former Vice President and Managing Editor, Washington Bureau, CNN

Julia Manchester (SPA/BA '17) - National Political Reporter, The Hill

Jonathan Martin - Political Correspondent, NYT; Co-Author, *This Shall Not Pass*

Janet Rodriguez - 2020 Sine Fellow; Internal Communications Manager, WhatsApp

Amy Walters - Publisher and Editor-in-Chief, The Cook Political Report with Amy Walters

Alyse Nelson - President and CEO, Vital Voices

Jordan Brooks - Former Chief of Staff, Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff

Molly O'Rourke - Executive in Residence, AU School of Communication; Senior Advisor to the Sine Institute

Patrice Willoughby - Chief of Policy and Legislative Affairs, NAACP

Joel Pritikin - President, AU College Republicans; Co-Founder and Vice Chair, DC College Republicans

Zolan Kanno-Youngs - White House Correspondent, NYT

Jason Kelly - New York Bureau Chief, Bloomberg News

Todd Zwillich - Deputy DC Bureau Chief, VICE News

Doug Hattaway - President, Hattaway Communications; Advisor to the Sine Institute

Kristin Soltis-Anderson - Republican Pollster and Strategist; Partner and Co-Founder, Echelon Insights

Layla Zaidane - President and CEO, Future Caucus

Cheyenne Daniels - Race and Politics Reporter, The Hill

Abid Shamdeen (SIS/MIS '19) - Co-Founder, Nadia's Initiative

Richard Bagger - Partner and Executive Director, Christie 55 Solutions

Andrea Gallegos-Montilla - Managing Director, SAMU First Response

Diana Garay - Program Coordinator, American University Center for Latin American and Latino Studies

Professor Liz Suhay, PhD

Tyler Brown-Dewese - Former President, AU College Democrats; AU Student Civic Life Fellow

Aaron Reichlin-Melnik - Senior Fellow, American Immigration Council

Kathleen Bush-Joseph - Policy Analyst, Migration Policy Institute

Suyanna Linhaes Barker - Chief Program Officer, La Clinica del Pueblo

Astrid Jiminez - Executive Director, Nueva Vida

Elaine Kamarck - Founding Director, Center for Effective Public Management, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Shane Santo Mulhern - Executive Director, Thrive DC

Alex Araya - Senior Attorney, Legal Orientation/Detained Adult Program, Amica Center for Immigrant Rights

Jayesh Rathod - Director, Immigrant Justice Clinic, American University Washington College of Law

Abel Nunez - Executive Director, Carecen



Past Fellows and Distinguished Lecturers

2024

Hon. Larry Hogan
Hon. Manisha Singh
Kara Swisher
Daniella Senior
Hon. Thomas Nides
Patrice Willoughby
Jim Sciutto*
Hon. Pam Melroy*

2023

Anna Deavere Smith
Hon. Bill De Blasio
Terence Samuel
Alida Garcia
Hon. Doug Ducey
Hon. Mimi Walters
David Rubenstein*
Horacio Rozanski*

2022

Hon. Julian Castro
Hon. Barbara Comstock
Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali
Richard Fontaine
Michele Norris
Shannon Watts
Ryan Gellert*

2021

Suzanne Clark
Ann Curry
Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic
Hon. Gary Locke
Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster
Governor Wes Moore
Mayor Lori Lightfoot*
Mayor Francis Suarez*

2020

Alphonso Jackson
Cody Keenan
Janet Rodriguez
John Tass-Parker
Katherine Miller
Hon. Susan Molinari
Hon. Joe Hockey*
Dina Powell*

2019

Abdul El-Sayed
Gov. Bill Haslam
William Kristol
Ruth Marcus
Karen Zacarias
Wes Bush*

*Distinguished Lecturer



Leadership

Amy K. Dacey is the Executive Director of the Sine Institute of Policy & Politics at American University. For more than two decades, she managed prominent national organizations, advised leading elected officials and candidates, including President Barack Obama and Senator John Kerry, and counseled a variety of nonprofits and companies. During the 2016 Presidential Election, she served as the chief executive officer of the Democratic National Committee. From 2010 to 2013, Amy served as executive director of EMILY's List, the organization dedicated to electing Democratic women to national, state, and local offices, and led the organization's revitalization, restructuring and rebranding efforts. Amy has a master's degree in Political Science from American University.

