



# ANNUAL REPORT

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2020—21



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**CHICAGO**

Center for  
Effective Government

[effectivegov.uchicago.edu](http://effectivegov.uchicago.edu)



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Center for Effective Government (CEG) was founded in 2019 at the Harris School of Public Policy with an ambitious but vital mission: to study, debate, and advance reforms that strengthen democratic institutions and improve the capacity of government to solve public problems. At its core, CEG builds bridges between scholars, students, civic leaders, journalists, advocacy groups, and politicians who seek to advance institutional reform and thereby protect and strengthen democracy.



Since our inception, CEG's work has revolved around three broad themes: **ideas, engagement,** and **education.** We conduct innovative, relevant, and rigorous research on promising solutions to ineffective government and democratic breakdown. Yet simply expanding and deepening this body of work is not enough. Through dialogue, partnerships, writing, and media outreach, we also elevate research on ineffective government, democratic backsliding, and institutional reform in the public sphere. All the while, we believe it is critical to give practitioners and aspiring leaders the tools and training they need to implement ideas for reform in the service of their organizations, governments, and communities. We also believe that abiding by our guiding principles is essential to CEG's success. In all our activities, we strive to be:

- **Inclusive:** We understand that inclusivity is fundamental to functional governance. It's not possible to develop effective solutions in a silo.
- **Serious-minded:** We are not interested in being clever. There is nothing more crucial to human progress than a government that facilitates human flourishing. In a complex world, this is hard work, and we take it seriously.
- **Action-orientated:** We believe in big ideas. We also believe in putting them into motion—in harnessing them to materially improve our government, our nation, and our world.

## In a year unlike any other, CEG's mission has never been more critical.

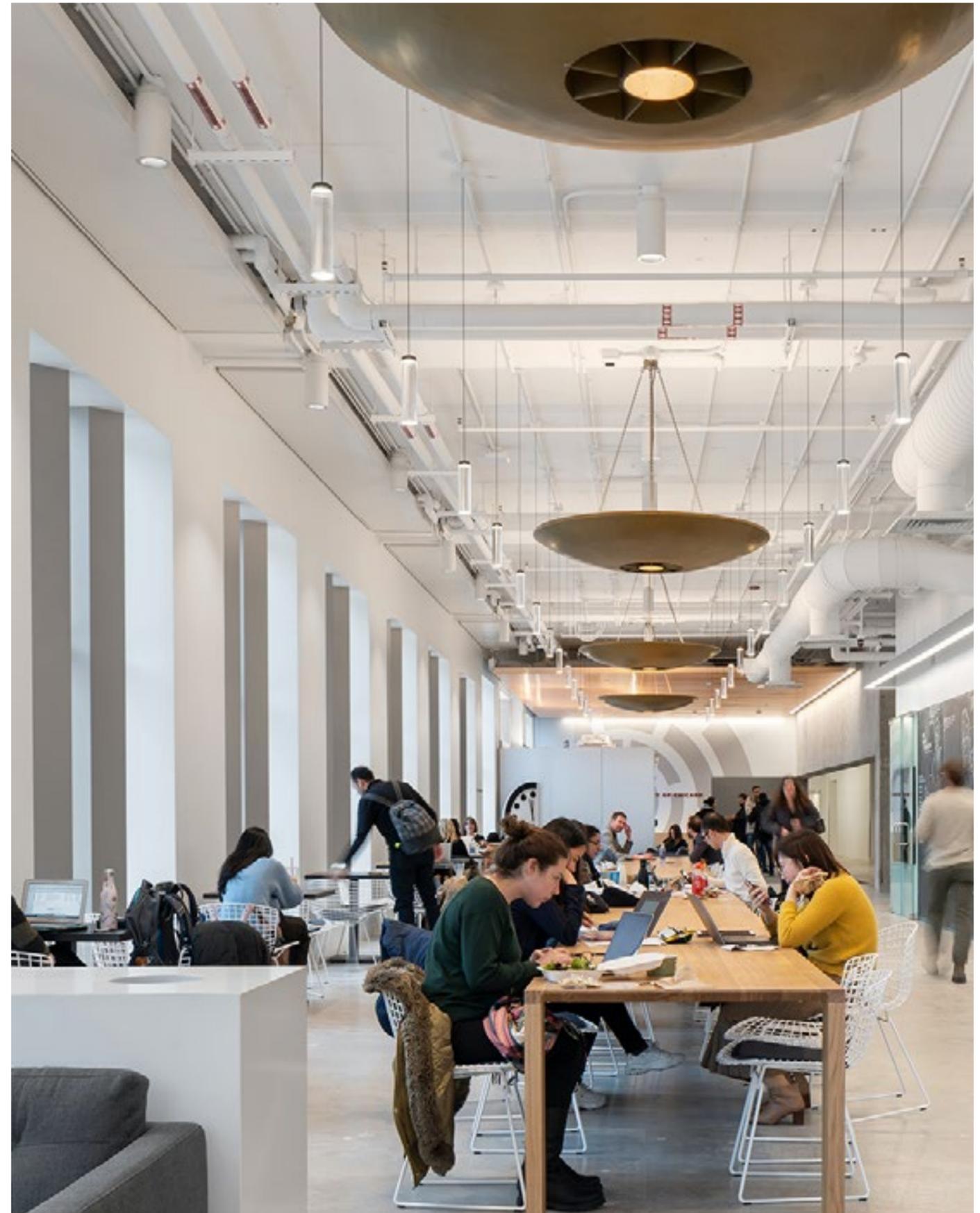
In a year unlike any other—in the shadow of a global pandemic, tumultuous politics, and unprecedented strain on our democratic institutions—CEG's mission has never been more critical. Amidst these unique circumstances, we have worked to rapidly scale our programming and reach. This year, in addressing the pressing issues of today, we have launched new initiatives, cultivated key partnerships within and beyond the University, adapted events and grown existing programs to meet the needs of a virtual environment—all while laying the groundwork for CEG's continued growth and maximum impact. By leveraging the assets of a world-class research university, we have deepened our ties to the academic community, expanded our reputation as a source for robust knowledge on reforming our governing institutions, and established ourselves as a key partner to those individuals and organizations equally invested in advancing reform.

