ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 ACADEMIC YEAR

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

The Sine Institute is a laboratory for university-wide collaboration and an incubator for policy innovation, convening the best and the brightest 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 work on the nation’s most pressing challenges in a way that promotes common ground and nonpartisan policy solutions. The Sine Institute of Policy and Politics seizes that opportunity at a defining moment for our democracy and the world. AU’s capital city location, at the nexus of government and within a growing international business center, connects diverse perspectives from around the country and the world. With our world-class academics and research, experienced practitioners in international and domestic views, leaders in business, nonprofits, and government, and the most politically-active student body in the U.S., Sine makes real, lasting change in public policy, the rise of the importance of economic regions in the United States, and international policy issues.

**AREAS OF FOCUS**

Drawing on their expertise in government, politics, academia, journalism, nonprofits, and business, Sine Institute Fellows uncover new
policy solutions and problem-solving methods informed by evidence and a cross-sector perspective. 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 ripple through our nation at the federal level and have significant consequences at the regional level. Those ripples cross sectors and impact international and national affairs, as well as our local communities. These complex influences are the crux of the conversations to be discussed and debated by Sine Fellows.
SINE INSTITUTE
PROGRAM PILLARS

Fellows Programs: A cornerstone of the Sine Institute is its Institute Fellows program. Each spring semester, beginning with Spring 2019, the institute hosts six fellows from a list of innovative leaders in government, politics, journalism, nonprofits, and business.

Research: Sine is building and collaborating to provide research, polling, and data-driven information to challenge and inform the policy makers and shapers, helping to define our future.

Events: Sine curates a robust program of in-person and online events. We bring together students, faculty, staff, and community members to share insights on policy topics of great importance, and share solution-driven programs happening on the local, state, national, and international stage.

Communications: Sine Institute plans to be a hub for policy questions, research, and solutions through its growing online social media and newsletter channels, sharing its programming and content with a large and diverse audience.

Training/Education: Sine is investing and collaborating across campus to build opportunities for credit and non-credit training and education experiences that highlight the techniques and tactics for building active policy initiatives—coordinating academic and practitioner perspectives to give a holistic view.
A Message from Executive Director Amy K. Dacey

It has been a full year since I started at the Sine Institute on June 19th. I was excited to work for an organization committed to finding solutions in a non-partisan way; I found an excellent start at the Institute, which had been launched the previous September. A unique inaugural group of fellows helped to bring Sine to campus and began working with students.

My first 90 days were focused on the education of the university and its faculty, staff, and students. Even though I was a proud Eagle Alumni, I knew this new role would take me places, and I would need relationships and partnerships all across campus to help build the vision of the Sines and President Burwell. The fall was dedicated to Sine promotion, selection of the Fellows 2020 class, and, of course, creating systems and structures to help build a strong foundation for Sine on—and off—campus. We executed 36 number of events that fall, through partnerships with various schools on campus and organizations from the D.C. community. I worked with alumni relations, development, University Communications, and career services to build awareness and seek ideas for the developing Institute. We were able to make a strong Fellows class for 2020, representing every relevant sector, and we enjoyed having them on campus for half the semester before Covid-19 moved us to work at home. We pivoted to all-virtual programming within 24 hours of moving off-campus, experimenting with new ways to engage our audiences, with great results. We grew our promotion through social media and our growing newsletter.

Sine is working with the university as we navigate what the future holds for us through the stages of the pandemic. We will offer summer programming, create various events for the fall semester, complete long-term planning and, of course, build a muscular fellow’s cohort for Spring 2021.

This report details our year June 2019-2020, and what is next for Sine.

All the best,
Amy K. Dacey
A Year in Review

June 2019
First Day of Work
Spoke at Career Panel on Campus
Joint Event with SPA, “No Labels”

July 2019
Development of Sine Promotional Video
Development of University-wide Sine Student Survey

September 2019
Women Empowering Women Breakfast-AU Alumni Association
Joint Event with KPU and SIS “Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zeiklow Event”

October 2019
Joint Event with U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation: “America Working Forward: Hidden Workforce”
Joint Event with SOC/SPA/WPI “Knock Down the House”
All American Weekend - Talk 2020 Update

