

# Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy

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**2020 Annual Report**



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Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank in Houston, Texas. The institute produces independent research on domestic and foreign policy issues with a focus on providing decision-makers in the public and private sectors with relevant and timely policy assessments and recommendations.

By bringing statesmen, scholars, and students together, the institute broadens the content and reach of its policy assessments and recommendations, and provides an open forum for debate and discussion.

The institute educates students on public policy issues and related subjects by offering courses at Rice University and sponsoring student intern and mentoring programs at home and abroad.



*Above*

*Secretary Baker delivered introductory remarks at the 2019 Presidential Elections Program conference.*

***“Part of our success lies with the fact that our fellows understand that a potential solution is really only as good as its ability to be implemented. With that in mind, the institute generates results-oriented policy research that is applicable to the real world in which we all live.”***

**THE HONORABLE JAMES A. BAKER, III**  
Honorary Chair

One of our responsibilities is to expand upon our mission “to address the most pressing policy issues of the day, through data-driven and nonpartisan research.” Another is to identify future challenges. In these respects, our fellows and scholars have been more rigorous than ever in their research and prolific in their outreach. Their dedicated motivation is in large part owed to the unprecedented following their events have garnered through the brave new world of webinars.

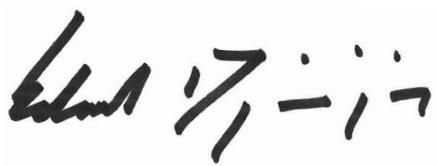
Our experts' areas of research — energy, health & biosciences, public finance, entrepreneurship and economic growth, presidential elections, drug policy, the Middle East, United States-Mexico relations, space policy, science & technology, and China — provide a sought-after source for decision-makers in the public and private sectors, locally, nationally, and globally. Their work generates frequent and important commentary and dissemination by the media.

Ranked the second-best university-affiliated think tank in the world and its Center for Energy Studies first in its class, the Baker Institute has had a resounding impact but we must not rest on our laurels. The critical moment in which we find ourselves with the COVID-19 pandemic makes our efforts all the more relevant. While pursuing our work with prudence, I have tasked all centers and program directors to review their strategic vision statements to define fundamental new projects and what human and financial support are necessary to sustain our lead. In this respect, I also want to recognize the excellent supportive role our staff provides.

In short, the institute's commitment to produce high-quality research and offer a forum for informed dialogue and debate with top domestic and foreign leaders is unwavering.

We are proud to be an integral part of Rice University. Many of our fellows teach undergraduate and graduate courses through our Master of Global Affairs and Master of Energy Economics programs, and we engage Rice students by offering dynamic student internships.

I am particularly grateful to my Board of Advisors for their wise counsel and generosity. I also want to thank our donors and our loyal Roundtable and Roundtable Young Professionals members. From all of us at the Baker institute, thank you for supporting our mission. My gratitude likewise extends to the Rice administration, faculty, staff, and community for their steadfast support.



**EDWARD P. DJEREJIAN**

Director

# HEALTH & BIOSCIENCES

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Almost a year ago, the world first learned of a deadly virus that scientists had never seen before. While COVID-19 cut a devastating path around the globe, **Center for Health and Biosciences** experts analyzed the science behind the pandemic and offered insights on safely navigating the crisis. Today the center continues its work, providing policy recommendations on issues from the safe distribution of a future vaccine to health care strategies for underserved populations.

**Peter Hotez** is one of the nation's most outspoken advocates for a fact-based COVID-19 response. In countless interviews with local, national, and international media outlets, he has argued for a national strategy to contain the virus — including enforcing quarantines and making testing more widely available. Hotez, a leading expert on infectious diseases and vaccine development at the Baylor College of Medicine, also lends an authoritative voice to the controversy on the accelerated pace of vaccine development. “We’ve got good, safe, and effective vaccines coming down the pike,” he said. “I’m fairly optimistic a significant percentage of the American population will be vaccinated by spring.” The Baker

Institute featured Hotez in three webinars this summer, where he provided a vaccine development update, discussed the conditions for a safe return to school, and addressed the impact of the virus on global security. As flu season approached, he said that a “reset” that reinforces the use of masks, contact tracing, and social distancing must be our highest national priority.