Taken together, our work in 2020-21 represents a meaningful step towards advancing our mission and ultimate goals for a strong, healthy democracy that fuels an effective government.



  
**William Howell**  
Director

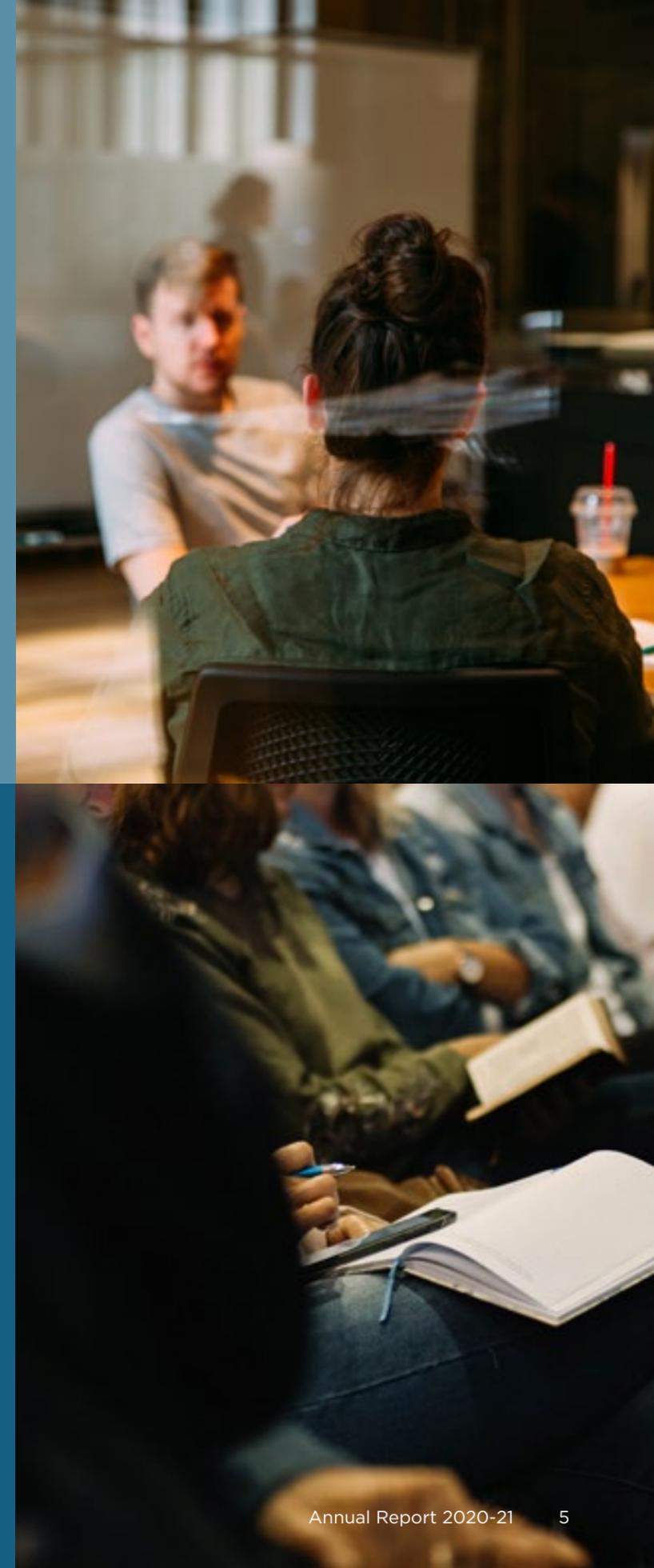
  
**Sadia Sindhu**  
Executive Director



Scholars join CEG for a virtual panel discussion on school board governance, April 2021.



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Ideas—innovative and rigorous research on threats to democratic governance and solutions to ineffective government—underpin and inform all of CEG’s work. Any efforts towards meaningful reform must be built upon sound, evidence-based ideas from across disciplines. The foundation for this work comes from an expanding array of faculty affiliates, scholars, partners, and students.



### Direct funding

CEG provides funds directly to faculty affiliates for research initiatives that advance the study of governing institutions and norms. This year, these projects have included the development of an original dataset of state legislators, experiments on political polarization, and qualitative studies of contemporary threats to the administrative state.

### Academic perspectives on current events

CEG consistently elevates academic research and recommendations on government reform relevant to the national dialogue on pressing issues and current events—from impeachment

to the global pandemic, filibuster reform to the January 6th insurrection. In a critical election year, the Center leveraged the knowledge of faculty affiliates in various conversations around the election and transition of power. The co-hosts of the Center’s Not Another Politics Podcast hosted debate debrief discussions centered on political science research and audience questions. We also led conversations about the future of our democracy, the insurrection at the Capitol, and the Trump presidency, which together garnered the interest of more than 300 attendees. CEG faculty affiliates also collaborated with the Harris School for a piece featuring advice to President Biden at the start of his administration.

In April 2021, as Chicago leaders and residents grappled with potential changes to its school governance structure, CEG held a series of panels on School Board Governance featuring leading scholars discussing and answering questions about accountability, student outcomes, and insights into how current scholarship can inform the public debate. The panel discussions attracted 120 attendees over two days, including scholars and practitioners from across the country and stakeholders from Chicago Public Schools, the Office of the Mayor of Chicago, and local organizations.

Looking ahead, CEG is laying the groundwork for several key research- and academic-focused initiatives that will further bolster our role as a generator and clearinghouse for cutting-edge ideas on institutional reform and democracy.

### Data and Democracy Initiative

Later this year, CEG will launch the University of Chicago’s Data and Democracy Initiative, a joint collaboration between CEG and Data Science. By joining computer scientists with political economists, historians, and sociologists, the two centers will investigate the effects of online political activity on the performance of government and the health of democracy. Additionally, the initiative will cultivate partnerships with outside organizations that focus on digital threats to democracy and will engage directly with researchers at social media platforms in order to share knowledge. As new discoveries are made, the centers will share them with scholars, policymakers, social impact organizations, and government officials with the objective of building actionable plans to strengthen our democracy.

