

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute

AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



**FISCAL
YEAR 2019
ANNUAL REPORT**





Since the founding of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute two years ago, our determination to strengthen global democracy by improving and expanding civic engagement and informed, inclusive dialogue has only grown stronger.

Throughout the past year, we have made significant strides in establishing the foundational elements on which to build our future success. Most notably, in April we named political scientist Hahrie Han as our inaugural director. This was a critical moment in the development of our organization. As director, Han will help shape our vision and mission, set our strategic direction, and begin the important work of building our core faculty, integrating the Institute into the broader university, forging relationships with the community, and building our reputation nationally and internationally.

As we conducted the director search, we also moved the work of the Institute forward by creating a robust program of curricular and extracurricular activities that together highlight the types of issues the Institute will tackle, the variety of disciplines that will be involved, and the importance of convening and sharing the work of various scholars, practitioners, and collaborative partners.

Acclaimed scholars joined the Institute as senior fellows and visiting faculty. Our speakers and events inspired participants and helped increase the profile of our work internally and externally. Students and faculty came together from across disciplines to further our academic mission. And we began designing the building that will become our permanent home.

We are incredibly proud of the work we have accomplished in these early days of the SNF Agora Institute. With these building blocks in place, there is no doubt that our momentum will continue to grow. With great pride and enthusiasm, we are pleased to share just a few of the highlights of the last year.

Thank you for being part of this endeavor, and this excitement.

The SNF Agora Institute's year was full of compelling conversations, exciting events, the important milestone of welcoming an inaugural director, and dynamic speakers, including Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Ambassador Wendy Sherman.

Early Strides in Leadership, Place, and Community

SNF AGORA INSTITUTE NAMES DIRECTOR

THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE WELCOMED HAHRIE HAN AS OUR INAUGURAL DIRECTOR THIS YEAR.

Han is a political scientist whose research examines the strategies that make civic engagement possible, probable, and powerful, and the ways to strengthen the ability of civil society organizations to act as everyday schools of democracy. She is a scholar, prolific researcher, and author of three notable books, including her most recent, *How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations and Leadership in the 21st Century*.

She joins us from the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she served as a professor of political science and environmental politics. She runs the P3 lab, which investigates how to build meaningful political and social action.

Han is also a part of numerous organizations and commissions centered on bringing academic studies

to work beyond campuses: she is a member of the Social Science Research Council Anxieties of Democracy Participation Group; a commissioner on the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship; and co-founder of the Center on Democracy and Organizing, among many other roles. In all of this work, she seeks to develop the leadership of younger scholars and practitioners, especially women and people of color.

Han’s body of work establishes her clear commitment to both the academic and public aspects of our mission. Her impressive scholarly achievements, combined with the practical application of her ideas and a demonstrated dedication to welcoming all voices into the conversation, position her to lead all parts of the Institute—the Academic Anchor, the SNF Agora Lab, and the SNF Agora Conversation.

“STRENGTHENING OUR ABILITY TO REALIZE THE PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD IS ONE OF THE GREAT CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.... THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE IS UNIQUELY POISED NOT ONLY TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS, BUT ALSO TO IDENTIFY ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM.”

Hahrie Han, Inaugural Director of the SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University



A WORLD-CLASS FACILITY FOR A GROUNDBREAKING INSTITUTE

We continue to develop our vision for a new, world-class facility to house the Institute on the Homewood campus. Renowned architectural firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop is designing the project, in partnership with Baltimore-based Ayers Saint Gross. We also determined the building site; identified additional funding sources to support the cost of building; developed a program that represents the functional and operational requirements for the work envisioned; worked on schematic design; and engaged with community members, university stakeholders, and state and local government to discuss, develop, refine, and gain support for the plans.

Piano has designed the building to be a portrait of the Institute, telling the story of our work and serving as a portal for the community to connect with us. Two “floating” glass cubes will create transparency between the inside of the building and the broader world outside. One side of the building will support our scholarly work, housing faculty offices, labs, classrooms, meeting and seminar rooms, and co-working spaces. The other will be a gathering place with several agora-like spaces for conferences, speaker presentations, art exhibitions, and other events. The building, which will be LEED certified and landscaped to reflect the natural environment of the mid-Atlantic region, promises to be an iconic structure for Johns Hopkins and for Baltimore.