**Vivian Ho** published a weekly blog summarizing the latest research on the risk factors associated with severe cases of COVID-19, emerging treatments and vaccines, and policy actions to control the pandemic. Her updates were also a weekly feature of “Houston Matters” on Houston Public Radio and she has been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *CNN* on the economic impact of COVID-19 on the health care sector.

Before the pandemic took hold in the U.S., Ho focused on the **Domestic Health Policy Program**'s goal of controlling rising health care costs. She was one of nine university researchers invited in 2016 to join the Blue Cross Blue Shield Research Alliance, an organization formed to identify smarter solutions for improving care quality and affordability.

Ho published her first paper this year from this collaborative. She found that freestanding emergency departments tend to raise emergency care spending per capita in states where they open, rather than serving as substitutes for hospital emergency departments. Ho's research is being used by federal policymakers to develop reimbursement policies for freestanding emergency department care and by state regulators deciding whether these facilities should be allowed to proliferate. In recognition of her years of leading scholarship in health care economics, Ho was elected to the National Academy of Medicine — one of the highest honors in health and medicine.

**Quianta Moore**, who leads the **Child Health Policy Program**, produced numerous policy papers, issue briefs, and commentaries on the pandemic's effects on vulnerable populations — such as immigrants, low-income mothers, and refugees — and recommended policies to help them. She also co-authored a commentary on the systemic racial and social disparities that have put African Americans at increased risk of contracting the virus. Moore continues to be a highly regarded media commentator.

Moore and experts from the Child Health Policy Program published several reports from extensive research in Houston’s historically African American Third Ward and Sunnyside neighborhoods. Local government agencies, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations used the findings to improve neighborhood conditions throughout the city. In another study, Moore evaluated the impact of parenting classes embedded in the federal

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children and found that the classes resulted in a lower risk of adverse outcomes for children of low-income women.

As part of the program’s expanded focus on mental health, project manager **Patrick Tennant** published several papers this year. Future program research will focus on the social and economic conditions that impact health in low income populations.

**Hagop Kantarjian**, a nonresident fellow, also contributed multiple blogs describing the nature of COVID-19 and its risks for spread. Kantarjian presented a webinar that balanced the costs and benefits of the initial U.S. lockdown against the value of lives saved, and concluded that the shutdown was justified. His proposals for widening access to health insurance are valuable resources for policymakers who seek to improve health care in the wake of the pandemic.

***“We’ve got good, safe, and effective vaccines coming down the pike. I’m fairly optimistic that a significant percentage of the American population will be vaccinated by spring.”***

**PETER HOTEZ, M.D.**

Fellow in Disease and Poverty

# ENERGY STUDIES

In early 2020, an oil price war and the COVID-19 pandemic triggered unprecedented volatility in oil markets. Uncertainty about energy markets will persist as economies struggle to recover and governments consider policy responses to address the virus and allay economic malaise. This has significant implications for energy transitions as governments seek to fund “green” recoveries and energy companies shift their strategies.

**Center for Energy Studies** (CES) reports, policy briefs, blogs, and opinion pieces have been highlighted in a variety of outlets. Its experts have organized conferences, workshops, and meetings at the Baker Institute and shared their

research and expertise within the U.S. and in 21 other countries. COVID-19 lockdowns have limited travel and face-to-face engagement, but not CES outreach. Since mid-March, the center has held weekly webinars that are well-attended by U.S. and international audiences.

CES' diverse team of experts provides insights into (a) evolving oil, natural gas, and electricity markets; (b) various energy technologies (including renewables, batteries, and plastics) from mining to manufacturing to end-of-life disposal; (c) political and geopolitical impacts on energy markets; and (d) factors that differentiate energy in various regions around the globe. Last year CES added

three new fellows — **Mark Finley**, **Steven Miles**, and **Ed Emmett** — with experience in oil and gas markets and policy and logistics and transportation. CES Senior Director **Ken Medlock** is co-chairing the G20 advisory T20 task force on energy, and several CES fellows authored briefs for the G20 communique published in Fall 2020.