### International academic collaboration

To address the alarming trends of democracy under threat across the globe, CEG plans to join forces with the Chicago Center on Democracy and the University of Chicago’s Paris Center to build a cross-Atlantic network of scholars and practitioners devoted to the study of democracy. From multiple continents, CEG will draw together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners with deep knowledge about the vulnerabilities of democracy and the political forces that, by turns, reinforce and undermine its expansion. The initiative will begin with virtual convenings, then move to in-person gatherings at the University of Chicago and the Paris Center, building increasingly innovative and ambitious activities at both locations.

In fall 2020, CEG collaborated with the University of Chicago Francis and Rose Yuen Campus Hong Kong to host a four-part series on the U.S. presidential election.

### American Politics Conference

Spearheaded by three CEG faculty affiliates (Profs. Fourinaies, Moskowitz, and Zelizer), CEG will host the inaugural American Politics Conference in Spring 2022. The conference will consist of 8-10 speakers presenting original research to several dozen attendees.

Building a cross-Atlantic network of scholars and practitioners devoted to the study of democracy

# ENGAGEMENT



2021 CEG Senior Practitioner Fellow Jennifer Horn leads students in a discussion of political parties as institutions of democracy with Former Republican Party Chair Michael Steele, May 2021.



Engagement—partnerships with peer organizations, individual practitioners and government officials, and the media—allows us to disseminate and elevate the ideas, research, and recommendations made by experts on topics of reform to a wider audience. During the last year, CEG has continued expanding these partnerships through a variety of initiatives and events.



## Written series

In fall 2020, CEG launched a joint essay series in partnership with Protect Democracy (a national nonprofit advocacy organization) and The Washington Post's Monkey Cage blog—titled [Rethinking Our Democracy](#)—to present, refine, and develop momentum for institutional reforms focused on relationships between Congress and the presidency. The direct impacts of this effort are already being seen, with several of the reforms proposed in the series under consideration in the 119th Congress and writers in the series recently providing congressional testimony. CEG will publish additional topical essays with Monkey Cage and Protect Democracy, beginning in fall 2021 with a series on the federal administrative state.

## Re-Imagine Chicago

CEG initiated a partnership with Chicago's NPR affiliate WBEZ's 'Reset' to launch a multimedia series, [Re-Imagine Chicago](#). With the city's recovery from the pandemic offering an opportunity to rethink the nature and strength of Chicago's civic institutions and consider alternative ideas for reform, the series featured conversations and explorations of four key institutional areas: city government, community investment, public safety, and education. Through weekly radio segments, written pieces, and events, we considered ward-based elections, collective bargaining, the design of police reform efforts, the powers of the mayor's office, and more. The 16-week series engaged community members, scholars, and public officials to re-examine the structures and institutions that shape civic life in Chicago.



## Senior Practitioner Fellowship

In order to bring a diverse set of leaders—elected leaders, former government officials, policymakers, advocates, nonprofit leaders, and journalists—together for in-depth analyses and extended stewardship of institutional reforms at CEG, the Center launched its [Senior Practitioner Fellowship](#) with generous support from Democracy Fund and welcomed its first cohort of fellows in March. Each fellow leverages the expertise from her field and passion for a particular area of government effectiveness to engage a community of students, faculty, and practitioners with similar passions and the resources to effect change. During their year-long tenure at the Center, Fellows engage in numerous activities organized around a unifying theme and develop programming that corresponds to CEG's key areas of focus. The first cohort of four Senior Practitioner Fellows—Liza Goitein, Jennifer Horn, Natalie Y. Moore, and Sonal Shah (AB'90)—have already begun their work with the Center on critical reform issues related to national security, political parties,

media and journalism, and innovation in civic engagement, which will continue through fall 2021.

## Convenings Initiative

In May, CEG hosted its first convening as part of a broader initiative to regularly bring together stakeholders to discuss key topics related to institutional and government reform. These closed-door gatherings involve a select, recurring group of partners in the pro-democracy space—faculty, researchers, advocates, practitioners, and funders—as well as the most important, expert voices on a particular topic, to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and strengthening of bonds between those analyzing and advancing reform. The first convening covered the use of emergency powers in response to the climate crisis, with discussion led by Liza Goitein, co-director of the Brennan Center's Liberty and National Security Program and CEG Senior Practitioner Fellow, alongside CEG Director William Howell.