Hopkins leadership met with renowned architect Renzo Piano throughout the year in Genoa, Italy; Athens, Greece; and on the Homewood campus of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.



BUILDING AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

We are excited to have begun the process of building the academic anchor this year, welcoming Yascha Mounk and Anne Applebaum as SNF Agora Institute senior fellows. Both are respected researchers and public intellectuals who will advance the Institute’s scholarly mission and help increase our connections with academics, media, and the broader public. In addition to their research and teaching on the Homewood campus, Mounk and Applebaum will also serve as Professors of Practice at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

We also hosted two visiting scholars, Harvard professor Daniel Ziblatt and journalist Dana Wolfe, who in January taught intersession courses for Johns Hopkins students and participated in public events. Bringing diverse and thought-provoking individuals such as these to campus

enables the Institute to share new voices and the SNF Agora Institute mission with Johns Hopkins students and with the Baltimore community.

Throughout the year, the Institute also fostered relationships with current Johns Hopkins faculty, who have served on our search committees, consulted on programming, and participated in our events. At the same time, we began the search for our core tenure-track faculty, establishing interdisciplinary search committees to provide counsel. With Han now in place as director, in the coming year we will focus on the important work of making these key academic hires and building our core group of scholars.

“What’s particularly impressive is the way SNF Agora seeks to be multidisciplinary, tapping people with different talents to approach these problems from different angles. The idea that these are not only academic research subjects but also that the Institute is ambitious enough to be part of the public debate, including politicians, journalists, and others—that really appeals to me.”
Anne Applebaum,
SNF Agora Institute Senior Fellow

1: Visiting scholar Daniel Ziblatt delivered a public talk about his book *How Democracies Die* on the Homewood campus.

2: Senior fellow Yascha Mounk took part in the “Reawakening the Spirit of Democracy” conference held in March.



SENIOR FELLOWS

Anne Applebaum is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, journalist, and professor whose work explores the topic of the evolving state of democracy in countries around the world. A central part of her efforts as a columnist for the *Washington Post* and through *Arena*, a research program she directed at the London School of Economics, is to provide counter responses to disinformation and propaganda feeding the degradation of democratic institutions worldwide. She is continuing these pursuits in her role as an SNF Agora Institute senior fellow. In addition to having participated in our 2018 “Disrupting Polarization” workshop in Athens, Applebaum helped organize our “Reawakening the Spirit of Democracy” conference this spring, a daylong event that brought together dozens of experts to assess the crisis of rising authoritarianism and populism in the United States and abroad. She will teach a class titled *Dictatorship, Dissidence and Democracy: Central Europe in the 20th Century* to undergraduates on the Homewood campus in fall 2019, then again to graduate students at SAIS Europe in Bologna, Italy, in spring 2020.



VISITING SCHOLARS

Dana Wolfe is a former Emmy Award-winning executive producer for *Nightline* and founding executive producer for Intelligence Squared US, a nonpartisan media company that organizes live debates. She brought decades of experience to bear for her course, *In Search of Intelligent Debate*, which taught students and other participants how to elevate the state of discourse. The class culminated in an evening of public debates moderated by Wolfe’s ABC News and IQ2US colleague John Donvan.



Yascha Mounk is a political scientist known for his work on the rise of populism and the crisis of liberal democracy. His most recent book, *The People vs. Democracy: Why our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*, has been translated into 10 languages and was recognized as a “Best Book of 2018” by the *Financial Times* and other publications. He is a frequent contributor to international newspapers and magazines, including *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Foreign Affairs*, and is host of a popular podcast, “The Good Fight.” Already as an SNF Agora Institute senior fellow, Mounk has helped shape a campus discussion about the state of democracy: He taught two semesters of his course, *Populism and Politics*. He participated in the panel discussion “Democracy in Retreat,” a public event that took place in February, and in the “Reawakening the Spirit of Democracy” conference in March. He also made presentations to the university’s Board of Trustees in March and during Alumni Weekend on the Homewood campus in April.