Benjamin Bryant joined the Sine Institute as Director of Strategic Communications in June 2022. Prior to his current role, he worked for six years on Capitol Hill, serving as the deputy press secretary for Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) and communications director for Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA). Ben is originally from Rhode Island and graduated from the University of Connecticut with a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Political Science.

Yanlin Zhang is the assistant director of events with Sine. Yanlin is originally from Shanghai, China. She moved to the United States in 2017, and now lives in D.C. with her husband and daughter. She has significant expertise in planning, developing, and executing a wide variety of events, programs and activities, including overseeing events throughout their full life cycle. Before moving to the U.S., Yanlin has worked in both the private sector and in NGOs like charity galas and trade shows, multi-day conferences, C-level dinners, committee events and roundtables.

Molly O'Rourke is the Senior Advisor at the Sine Institute and an Executive in Residence in the School of Communication at American University who also serves as the Director of the MA program in Political Communication. She teaches undergraduate and graduate-level courses in

Research Methods, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. She has more than 20 years' experience in the field of public opinion research, most recently as a partner at Hart Research in Washington, D.C., where she led multiphase research project for dozens of advocacy and nonprofit organizations, political candidates, and media outlets.

Sydney Weinstein is a Graduate Assistant with the Sine Institute, and an American University Graduate Student pursuing her Master's Degree in Terrorism and Homeland Security Policy. She also serves as an Academic Year Intern at the UMD Applied Research Lab for Intelligence & Security (ARLIS), where she works on intelligence and security challenges projects. Sydney has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Distinguished Fellow in Residence

Hon. Sylvia Burwell - 2025 Sine Institute Fellow, former Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, former Director, Office of Management and Budget, 15th President, American University

Board of Advisors *(in formation)*

Anita McBride - former Assistant to President George W. Bush, former Chief of Staff to First Lady Laura Bush, and current Executive-in-Residence at AU's School of Public Affairs (SPA)

Janet Rodriguez - 2020 Sine Institute Fellow; Head of Internal Communications, WhatsApp; Former White House Correspondent, Univision

Founding Board Members

Frances Townsend (SPA/BA '82)

Danielle C. Gray

Deval Patrick

Philip Zelikow

Michelle Flournoy



Communications

Sine Institute events and initiatives have received widespread media coverage over the past academic year, with mentions and coverage appearing in outlets such as the Washington Post, CNN, National Public Radio (NPR), Politico, USA Today, ABC News, CQ Roll Call, Forbes, The Hill, and many others. Over time, the Sine Institute has built a strong network of prominent journalists across Washington D.C., the United States, and internationally to support the growth and outreach of the Sine Institute. In 2024 alone, Executive Director Amy K. Dacey conducted 88 media interviews reaching over 292 million people worldwide.

Each year, the Sine Institute strengthens its media presence and raises its public profile by ensuring that our events, initiatives, and goals are recognized both internally with American University publications and externally in the broader media landscape.

Training and Education

Each semester, the Sine Institute works to involve undergraduate and graduate American University students in our programs and events. Each spring, we offer an opportunity to earn a “Sine Institute Collaborative Leadership Certificate” through attending 6 Sine Fellow seminars and completing a reflection on lessons learned and takeaway thoughts. Successful students then receive a printed certificate as well as a LinkedIn badge, recognizing their commitment to Sine’s mission.



In the fall of 2024, the Sine Institute premiered another certificate program: the Sine Institute Innovative Communication Certificate Program, which encourages students to earn points by supporting Sine staff in areas including graphic design, social media, podcast production, event logistics, and more.

Each academic year, the Sine Institute is joined by a new group of Student Advisors - students from across campus who guide and inspire the Institute as the next generation of leaders by providing strategies for boosting student engagement, providing counsel on programming, and offering recommendations for building Sine’s reach at AU. AU students are also invited to apply to serve as Sine Institute Student Associates for Sine Sine Fellows, helping to craft seminar content and ensuring that events are run efficiently.

The Sine Institute regularly partners with established data collection organizations to administer comprehensive annual surveys of young Americans across the nation. This research uncovers data-driven insights that both challenge and inform policymakers, contributing to the shaping of America’s future and its influence on the global stage.