## Not Another Politics Podcast

In partnership with the Harris School, CEG produces [Not Another Politics Podcast](#), a podcast that delves into important and timely political research on democracy. The podcast has surpassed 100,000 downloads just over a year after its debut. Hosted by three CEG faculty affiliates, including CEG Director William Howell, Wiola Dziuda, and Anthony Fowler, the podcast finds answers to the most important issues facing our politics today—not through opinion and anecdote like so many other podcasts offer, but through rigorous, evidence-based scholarship and a deep understanding of the political science literature.

## Events with partners

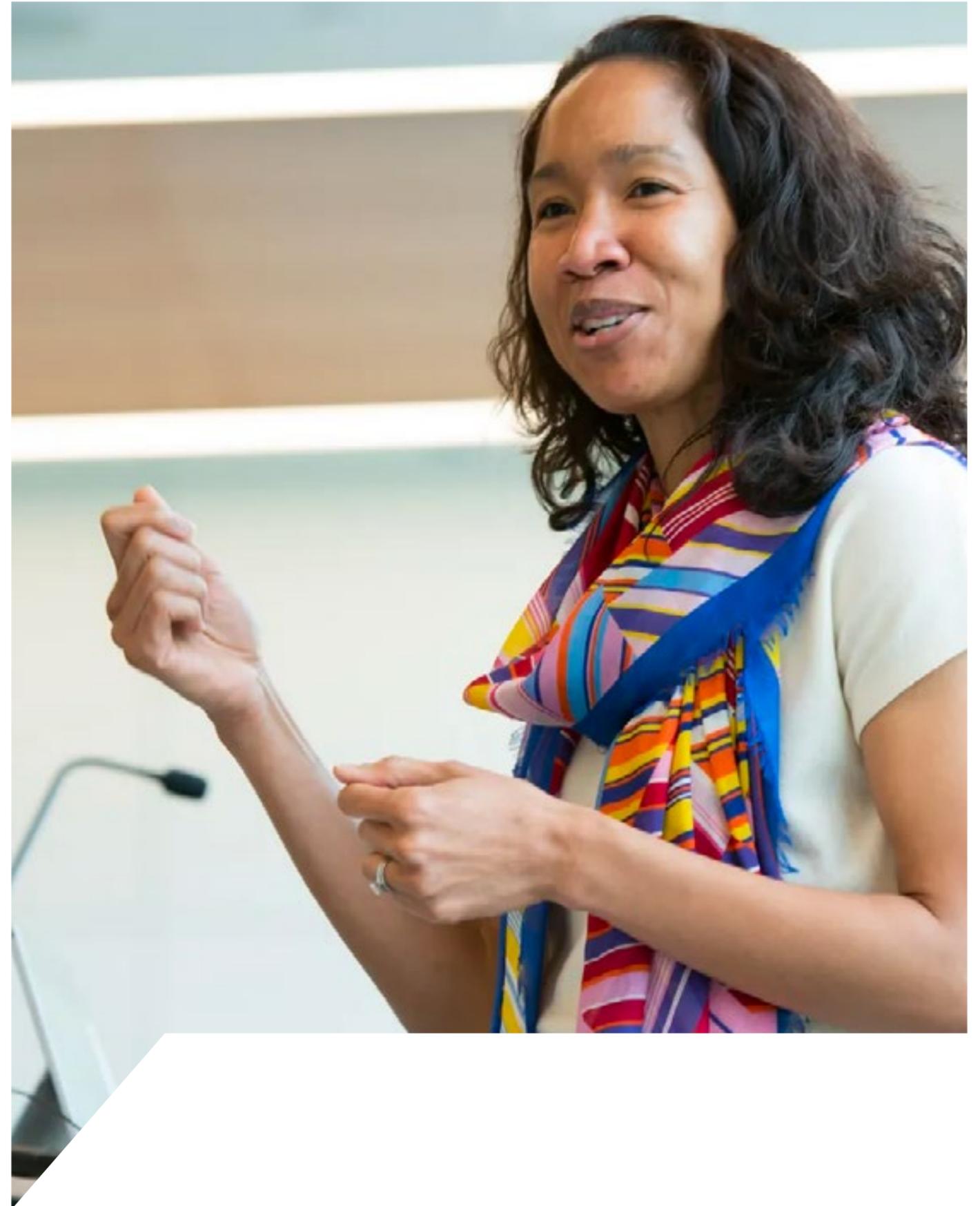
CEG has hosted numerous events this year in collaboration with partners from across the University and the broader reform space to advance discussion of key reform topics in the public sphere. These events—through collaborations with key partners including other University divisions and centers, Protect Democracy, and Participant Media—center ways that systems can be reformed to better serve and uphold democracy, delving into topics such as the future of democracy, the state of the federal bureaucracy, the 2020 elections, filibuster reform, and protests in the City of Chicago. In May 2021, CEG co-hosted a panel discussion with the Chicago Center on Democracy and the Democracy Fund on Bureaucratic Resistance to Autocratic Ambitions. In this panel, scholars and practitioners evaluated the condition of the federal bureaucracy in the aftermath of the Trump presidency and the norms, rules, and practices that guard against populist attacks on the administrative state.