Daniel Ziblatt is the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard University. As a visiting scholar, he taught a course based on his latest book, the *New York Times* bestseller *How Democracies Die*. The class explored the history of democracy and theories of democratic breakdown in order to prepare students to think about what can be done to mitigate the erosion of our own democracy. Ziblatt also gave a public talk about his book on the Homewood campus.



Sparkling Conversation

A DIVERSE LINEUP OF EVENTS, PROGRAMS, AND SPEAKERS

During this first year, we introduced ourselves to scholars, practitioners, the media, and the community through a series of engaging, well-attended public programs and events. Ranging from intimate discussions with authors, to lively interactive performances, to thought-provoking conferences, these events enabled us to showcase to multiple audiences the myriad lenses through which the Institute’s work might be viewed, the diversity of relevant scholarship and disciplines, and the different forums for conversation we will convene.

We extended the reach of many of our programs and events through livestreaming, publishing articles on the university’s owned media channels, sharing content on the university’s social channels, and by interacting with local and national media—all in support of increasing our visibility, engaging new audiences, and beginning the substantive work of the Institute by modeling various forms of informed, inclusive dialogue and debate.



Senator Heidi Heitkamp, Anne Applebaum, and Michèle Flournoy participated in a panel at the Washington, DC, portion of the “Reawakening the Spirit of Democracy” conference.

THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE GUEST SPEAKERS REPRESENT A BROAD RANGE OF PROFESSIONS, BACKGROUNDS, AND PERSPECTIVES:

- Yamiche Alcindor** – White House Correspondent, *PBS NewsHour*
- Anne Applebaum** – Columnist, *Washington Post*
- Gerard Baker** – Writer and Columnist, Editor-At-Large, *Wall Street Journal*
- Sheri Berman** – Professor of Political Science, Barnard College, Columbia University
- Max Boot** – Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies, Council on Foreign Relations
- Donna Brazile** – Former Interim Chair, Democratic National Committee
- Graham Brooksie** – Director and Managing Editor, Digital Forensic Research Lab, The Atlantic Council
- Eric Cantor** – Former House Majority Leader, Virginia; Vice Chairman, Moelis & Company
- Ben Cardin** – Senator, Maryland
- Mark Carroll** – Partner, RPBW
- Steven David** – Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University
- John Donovan** – Journalist, Broadcaster, and Debate Moderator
- Evelyn Farkas** – Resident Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund
- Michèle Flournoy** – Co-founder and Managing Director, WestExec Advisors
- Francisco Gonzalez** – Associate Professor of International Political Economy and Latin American Politics, Johns Hopkins SAIS
- Jonathan Haidt** – Thomas Cooley Professor of Ethical Leadership, New York University Stern School of Business
- Heidi Heitkamp** – Former Senator, North Dakota
- Toomas Hendrik Ilves** – Former President, Estonia; Berggruen Fellow at Center for Advanced Studies, Stanford University
- Ayaan Hirsi Ali** – Research Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University

- Christina Hoff Sommers** – Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute
- Larry Hogan** – Governor, Maryland
- Martha S. Jones** – Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor; Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University
- Sara Just** – Executive Producer, *PBS NewsHour*
- Garry Kasparov** – Chairman, Renew Democracy Initiative
- Courtney Kaufman** – Program Manager, NYC Urban Debate League
- Munzer Khattab** – Co-founder, BureauCrazy
- Eric Klinenberg** – Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge, New York University
- Bill Kristol** – Founding Director, Defending Democracy Together
- Mark Lasswell** – Associate Opinion Page Editor, *Washington Post*
- Edward Lucas** – Senior Vice President, Center for European Policy Analysis
- Roelf Meyer** – Former Minister of Constitutional Affairs, South Africa
- Barbara Mikulski** – Former Senator, Maryland
- Michelle Miller** – Co-host, *CBS This Morning: Saturday*
- Marc Morial** – President and CEO, National Urban League
- Yascha Mounk** – Senior Fellow, SNF Agora Institute; Professor of Practice, Johns Hopkins SAIS
- Mike Niconchuk** – Senior Researcher, Beyond Conflict
- Richard North Patterson** – Former Chairman, Common Cause
- Tim Philips** – Founder and CEO, Beyond Conflict
- Renzo Piano** – Architect
- Ebrahim Rasool** – Former South African Ambassador to the United States