Within CES' broad research agenda are three initiatives related to decarbonization: (1) Medlock, Emmett, and **Keily Miller**, with assistance from **Rachel Meidl** and **Michael Maher**, are leading a multi-stakeholder effort to evaluate policy initiatives to facilitate broader use of carbon capture and grow the hydrogen market on the Texas Gulf Coast; (2) together with **Jim Blackburn** and **Carrie Masiello**, Medlock is also convening a multi-stakeholder project on soil carbon sequestration; and (3) Medlock and Meidl are involved in the recently established Carbon Hub at Rice University.

Another CES effort engaged our fellows and outside experts in a series of working papers focused on the role of foreign direct investment in resource-rich regions. A key conclusion is that strong governance structures reduce risks attributed to resource development.

*“The global energy landscape is rapidly changing. The Center for Energy Studies continues to achieve great success by staying focused on data-driven, impartial analysis that is rooted in academic rigor.”*

**KENNETH B. MEDLOCK III**

Senior Director, Center for Energy Studies

CES research on oil and gas continues to be impactful. In May, Medlock testified to the Texas Railroad Commission on pro-rationing, presenting work he prepared with Finley. **Mark Agerton** published a paper on “Drilling Decisions and Geological Quality in the Haynesville Shale.” Several papers analyzed natural gas flaring, and **Gabe Collins** continued his work on Permian Basin water use.

CES researchers also analyzed the interplay between U.S. and global energy markets and policy. **Jim Krane** and Finley authored publications on Middle East geopolitics, OPEC behavior, U.S. shale, and their impacts on oil prices and markets. **Anna Mikulska** and Collins reported on the geopolitics of Russian natural gas exports to the EU and U.S. efforts to intervene. **Elsie Hung** and Collins also continued their work on mapping China’s energy infrastructure.

**Francisco Monaldi** spearheads CES research on oil, natural gas, and politics in Latin America. **Benigna Leiss**, **Lourdes Melgar**, **Adrian Duhalt**, and Monaldi engaged widely on energy issues in Mexico, and **Mark Jones** provided energy insights for the 2019 elections in Argentina. Medlock continued his engagement with FGV and the U.S. State Department on energy reform in Brazil.

Energy markets are increasingly impacted by policies that affect trade. Medlock, Mikulska, **Ted Temzelides**, and CES graduate fellow **Igor Hernandez** published a cost-benefit analysis of the Jones Act that limits movement of oil products and LNG between U.S. ports. Medlock and Temzelides analyzed the potential impacts of the U.S.–China trade dispute for U.S. and Northeast Asian economies and energy markets. Miles and Medlock examined how long-term contracts for U.S. LNG could be used to meet requirements for China’s energy imports under the U.S.–China trade agreement. Meanwhile, Collins investigated the dependency of key U.S. manufacturing sectors on China.

Meidl expanded her research on the environmental impacts of plastic waste and began researching the lifecycle of new energy technologies. Together with Temzelides, Meidl also joined a team of Rice engineering professors looking at hurricane resiliency of energy infrastructure.

The third annual Baker Botts–CES conference in Fall 2019 focused on energy transitions and featured keynotes by **Secretary James A. Baker, III**, and executives from Shell and ENGIE. Panels discussed various topics central to CES research.

**Michelle Foss** led a major workshop on “Energy and Minerals – Framing Integration Futures” in partnership with Imperial College–London that included delegates from universities in the U.S., UK, Japan, and Chile as well as industry and government participants. Foss also coordinated the first Energy and Minerals Roundtable, which brought together over 40 experts and was followed by a virtual armchair conversation between Medlock and Frank Fannon, assistant secretary for the Bureau of Energy Resources at the U.S. State Department.

CES also hosted a panel with Eastern Europe’s top diplomats on the region’s energy policies. In another event, José Antonio González Anaya, Mexico’s former finance secretary and former CEO of Pemex, discussed Mexico’s economy and oil sector. Medlock held armchair discussions with Phillips 66 Chairman and CEO Greg Garland on the changing energy landscape and with Air Liquide CEO Michael Graff about resilience amid the pandemic and hydrogen as a fuel of the future.