## Direct engagement with practitioners and public officials

CEG plans to continue establishing and building upon direct relationships with government officials in Chicago and beyond to bring rigorous discussion of reform to critical seats of power. For instance, following public scholarly panel discussions, CEG facilitated conversations with senior policy-makers on school board governance in Chicago this spring, elevating relevant scholarship in a meaningful, timely policy discussion. And, after the success of CEG's bipartisan Political Digital Media & Democracy Working Group's public statements and events on data privacy and data sovereignty, the group again assembled with CEG in May 2021 for a public conversation on the Dynamics of Digital Media and Politics. This effort builds on the Center's past work to host unique bipartisan conferences with the nation's top political campaign professionals, which has been instrumental in bringing together scholarship and legal expertise to bear in a series of lawsuits around the country to remove election-altering biases in rules governing the order in which candidates appear on the ballot.

Bringing rigorous discussion of reform to critical seats of power

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CLA fellows and alumni gather virtually for a civic collaboratory focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, September 2020.

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Through training initiatives for civic leaders and rich learning experiences and mentorship for members of the University community, education helps drive reform ideas and efforts by cultivating strong stewards of reform and effective government. This year, CEG pivoted its education work to a virtual environment, built on the past successes of our flagship Civic Leadership Academy, expanded student-facing interactions with our affiliates and alumni, and strengthened ties to our partners across the University community.



## Civic Leadership Academy

CEG serves as the organizational home to the [Civic Leadership Academy](#), which was initially launched in 2014 with seed funding from The Chicago Community Trust, the MacArthur Foundation, Microsoft, JP Morgan Chase, the McCormick Foundation, and the University of Chicago. CLA has grown to be a highly selective interdisciplinary leadership development program designed to develop a diverse pipeline of talented leaders to help Chicago nonprofits and government agencies—institutions and organizations critical to the city’s civic infrastructure—thrive.

CLA develops individual fellows and, in turn, broader organizations committed to building and strengthening local Chicago communities. CLA fellows—an annual cohort of 30 high-potential leaders of nonprofit organizations and government agencies that serve residents and communities across the city of Chicago and Cook County—engage in six months of leadership development programming and instruction with renowned UChicago faculty designed to challenge fellows to analyze organizational best practices, community impact, and institutional reform in the city of Chicago and beyond.

Now entering its eighth year, CLA has over 200 alumni in leadership positions at over 100 government and non-profit agencies. Since its inception, CLA has been dedicated to building cohorts that reflect Chicago’s rich racial diversity: 60% of all CLA fellows are leaders of color. CLA fellows represent organizations that serve all neighborhoods and communities across the city of Chicago and Cook County, but (both in the number of organizations and those organizations’ focus) have a significant presence in the historically underserved communities on Chicago’s South and West sides.

CLA’s Welcome Ceremony in January 2021 for the seventh cohort featured remarks from Harris School Dean Katherine Baicker, UChicago Civic Engagement Vice President Derek Douglas, Cook County Board President Preckwinkle, and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot. The event also featured a toast from alumni in each cohort, sharing their hopes and advice for the newest group of fellows. The virtual welcome ceremony was a resounding success that engaged almost 300 fellows, alumni, family members, and stakeholders.

The CLA curriculum adapted to virtual programming with great success, maintaining robust discussions and inclusive community-building. From small group “coffee hours” and photo contests to virtual skit and game nights, the 2021 cohort adjusted to and embraced the virtual program and developed the sense of community that is critical to CLA.