- Hanna Rosin** – Author, Writer, and Podcast Co-host
- Alec Ross** – Former State Department Senior Adviser for Innovation
- Jennifer Rubin** – Opinion Writer, *Washington Post*
- Wendy Sherman** – Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs
- Barri Shorey** – Senior Technical Director, Economic Recovery and Development, International Rescue Committee
- Bret Stephens** – Columnist, *New York Times*
- Chris Sununu** – Governor, New Hampshire
- Zeynep Tufekci** – Associate Professor, University of North Carolina School of Information and Library Science; Adjunct Professor, Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
- Pete Wehner** – Senior Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center; Contributing Opinion Writer, *New York Times*
- Dana White** – Former Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
- Tom Wolf** – Governor, Pennsylvania
- Dana Wolfe** – Founding Executive Producer, Intelligence Squared US
- Paul Wolfowitz** – Former United States Secretary of Defense; Visiting Scholar, American Enterprise Institute
- Judy Woodruff** – Broadcast Journalist and Managing Editor, *PBS NewsHour*
- Daniel Ziblatt** – Eaton Professor of the Science of Government and Acting Director of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University



FEATURED FORUM:

“A GOOD GIVE AND TAKE”: THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE AND PBS NEWSHOUR FORUM EXPLORED BIPARTISAN SUCCESS

New Hampshire, Maryland, and Pennsylvania face vastly different challenges and opportunities. Yet they share one thing in common: each has a leader well-versed in bridging differences to gain results.

In January 2019, the SNF Agora Institute partnered with PBS *NewsHour* to host “Divided Nation, United States,” a roundtable discussion that included Maryland Republican Larry Hogan, Pennsylvania Democrat Tom Wolfe, and New Hampshire Republican Chris Sununu, all of whom work with opposing party legislatures in their states. The event, held in the historic SNF Parkway Theatre in Baltimore, was moderated by *NewsHour*’s Judy Woodruff and gave the governors an opportunity to share insights

into navigating partisan political landscapes.

The wide-ranging discussion covered the federal government shutdown, state-level partisan divides, and gerrymandering, among other issues.

The sold-out event was attended by both local audience members and visitors from beyond the city. The livestream garnered 56,755 views and 15,000 total viewers. In addition, *NewsHour* featured the forum the following day on its nightly newscast, which reaches an average of 1.8 million people across the country.

“It’s not all about fighting—it’s persuasion,” said Gov. Wolfe during the discussion. “In a real functioning democracy, you actually have a good give and take. You can convince people, and people can convince you.”



FEATURED CONFERENCE:

THOUGHT LEADERS GATHER TO REINVIGORATE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Nativism, authoritarianism, and populism are growing around the world. Long-established international alliances are fraying, and institutions that protect and promote our liberties are being attacked by the left and the right. Can liberal democracy endure?

“Reawakening the Spirit of Democracy,” co-hosted in March 2019 by the SNF Agora Institute and Renew Democracy Initiative (RDI), addressed this question head on. Held over two days—an evening panel at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC, and a daylong conference at Johns Hopkins’ Peabody Library in Baltimore—the event brought together an international group of thought leaders from across the political spectrum to examine underlying threats to liberal democracy and propose strategies to reinvigorate it.

“Despite what you might see on cable news, there is room in the middle,” RDI founder and SNF Agora Institute board member Garry Kasparov said in his talk. “There’s room for respect, cooperation, even for sanity.”

In all, more than 30 leading pundits, policymakers, scholars, and journalists covered topics including populism vs. democracy, discourse on the right and on the left, free speech, disinformation and democracy, and how we can create a common American strategy. Nearly 700 people—including students, academics, and members of the Baltimore community—registered to attend the event over its two days, and more than 2,000 people viewed the livestream.