Sine in the Media: 2024

530

Mentions of the Sine Institute in national and international media outlets in 2024, including:

Washington Post
ABC News
CNN
NPR
C-Span
The Hill
Politico
Politico Playbook
Newsweek

Voice of America
Bloomberg
Business Insider
Buzzfeed
CBS Radio
CBS News
VOX Magazine
BBC Live Service
BBC Newsday

BBC World Service
National Journal
LA Times
London Times Radio
Houston Chronicle
McLatchey
Al Jazeera

reaching...

292M people in
150 countries and on
6 continents





3rd Annual

Sine Institute Poll

Reimagining Political Leadership: The Outlook of Young Americans

The Sine Institute’s third annual poll is an investment in understanding what young Americans look for in political leaders, their levels of optimism about their own lives and the future of the country, their levels of involvement in causes they care about, and more.

Young Americans say **political leaders are focused on the wrong agenda:**

36% say that leaders focus on the wrong issues and priorities

31% say leaders are **too focused on winning reelection** instead of making **hard decisions** that might make them unpopular

28% say leaders are **unethical** and do things mostly to **benefit themselves**

Reported **actions that would increase young Americans’ trust** in political leaders:

Consult with youth advisors

Participate more often in community events

Engage in regular dialogue with other parties

Shadow an “average” person’s daily life

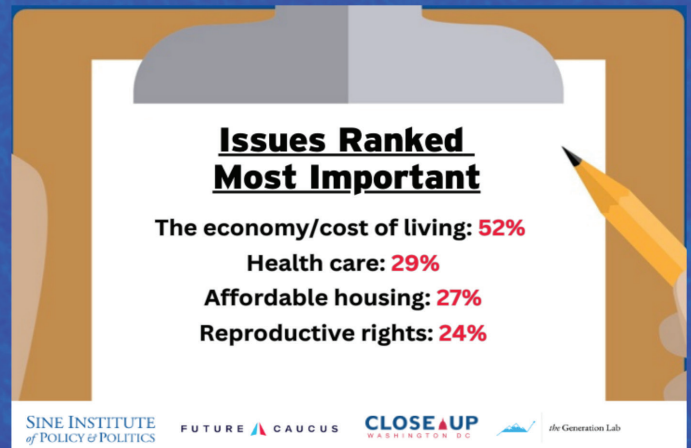
Communicate an understanding of life’s adversities and challenges

Young Americans are **pessimistic** about the future of the country, but remain **optimistic** about their own futures

75% want leaders who are **motivated to serve others**, not themselves

47% want leaders who **listen to others** and consider their perspectives

63% say **mental health challenges** have interfered with their daily lives



What's America Thinking: Young Voters of Today, Political Leaders of Tomorrow

SPOTLIGHT: 2024 Sine Poll Discussion with The Hill

On September 17th, the Sine Institute teamed up with our partners at The Hill to record an episode of the Hill's "What's America Thinking?" with Julia Manchester entitled "Young Voters of Today, Political Leaders of Tomorrow." The event featured two panel discussions with notable experts that centered on the results of the Sine Institute's 2024 poll, "Reimagining Political Leadership: Views From Young Americans." Topics covered include Sine's new data on what young Americans ages 18-34 look for in leadership and how their priorities could impact the future of U.S. politics.

The first panel featured a discussion of the Sine Institute's 2024 poll results, featuring Molly O'Rourke, who serves as Executive in Residence at the AU School of Communication (SOC), and Doug Hattaway, President of Hattaway Communications. Both speakers also serve as advisors to the Sine Institute.



The event's second panel featured a conversation between The Hill's Julia Manchester and guest speakers Patrice Willoughby, a 2024 Sine Institute Fellow who serves as Senior Vice President of Global Policy & Impact at NAACP; Layla Zaidane, President & CEO of Future Caucus; and Naomi Miguel, former Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Advancing Education Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans at the U.S. Department of Education.





SPOTLIGHT: Dialogue for Democracy

On July 22, the Sine Institute hosted its first nonpartisan “Dialogue for Democracy: Modeling Civil Discourse with Gen Z” discussion to demonstrate that civil discourse and productive communication is still possible among young Americans with differing political views.

The event was held on AU’s main campus and featured a discussion between College Republican National Committee National Chairman Courtney Hope Britt and College Democrats of America National President Carolyn Salvador Avila. The talk was moderated by Virginia Gunawan of Voice of America.