November 2019
Sine Spring Fellows Class Announcement
Wes Bush Event “What is the Role of Business in a Civil Society”
Joint Event with WCL and Center on Congressional and Presidential Studies “Impeachment: The Constitutional Remedy of Last Resort”
Announcement of Sine Spring Fellows 2020
Student Advisory Committee Meeting
Sine Advisory Committee Webinar

December 2019
Orientation Handbook sent to Spring 2020 Fellows
Panel Discussion: Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC

January 2020
Implementation of Sine Student Survey
Orientation for Sine Spring Fellows 2020
Seminar: “How We Got Here: Exploring the Divisive Politics of the Past Decade”
Led By: Janet Rodriguez, White House Correspondent at Univision News
Seminar: “The New Politics: Campaigning and Developing Policy in a Digitized World”
Led by John Tass-Parker, Head of Politics and Government at Instagram
Seminar: “Politics on the Plate”
Led by Katherine Miller, Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

February 2020
Led by Susan Molinari, Strategist, Former VP at Google Inc, Former Member of Congress

Seminar: “The Path to the President’s Cabinet: My Personal Story”
Led by Alphonso Jackson, the 13th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President George W. Bush

Seminar: “Setting the Table for Change”
Led by Katherine Miller, Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

Seminar: “Lend Me Your Ears: Speechwriting Master Class”
Led by Cody Keenan, Speechwriter for President Barack Obama

Seminar: “Enemy of Democracy: Foreign or Domestic?”
Led by John Tass-Parker, Head of Politics and Government at Instagram

Seminar: “The Important Role of the Executive Branch”
Led by Alphonso Jackson, the 13th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President George W. Bush

Led by Cody Keenan, Speechwriter for President Barack Obama

Seminar: “On the Ground: The Life of a Political Embed”
Led by Janet Rodriguez, White House Correspondent at Univision News

Seminar: “So, You Think You Want to Campaign? Exploring Successful Strategies for Office and Life”
Led by Susan Molinari, Strategist, Former VP at Google Inc, Former Member of Congress

Seminar: “How Departments in the Executive Interact with Congress”
Led by Alphonso Jackson served as the 13th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President George W. Bush

Seminar: “Going Global: Campaigns Abroad”
Led by John Tass-Parker, Head of Politics and Government at Instagram

Seminar: “Public and Affordable Housing and Homeownership: A Policy Case Study”
Led by Alphonso Jackson, the 13th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under President George W. Bush

Seminar: “The Fight for Fair Wage”
Led by Katherine Miller, Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

March 2020

Seminar: “Breaking Through the Modern Political Media Environment”
Led by Cody Keenan, Speechwriter for President Barack Obama
Webinar: “Where Are We Now?: The State of the Race after Super Tuesday”
Led by Janet Rodriguez, White House Correspondent at Univision News

Webinar: “The Power of Chefs & Community to Change the World”
Led by Katherine Miller, Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

April 2020
Seminar: “Do you even go here? Influencers, Corporates and NGOs in Digital Spaces”
Led by John Tass-Parker, Head of Politics and Government at Instagram

Seminar: “The True Cost of Food”
Led by Katherine Miller, Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

May 2020
Webinar with the U.S.-Mexico Foundation: “COVID-19 on the Southern Border: How Will it Shape the Future of Immigration Policy between the U.S. and Mexico?”

June 2020
Launch of the Sine Summer Seminar Series

Shaping the Future of Policy and Politics

SINE INSTITUTE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

A cornerstone of the Sine Institute is its Institute Fellows program. Each spring semester, beginning with Spring 2019, the Institute will host six Fellows. Sine Institute Fellows consist of innovative leaders in government, politics, journalism, nonprofits, and business. Fellows have the ability to collaborate with renowned AU researchers and practitioners, as well as the most politically active students in the country, to uncover new policy solutions and problem-solving methods informed by evidence from the public, private, media, and nonprofit sectors.