FEATURED CONFERENCE:
CREATING AGORA-LIKE SPACES IN
THE MODERN WORLD

“What are the choices we can make about how to design the agora-like spaces in the institutions that we have, to make possible the democracy that we want?”

Inaugural director Hahrie Han asked this most fundamental question and laid out her vision for the future of the Institute to kick off the second annual SNF Agora Institute workshop in Athens, Greece, in June 2019, as part of the SNF Summer Nostos Festival.

The workshop, “Talking (and Listening) Across Divides: What We Can Learn from Research and Experience,”

brought together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners to explore ways we can be more open to opposing ideas and to create spaces for structured dialogue and debate. Panels included two former South African adversaries discussing how countries can work through conflict and toward unity; the former mayor of New Orleans, now head of the National Urban League, talking with a JHU history professor about democracy and political participation; and several stakeholders offering different perspectives on refugees and integration, including a neuroscientist who shared his research into how the brain responds to conflict and stress.

FEATURED PROGRAM:
TEXTS AND TWEETS AND DEMOCRACY

Is 280 characters enough to hurt—or help—democracy? The first of our Democracy Dialogues explored this question on April 19, 2019. The forum brought together Zeynep Tufekci, an academic, columnist, and author whose work has focused on social media and its effects on democracy, and Alec Ross, an innovator, investor, and author who witnessed the power of technology in democracies around the world while working at the US State Department. Moderated by Adam Sheingate, professor and chair of Johns Hopkins’ Department of Political Science, the event engaged students in a lively conversation about this important and timely topic.

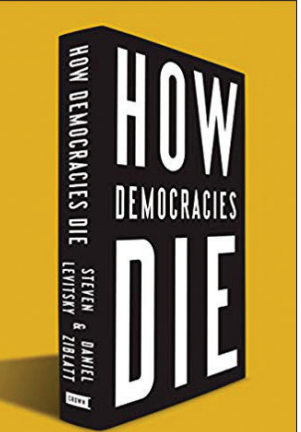
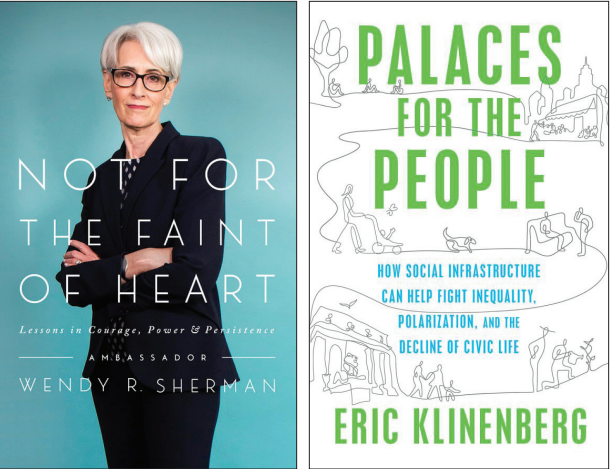


AUTHOR SERIES

This year the Institute brought acclaimed authors to Baltimore—including an ambassador, a Harvard professor, and a sociologist—to discuss their work and share their insights on diplomacy, democracy, and the importance of social infrastructure.

THEATER OF WAR PRODUCTIONS

Through an ongoing collaboration with the production company Theater of War, the Institute partnered with Johns Hopkins’ SAIS and Berman Institute of Bioethics to bring two interactive events to campus. These performances were designed to open lines of discussion on the challenging topics of end-of-life care and civil-military relations.



Educating the Next Generation

STUDENTS AND THE SNF AGORA INSTITUTE

Students are at the center of our work at the SNF Agora Institute. They attend our events, take courses offered by SNF Agora Institute scholars and affiliated JHU faculty, and are the ultimate beneficiaries of our efforts. As they learn how to listen and engage thoughtfully, and to participate productively, our students have the potential to ensure that democracy can survive in the future.

Throughout the year, we built relationships with a number of student groups, including Discourse, IDEAL, College Republicans, and the Student Government Association, among others. We engaged students to help with our Maryland State Legislature capital budget request, working with them to develop messaging and to lobby state legislators for funding for our new building. And we

had student focus groups to help us in the design of our new website.