During the course of the evening, Britt and Avila gave voice to the divided state of politics and the commonalities that matter most to a diverse voting block of Americans who are now key to the outcome of U.S. elections. Shared concerns include college affordability, the environment, and affordable housing—all of which were among the issues identified in the Sine Institute’s 2023 “Reimagining the American Dream” poll of young Americans ages 18–34.

The event was also the first official campus gathering attended by American University President Jonathan Alger, a national leader in the field of civic engagement in higher education, who joined AU on July 1, 2024.

Sine Institute Founder Jeff Sine (SIS/BA ’76) who, along with his wife Samira Sine, made the \$10 million milestone gift to launch the Sine Institute in 2018, also attended the event, along with national and local reporters and more than 50 AU community members. Another 300 viewers tuned in to the event’s livestream.



SPOTLIGHT: The Civic Life Election Panel Series

As part of American University’s “The Civic Life” initiative, led by AU President Jonathan Alger, the Sine Institute hosted a series of three panel discussions relating to the 2024 presidential election over the course of fall 2024. Topics discussed included the Electoral College, the factors that led to President Trump’s reelection, and the history and details behind the presidential exchange of power in the United States.



On October 29th, Elaine Kamarck of the Brookings Institution and John C. Fortier of American Enterprise Institute kicked off the panel series with a discussion hosted by 2020 Sine Fellow and What’s App Internal Communications Manager Janet Rodriguez: “What Happens After Election Day? - How the Electoral College Works.”

pollster Kristen Soltis Anderson, The Hill race and politics reporter Cheyanne M. Daniels, and political strategist Amanda Hunter. The discussion covered what led to the results of the 2024 election and their potential impact on our nation’s future.

For the second panel on November 12th, “What Just Happened? Voting is Over - What Did We Learn from Election 2024,” the Sine Institute hosted a distinguished, all-woman panel moderated by Betsy Fischer Martin of the AU School of Public Affairs Women & Politics Institute and featured Sine Institute senior advisor Molly O’Rourke, Republican

On November 19th, the Sine Institute hosted the final installment of the election-based panel series: “What Happens Next? The Presidential Transition of Power.” The virtual discussion was moderated by 2022 Sine Fellow Terence Samuel and featured Dean David Marchick of AU’s Kogod School of Business and Rich Bagger, Partner and Executive Director of Christie 55 Solutions.

SPOTLIGHT: Immigration Initiative Pilot

On April 1st, 2025, the Sine Institute cohosted the first Immigration Initiative Pilot Program event: “Immigration and the Trump Administration’s First 100 Days.” Held in the AU School of International Service, the event featured a group of panelists who included: Kathleen Bush-Joseph of Migration Policy Institute, Aaron Reichlin-Melnick of the American Immigration Council, and Ernesto Castaneda, Executive Director of the AU Center for Latino and Latin American Studies. Student researchers also presented results from the Immigration Lab’s study of recent arrivals to the DMV area.



On April 24th, the Immigration Initiative Pilot continued as Sine Institute Executive Director Amy K. Dacey joined the “Immigration in Focus: Insights from Community Partners and Policy Experts” panel discussion, an analysis of current immigration issues and the struggles faced by the immigrant community, featuring community based partners and immigration policy experts. The discussion was led by the AU Center for Latin American and Latino Studies and cosponsored by the Sine Institute.

SPOTLIGHT: Innovative Communications Certificate

The Sine Institute's new Innovative Communication Certificate Program provides an opportunity for AU students to get involved with the Sine Institute while engaging and strengthening their communication and leadership skills. This is the second program provided by the Sine Institute for AU students to earn a certificate, with the first being the Sine Institute Collaborative Leadership Certificate program, which provides a unique opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to expand their knowledge of politics and policy in today's world while exploring and developing their individual leadership styles, skills and values.

To earn the Innovative Communications certificate, students are required to earn 7 "points" throughout the fall semester. Different tasks, such as graphic design, social media, podcast production, and event logistics and support are worth different point values. Participants are also asked to complete an online post reflection form at the end of their 7 points to receive the certificate.



SPOTLIGHT: Washington Ireland Program Research Project

The Sine Institute was a 2025 Work Placement Partner by its long-term partner organization the Washington Ireland Program (WIP). WIP staff also welcomed Executive Director Amy Dacey to Northern Ireland to participate in a project undertaken by WIP Work Placement Partners and WIP participants. The purpose of the project was to explore the topic of Artificial Intelligence and its evolving relationship with education systems and the working world.