## Committed to building and strengthening local Chicago communities

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To supplement the curriculum, CLA hosted additional Civic Practitioner Leadership Series (CPLS) discussions, featuring guest speakers such as Chicago Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady (CLA’18), Jahmal Cole (CLA’20) of My Block My Hood My City, and Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx. These discussions are private to the CLA fellow network, and speakers offer insight into leadership opportunities and challenges specific to the city of Chicago. This year, these CPLS sessions engaged more than 400 attendees over a series of seven events—roughly twice the typical number—made possible by a virtual environment.

As part of alumni engagement programming, CLA hosted an Alumni Civic Collaboratory session. These sessions are an opportunity for CLA alumni to crowdsource ideas and resources from within the CLA network that can support the presenter’s work. This year, the Alumni Civic Collaboratory welcomed three alumni presenters including Era Lauder milk (CLA’20) from the Cook County Public Defender’s Office, Peter

Leonard (CLA’17) from Chicago Public Schools, and Carmen Vergara (CLA’17) from Esperanza Health Centers.

To culminate the 2021 cohort experience, a virtual graduation ceremony was held to celebrate the accomplishments of the 2021 cohort and welcomed alumni, donors and guests of fellows. The ceremony featured remarks from key partner Daniel Ash of the Chicago Community Trust, and three program alumni: Miguel A. Blancarte, Jr. (CLA’21) with COVID-19 Response and Community Engagement, Julia deBettencourt (CLA’21) with Arts Education at Chicago Public Schools, and keynote address from Marshall E. Hatch, Jr (CLA’20) with the MAAFA Redemption Project.

The 2021 CLA Global Practicum trip to Paris, an immersive international civic collaboration experience, has been rescheduled to 2022. This decision was made in collaboration with the 2021 fellows. Both the 2021 and 2022 CLA cohorts will participate in the Global Practicum in Paris, ensuring they have the opportunity to



Increasing students' exposure to CEG's mission, work, and affiliates

learn about civic leadership in a global context. CLA fellows and alumni often collaborate closely with our partners at the Harris School. CLA fellows and alumni have been featured in a Harris Viewpoints series, Harris Welcome Week events, and mentorship panels for graduate and undergraduate students.

Looking ahead to recruiting the CLA 2022 cohort this fall, CEG is hosting 12 information sessions this summer for prospective applications to learn more about the program. A robust social media and alumni engagement strategy will also be deployed to support recruitment. Last summer, CEG hosted seven sessions with nearly 100 attendees.

### Senior Practitioner Fellowship student interactions

Since the launch of CEG's Senior Practitioner Fellowship in March, the four Fellows have hosted a set of regular office hours and small group workshops for University of Chicago students to interact directly with the Fellows, engage in their work with the Center, and seek mentorship. A quarter-long Study Group was led by Jennifer Horn, which brought together a group of students to participate in recurring, intimate discussions with Horn—and numerous guest speakers such as Former GOP Chair Micheal Steele—throughout the academic quarter on topics central to improving governing institutions and strengthening democracy.

### University partnerships

Working closely with partners across campus, we have strengthened our ties to the University; increased students' exposure to CEG's mission, work, and affiliates; and collaborated on the broader efforts of the University and its various divisions. CEG affiliates are an integral part of mentoring and career opportunities, diversity and inclusion programming, and student recruitment efforts.

CEG also works closely on University-wide civic engagement, as well as alumni relations and development. For instance, CEG Director William Howell has delivered multiple lectures for the alumni community at home and abroad, including a Harper Lecture on "The American Presidency in the Time of COVID" to nearly 3,000 global attendees, and, alongside co-author and Stanford Professor Terry Moe, a Yuen Lecture on populism and the 2020 Election in partnership with the University of Chicago Francis and Rose Yuen Campus Hong Kong.

CEG and its affiliates have recently been featured in several University of Chicago publications and podcasts, all with significant reach.

### Graduate assistantships and internships

CEG continues to provide meaningful opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to support CEG's work throughout the school year. Since June 2020, five graduate assistants and three undergraduate interns have contributed extensive operational support to the Center and its programming.



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