Now, students will also play a valuable role in the Institute’s planning. Last year, we began the process of establishing a student advisory board and invited graduate and undergraduate students university-wide to apply. Beginning in fall 2019, this group of students will work with Institute leadership and faculty to develop the Institute’s mission and to raise awareness about its presence on campus. They will offer their insights into the larger student population, participate in focus groups, serve as SNF Agora Institute ambassadors, and support our efforts to create programming for the broader community.

FEATURED COURSE: LOOKING FOR—AND FINDING—RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE: IN SEARCH OF INTELLIGENT DEBATE

Debate doesn’t just occur on a formal stage within election cycles—it happens at the dinner table, in the classroom, or over a cup of coffee with a friend. The winter 2019 intersession course In Search of Intelligent Debate gave students the opportunity to learn how to effectively participate in debate no matter where they come across it. Dana Wolfe, SNF Agora Institute visiting scholar and former Emmy Award-winning executive producer for *Nightline*, taught the course along with several guest speakers, including PBS *NewsHour* producer Sara Just, *Wall Street Journal* editor-at-large Gerard Baker, author/philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers, and NPR host Hanna Rosin.

John Donvan, four-time Emmy Award-winning journalist and broadcaster, moderated the students’ final debates,

which ranged in topic from abolishing SATs, to giving voting rights to ex-felons, to the harm vs. benefits of home DNA tests.

FEATURED COURSE: “INTELLECTUALLY RIGOROUS AND INTELLECTUALLY OPEN”: POPULISM AND POLITICS

Around the world, from Italy to Brazil, from Hungary to the US, populist candidates are fundamentally changing the political landscape. Populism and Politics, a spring 2019 undergraduate course taught by SNF Agora Institute senior fellow Yascha Mounk, explored the causes of the populist rise in response to demographic changes; whether it is an existential threat to liberal democracy; and strategies that might allow non-populist political actors to push back.



Students received guidance and practice in thoughtful and respectful debate during the intersession course In Search of Intelligent Debate.

“PROFESSOR MOUNK’S CLASS HAS BEEN THE BEST CLASS I’VE TAKEN AT HOPKINS. **WHAT I ENJOY MOST IS HOW HE GUIDES CLASS READINGS AND DISCUSSIONS TO BE BOTH INTELLECTUALLY RIGOROUS AND INTELLECTUALLY OPEN. THE CULTURE OF THE CLASS IS SOMETHING I LOOK FORWARD TO EVERY WEEK.** WE OFTEN DISCUSS CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS, AND WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO SAY WHATEVER WE’RE THINKING AS LONG AS WE CAN BACK IT UP LOGICALLY, AND OUR RESPECT FOR LOGICAL DEBATE ENGENDERS RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER, WHATEVER OUR VIEWPOINTS. MANY STUDENTS IN THE CLASS, MYSELF INCLUDED, HAVE WELCOMELY ADMITTED TO CHANGING OUR MINDS OVER THE COURSE OF A DISCUSSION.”

Megan Rutkai, Class of 2021

An Exciting Year to Come

A SUCCESSFUL AND PRODUCTIVE YEAR HAS PASSED, WITH MOMENTUM BUILDING AND MORE PLANS ALREADY UNDER WAY.

With Han’s direction, our work in the coming year will focus on rolling out a strategic plan to guide the SNF Agora Institute’s development. We will begin to identify and hire early faculty to drive scholarship and set the foundations for the kind of content, collaboration, curriculum, and communication that will be at the heart of the Institute’s work.

We will foster integration and buy-in from across Johns Hopkins University, while also creating a network of external academic centers and institutes, think tanks, foundations, and communities to support and advance our mission. We will continue to deliver relevant content through curricular and extracurricular offerings on and off campus, as well as through events, conferences, and other programming that appeals to the broader community. We will also finalize the program and design of our new building.

As the year progresses, we expect to be well on our way to becoming known for our scholarly and applied resources and practices that organizations, leaders, and citizens employ in order to strengthen the capacities of citizenship required for functioning democracy.



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