The Sine Institute Fellowship provides Fellows the space and resources to advance one or more policy solutions, as well as a platform to share their work more broadly. We offer connections with AU faculty, Institute Advisory Board Members, Fellows, and others with potential to catapult ideas forward.
2020 SINE INSTITUTE SPRING FELLOWS

Alphonso Jackson
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for President George W. Bush

John Tass-Parker
Head of Politics and Government, Instagram

Cody Keenan
Chief Speechwriter for President Barack Obama

Katherine Miller
Vice President of Impact, The James Beard Foundation

Janet Rodriguez
White House Correspondent, Univision

Susan Molinari
Strategist and Former Vice President, Google; Former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives (New York)

2020 DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS

Dina Powell
Management Committee of Goldman Sachs and Former U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor

Joe Hockey
Former Ambassador to the U.S. from Australia
2019 SINE INTITUTE SPRING FELLOWS

Abdul El-Sayed  
Former Executive Director, Detroit Health Department; Former Candidate for Governor of Michigan

Ruth Marcus  
Political Commentator and Columnist for the Washington Post

Bill Haslam  
Former Governor of Tennessee

Karen Zacarías  
Playwright, Founder of Young Playwrights’ Theater and Latinx Theater Commons

William Kristol  
Political analyst and Founder of the Weekly Standard

2019 DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS

Wes Bush  
Chairman and Former CEO of the Northrop Grumman Corporation
GUEST SPEAKERS

Allison Aubrey, NPR News Correspondent

Monique Baptiste, VP at JP Morgan

Kristen Bartoloni, Silver Street Strategies Founding Partner

Olga Belogovlova, Policy Manager for Information Operations at Facebook

Joel Benenson, Founder and CEO of the Benenson Strategy Group

Jeffrey Blattner, Former Aide to Sen. Edward Kennedy

Catherine Boudreau, Food and Agriculture Reporter at POLITICO

Amy Brandwein, Owner and Chef, Centrolina

Troy Broussard, Dallas Housing Authority (DHA), President and CEO

LaTosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter Fund and the BWM Capacity Building Institute

Wes Bush, Chairman and Former CEO of the Northrop Grumman Corporation

Christine Cikowski, Chef & Owner of Honey Butter Fried Chicken

Ryan Clancy, Chief Strategist of No Labels

James Clyburn, House Majority Whip

Tom Colicchio, Restauranteur and Top Chef/Producer

Sen. Bob Corker

Brent Colburn, Former Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs

Amy K. Dacey, Sine Institute, Executive Director

Mike Davirs, Former Chief Nominations Counsel for Sen. Chuck Grassley

Devita Davison, Executive Director, Food Lab Detroit

Mia Dell, Policy Director, SEIU

Niaz Dorry, Coordinating and Executive Director, National Family Farm Coalition and Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance
Abdul El-Sayed, Former Executive Director of the Detroit Health Department

Michele Flournoy, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of WestExec Advisors

Caroline Fredrickson, Author

Fin Gomez, CBS News

Daniel Gonzalez, The Arizona Republic, Immigration Reporter

Cherry Graziosi, Former Congressional Candidate

Katie Harbath, Director of Global Elections at Facebook

Bill Haslam, Former Governor of Tennessee

Laura Hayes, Food Editor, Washington City Paper

Ryan Heath, Author of POLITCO’s Global Newsletter and Podcast, Global Translations

Pamela Hess, Arcadia Food Director

Vaughn Hillyard, NBC News

Ambassador Joe Hockey, Former Ambassador of Australia to the United States

Myriam Igoufe, Dallas Housing Authority (DHA), Vice President of Policy Development and Research

Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA-7)

Rep. Ro Khanna (CA-17)

Ben Krauss, Fenway Strategies Partner

Bill Kristol, Political Analyst/Founder of the Weekly Standard

Rachel Lears, Co-Producer of Knock Down the House

Amanda Litman, Co-Founder and Executive Director for Run for Something

Ruth Marcus, Washington Post Columnist

Gebe Martinez, Communications Strategist
Deray McKesson, Civil Rights Activist, Educator, Podcaster, and Author

Brian Montgomery, HUD Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Ed O’Keefe, Political Correspondent, CBS News

Kwame Onwuachi, Executive Chef, Kith/Kin

Sarada Peri, Former Senior Speechwriter for President Obama; Communications Strategist

Rep. Chellie Pingree (ME-1)

Alex Platkin, Silver Street Strategies Founding Partner

Andrea Reusing, Lantern, Chef & Owner; The Durham Hotel, Chef

Ben Rhodes, Former Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama

Jamila Robinson, Food Editor, the Philadelphia Inquirer, Vice-Chair, JBF Journalism Committee