A core pillar of the WIP program is providing work placement experience to participants. Over the course of two different summers, the Sine Institute has welcomed students from Ireland and Northern Ireland to work in its offices as part of the WIP's Emerging Leader Program. This summer placement program provides students with an opportunity to immerse themselves in professional work environments and enhance their career-oriented skills over a summer spent in Washington, D.C.





Student Involvement

Sine Institute Student Advisory Group

The Sine Institute Student Advisory Group is a collection of students from schools across AU's campus who are selected annually by their school's dean to guide the Sine Institute and help inspire the next generation of leaders. During meetings at the Sine Institute offices in Kerwin Hall, the group discusses tactics for student engagement, ideas for programming, and recommendations for Fellows and speakers. The Sine Institute's 2024-2025 Academic Year Student Advisors are:

- Ahmet Aytekin (KSB)
- Gabriella Biello (SPA)
- Michael Bruk (SIS/SPA)
- Julia Cucchiara (SOC)
- Gabriela Reis Hejde (KSB)
- Hannah Lowenstein (SOE)
- Adaobi (Myles) Nwatu (SPA)
- Philip Winkle (WCL)
- Michael McGee-McCoy (CAS)
- Kate Radt (CAS)
- Ansley Russ (SIS)
- Zachary Draghiciu (SOE)
- Andrew Gamble (WCL)
- Evan M. Gerstenblith (SOC)
- Campbell Hall (KSB)

Sine Institute Student Research Advisory Group

The Sine Institute Student Research Advisory Group is a selection of highly-committed AU students who give essential insight into the Sine Institute's annual polls of young Americans. The Sine Institute's 2024-2025 Student Research Advisors are:

- Tyler Brown-Dewese
- Nika Gigishvili-Matthews
- Sydney Gough
- Samantha Hessel
- Pablo Landsmanas Gary
- Katie Nowicki
- Lexie Osbourne
- Rohan Singh
- Edozie Umunna
- Matthew Wiggans





2024-2025 Student Associates

Each year, Sine Institute Fellows are assigned a group of Student Associates to assist in designing, planning, organizing, and executing their seminar series. Student Associates come with diverse backgrounds, skills, and experiences that enrich seminar development, and help ensure that Fellows’ seminars are well-publicized, well-attended, well-documented, and an overall success. Sine’s Spring 2025 Student Associates were:



Nadia Murad

- Jocelyn Parker* (SIS)
- Gabriella Biello (SPA/SOC)
- Tara Parsa (SPA)
- Victorine Tamko (CAS)
- Aaron Miller (SPA)
- Alya Elhassani Elalaoui (SPA/SOC)



Hon. Sylvia Burwell

- Alex Moskovitz* (SPA/KSB)
- Mason Corkhill (SPA)
- Gabrielle Wong (SIS)
- Daniel Domsy (SIS/CAS)
- Jackson Taylor (SPA)
- Ahmet Aytekin (Grad, KSB)
- Tyler Brown-Dewese (SPA)



Tara Palmeri

- Sara Carney*(SOC/SPA)
- Adaobi (Myles) Nwatu
- Thom Blair (Grad)
- Do Sinh Tran (SPA)
- Julia Cucchiara (SOC/SPA)
- Ariana Becemberg (SIS)
- Akhila Vemuri (Grad)



General Student Associates

- Katie Dorfman* (SPA)
- Ming Tso Tai (Grad)
- Kareen Gill (SPA)
- Ella Bianco (CAS)



Hear From Our Students

“Through my time with the Sine Institute, I learned that good policy isn’t just about the right ideas—it’s about listening, collaborating, and having the courage to act. I am appreciative of the opportunities Sine has provided me with and am looking forward to staying connected with the Institute following my graduation.”

- Katherine Dorfman (SPA)

“My experience at the Sine Institute has connected me with so many interesting people who all view the world in unique ways. Working as a Sine Student Associate allowed me to attend events and hear from speakers that I would have otherwise never had the opportunity to meet. The events challenged me to think about how I lead and communicate within my community.”

- Julia Cucchiara (SOC/SPA)

I knew from my first day at AU that I wanted to get involved with the Sine Institute. After seeing that my former governor, Larry Hogan, was a Fellow, I became extremely interested in what Sine stood for. Since joining, I have been amazed at the amount of knowledge I was able to gain and the opportunities I have been able to experience. I am extremely grateful to have experienced this in my freshman year and hope to keep watching it grow over the next few years.”