Alexandra Rojas, Executive Director of Justice Dems

Christine Ross, President of Maryland Chamber of Commerce

Don Seymour, Facebook Head of Politics and Government

Ernest Smith, Owner of ES Fitness

Terence Szuplat, Global Voices Communications, Speechwriter

Rep. David Trone (D-MD-6)

Dave Weigel, Journalist at Washington Post

Ed Whelan, President, Ethics and Public Policy Center

Karen Zacaries, Playwright/Founder of the Young Playwrights’ Theater and Latinx Theater Commons

Phillip Zelikow, Director of the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia

Andrew Zimmern, Chef, Writer, Teacher
SINE’S MEDIA PRESENCE

The Sine Institute has launched and supported a more robust online presence over the past eight months, building strong channels and programming on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. We are growing and expanding our followers and developing unique and compelling content.

SINE OF THE TIMES

We launched the “Sine of the Times” newsletter, which currently reaches over 2,600 influencers and engaged individuals in D.C. and across the country. With this newsletter, we set out to create an inclusive space for the D.C. community, stakeholders, politicians, students, faculty, and staff. The “Sine of the Times,” which started out monthly and moved to bi-weekly during the content-heavy spring semester, includes examples of nonpartisan collaboration, updates on laws and legislature, event promotion, and updates from past and present Sine Fellows.

2020 POLITICS WAR ROOM

We also are hosting on campus the 2020 Politics War Room Podcast with Al Hunt and James Carville. With over 20,000 listeners and growing, the podcast features compelling interviews with figures from the 2020 elections and current events. Executive director Amy K. Dacey was a guest speaker on the podcast, where she discussed the possibility of a brokered convention.
Leadership

STAFF BIOS

Amy K. Dacey is 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. Before joining AU, Amy was president of AKD Strategies, a strategic firm working with nonprofits and foundations in the progressive policy space. During the 2016 presidential election, she served as the chief executive officer of the Democratic National Committee. During the 2004 elections, she worked for then-Sen. John Kerry on his presidential campaign and, following his narrow loss, helped to lead Kerry’s political operation. She also managed Rep. Louise Slaughter’s congressional campaign in 1998. 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. In addition, she served in various leadership positions for several other organizations, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Fund for America, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Recently, Amy served as executive vice president and managing director for MWWPR, one of the world’s top independent public relations agencies.

La’Nasa Clarkson serves as the administrative assistant at the Sine Institute of Policy and Politics. She is interested in foreign policy and plans to pursue a JD in international law. La’Nasa completed undergrad at the College of
Charleston, where she double-majored in political science and African American Studies with a concentration in politics, philosophy, and law. While at the College of Charleston, she served as the president of the Black Student Union and research assistant for the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture.

Charles Leggett is the assistant director of events; he oversees and coordinates events for the School of Public Affairs and supports programs related to the Sine Institute of Policy & Politics. Additionally, Charles acts as liaison among various departments on American University’s campus, coordinating with faculty, staff, students, and outside partners. Prior to joining American University’s School of Public Affairs, Charles organized events for AU’s School of Communication, and managed communications, marketing, and event logistics for the Embassy of France’s cultural activities in Washington, D.C.

**BOARD OF ADVISORS**

The Sine Institute is made possible through a milestone gift of $10 million from AU alumnus, trustee and entrepreneur Jeff Sine, SIS/BA ’76, and Samira Sine, advocate for women and children and seasoned journalist. The gift is the manifestation of the Sines’ interest in making positive change that will inspire future generations of leaders. The non-partisan, cross-disciplinary advisory board joins the Sines to lead the way in cultivating and inspiring the next generation of leaders.

**Michèle Flournoy**, former undersecretary of defense for policy (2009-2012) and current CEO of WestExec.

**Danielle C. Gray**, former assistant to the president and cabinet secretary in the Obama administration and current senior vice president, chief legal officer, and corporate secretary for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

**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.


**Frances Townsend** (AU SPA/BA ’82), former assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism (2004-2008) and current national security analyst on CBS News.