- Jackson Taylor (SPA)





What's Next For Sine?

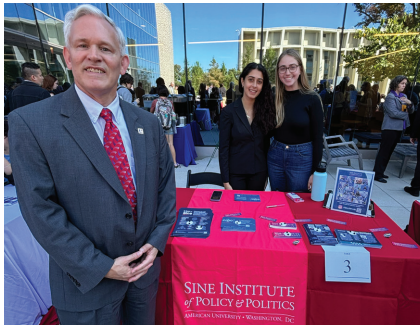
As American University's 2025-2026 Academic Year approaches, the Sine Institute of Policy & Politics looks forward to expanding its reach through several new initiatives. As of fall 2025, the Institute will take on a leadership role with American University's new Democracy Innovation Lab, which will conduct important research regarding young Americans' views on policy and politics.

The Institute will also partner with American University President Jonathan Alger to advance President Alger's "The Civic Life" initiative, which highlights the importance of and encourages civic participation and civic education among Americans of all ages.

Along with these new initiatives, the Sine Institute will continue its Fellowship program and further our work convening bright minds from varied and diverse backgrounds and encouraging the conversations that will lead to lasting solutions to the problems we face as Americans and globally.

We thank our supporters and the American University students, faculty, and staff who have helped turn our ideas into reality, as well as our partners, friends, and the broader American University community for their ongoing support of our work.





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“This semester, I had the honor of returning to my alma mater, American University, as a Sine Institute of Policy and Politics Fellow. In our seminars and conversations, we explored the global challenges that continue to shape my work, particularly efforts by Nadia’s Initiative and others to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We also focused on implementing survivor-centered approaches that prioritize dignity, avoid retraumatization, and challenge stigma. Thank you to the incredible students and participants for your warm welcome and for your unwavering commitment to justice and survivor advocacy.”

- 2025 Sine Institute Fellow Nadia Murad (CAS/BA ‘24)

“It was wonderful to return to American University as a 2025 Sine Institute Fellow. The Institute fostered honest conversations about why the Democrats lost the election, the rising influence of podcasts over traditional media, and the shift of silicon valley to the right. The school, guests, and the highly-engaged students made my semester at Sine a success.”

- 2025 Sine Institute Fellow Tara Palmeri (SOC/BA ‘08)

“Serving as a fellow with the Sine Institute of Policy and Politics allowed me to connect with and learn from undergraduate and graduate students—our future leaders—and explore how shifts in political, cultural, and economic perspectives can impact elections, politics, and policy. I hope that our discussions on campus and on Capitol Hill through my seminar series through my seminar series—From Dolly Parton to Shaboozey: Is the 9 to 5 Still Working?—shed new light on what motivates voters and whether the nation is in the midst of another political realignment. I was inspired by the interest and perspectives of students and other community members throughout the semester, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of the Sine Institute’s important work, convening diverse viewpoints to bring needed change.”

- 2025 Sine Institute Fellow Hon. Sylvia Burwell

“Each year since its founding, the Sine Institute has continued to grow in its reach, reputation, and impact. My wife Samira and I have watched with great enthusiasm as the Institute has convened visionary leaders with diverse backgrounds and experiences on and off campus to discuss today’s biggest issues and challenges and engage with students and the broader American University community. I am delighted to be launching the Democracy Innovation Lab, a project of the Sine Institute this fall and thank President John Alger for his Leadership with this new initiative. I thank the Sine Institute team for their hard work, and I look forward to what’s next as the Institute continues to convene conversations that bring us closer to finding solutions to our biggest challenges in America and across the globe.”

- Sine Institute Founder Jeff Sine (SIS/BA ‘76)

“The Sine Institute of Policy & Politics brings bright minds and diverse viewpoints together right here at American University for a critical and noble cause – ensuring all voices and ideas are heard as we work to address today’s challenges and search for needed solutions. Importantly for me, the Sine Institute is also committed to encouraging civic education and inspiring Americans of all ages and backgrounds to engage in the civic participation that is crucial for our nation’s future. Thank you once again to the Sine Institute for providing our students and the larger AU community with the type of opportunities that can inspire great achievements and lasting change.”

- AU President Jonathan Alger



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