**Philip Zelikow**, former counselor of the United States Department of State, former executive director of the 9/11 Commission, and current professor of governance and history at the University of Virginia.
Student Engagement

2019-2020 SINE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Sine Student Advisory Committee is a group of student visionaries from across campus elected to guide the Institute and inspire the next generation of leaders. This committee will discuss student engagement, programming, and recommendations for fellows and speakers at the Sine Institute. Our inaugural committee members are:

**Clarissa Cheung**, College of Arts & Sciences

**Kira Burba**, School of Education

**Mason Peeples**, School of Communication

**Sledja Ishmakej**, Kogod School of Business

**Shauna Burton**, School of Public Affairs

**Mohammad Al-Mailam**, School of International Service

**Ericka Cruz**, Washington College of Law

**Madeline DeGorges**, Washington College of Law

**Jake Denton**, School of Professional and Extended Studies

2019-2020 STUDENT ASSOCIATES

Each Sine Institute Fellow will be assigned student associates. These associates will assist the Fellow in designing, planning, organizing and executing their seminar series on campus. These students will be assigned certain roles to help the Fellow make sure their seminars are well publicized, attended, documented, and an overall success.

**Britt Jacovich**

**Jackson Beauregard**

**Anna Donohue**

**Yazan Hanouneh**

**Lucas Stockslader**

**Mallory Payne**

**Heather Hardee**

**Alexander Turner**

**Harper Roberts**

**Jake Denton**

**Joshua Evans**

**Robert Roseman**

**Jonah Estess**

**Mason Peeples**

**Chris Rodriguez**

**Zachary Hill**

**Isabelle Dahl Acker**

**Aidan Levinson**

**Lucas Stockslader**

**Rachel Schultz**

**Lauren Monahan**

**Prerita Govil**
HEAR FROM SINE STUDENT ASSOCIATES

“From the friends I made to the personal and professional opportunities I’ve had, my time at AU has set me up for a bright future and created cherished memories along the way. The Sine Institute has been an important part of that. I am grateful for the chance to have learned from mentors like Amy Dacey and Janet Rodriguez, as well as the opportunity to visit the White House Press Briefing Room.”

-Yazan Hanouneh

“My four years here at AU have been more impactful than I could’ve imagined, not just personally and academically, but professionally as well. Having the opportunity to work as a Sine Institute Student Associate this semester has helped me learn more about a wide variety of policy topics while getting the chance to network with Fellows and other Student Associates. As I head into my post-graduate career, I’ll be sure to carry this experience along with me.

-Anna Donohue

“Being a Sine Student Associate was one of the highlights of my senior year at AU. I really enjoyed getting to know my Fellow, John Tass-Parker, and I learned a lot about digital politics. It offers a very unique opportunity to work alongside influential people in your area of interest.”

-Alex Turner

“Faculty, staff, and other students will often go great lengths to help you succeed in any way they can. Working as a student associate for the Sine Institute gave me another community that wanted to see me succeed.”

-Rebekah MacArthur

“Being an SPA student from 2016 to 2020 has been a real trial by fire as the political system experienced profound change. Being a Sine Student Associate and learning from John Tass-Parker has been a similarly transformative experience because I’m certain that digital politics will continue to reshape national and global politics for decades to come.”

-Heather Hardee
If we have learned one thing from the recent COVID-19 experience, it is that Sine must have a healthy balance of events, online programming, research programming and other substantive non-event related work. To address this need, we have designed working “pillars,” or areas we have identified as possible funding and programming opportunities:

These pillars include:

• Fellows/ Distinguished Lecturer Program
• Policy/Politics Events with Partners
• Training and Education
• Research and Polling
• Communications

These pillars were created to ensure that future programming would align with the mission and key issue areas of Sine’s strategic plan.

One of Sine’s hopes for the future is to expand on the academic opportunities that we provide for AU students. Currently, we are working with Washington College of Law’s Program on Legislative Negotiation (PLN) and the Center on Congressional and Presidential Studies to create a one-day legislative negotiation seminar. The purpose of this course is to give students a deeper understanding of the dynamics of legislative negotiations, and how to increase the chances of achieving goals in an often polarized environment.

In addition, Sine would like to create a space for people of the D.C. community and beyond to share ideas, find opportunities to collaborate, and work on policy solutions to some of our most challenging issues.
Keep up with the Happenings at Sine

SOCIAL MEDIA

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LEARN MORE ABOUT SINE

Amy K. Dacey Bio

2019 Fellows Video

Sine Institute Website