# UNITED STATES & MEXICO

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Mexico was having a difficult year even before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. Its economy, stagnant in 2019, contracted dramatically in 2020, while crime and unemployment continued to rise.

Experts at the **Center for the United States and Mexico**, led by director **Tony Payan**, followed these developments closely, analyzing their impact on the binational relationship and trade across the border. “Unless the Mexican government changes course and provides a more stable environment for business and for its people, we haven’t seen the worst,” said Payan.

Decisions made before the pandemic slowed the government’s response when the virus hit. Among other measures, the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador had spent only 60% of the amount authorized for health care, wrote research scholar **Rodrigo Montes de Oca** in a report on the crisis. As COVID-19 spread, the sick streamed into hospitals dangerously short of medical supplies, drugs, and personnel — and Mexico’s virus-related fatalities quickly grew to one of the highest in the world.

Mexico’s problems were also those of Central American migrants, whose U.S.-bound caravans came to a halt when the pandemic prompted the closure of Mexico’s northern

and southern borders. The center documented the stranded migrants’ plight in a policy paper that identified avenues of humanitarian aid in the U.S. and Mexico.

The economic outlook for Mexico is uncertain, wrote postdoctoral research fellow **Jose Ivan Rodriguez-Sanchez** in various white papers. Policies meant to put Mexico on a path of self-sufficiency have depressed foreign investment, while moves to restructure national electoral and judicial systems have raised questions about the rule of law. Amid such developments, the center will host a virtual conference in December examining the country’s shifting regulatory, economic, political, and security landscape. Now in its second year, the Mexico Country Outlook provides decision-makers with information and an insider’s guide to doing business in Mexico.

Not all the news is grim. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which replaces NAFTA, could help shore up Mexico’s prospects. The accord became effective in July 2020, as the pandemic and U.S.-China trade war battered the economy. “These events may increase the percentage of U.S., Canadian, and Mexican total trade that takes place within North America in the future, and reduce the region’s imports from elsewhere,” said

fellow **David Gantz**, who authored the center’s 12-part series on the trade deal. “Without the USMCA, this process would have been even more costly and difficult to implement.”

The center explored long-term prospects for the binational relationship in two recently published books. *The Future of the U.S. Mexico Relationship: Strategic Foresight*, edited by Payan, nonresident scholar **Jesús Velasco**, and Alfonso Lopez de la Osa, forecasts how 16 topical areas, such as immigration and shared groundwater, will evolve. *Binational Commons: Institution Building and Governance on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, edited by Payan and research analyst **Pamela Lizette Cruz**, recommends steps toward better and more collaborative border governance.

The center’s “Mexico Centered” podcast, which attracts thousands of listeners each month, also shines light on the complex U.S.-Mexico relationship. Its host, graduate fellow **Enrique Quezada**, leads lively discussions with government officials, academics, and other experts on topics such as the border wall and how Mexico views the United States.

# MIDDLE EAST

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The past year has been characterized by deepened uncertainty and turmoil across the Middle East. Nearly one decade after the Arab uprisings, the struggle for political reforms and socio-economic justice persist. At the advent of the year 2020, conflict between the U.S. and Iran sparked fears of war. The path toward resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains highly elusive, as the Trump administration's "Deal of the Century" has been met with skepticism and condemnation by major regional and international players. In the Persian Gulf, the implosion of global oil prices cast doubt on the long-term financial strength and reform programs of monarchies that are reliant on energy wealth. Simultaneously, the calamitous coronavirus pandemic has compounded these and other challenges, including refugee crises. The research and activities of the **Center for the Middle East** (CME) have focused on these key issues.

Conflict resolution, particularly in the Israeli-Palestinian sphere, has been a pillar of the Baker Institute's research mission from the outset. In an exclusive interview with *Al-Monitor*, **Ambassador Edward Djerejian** offered insights into how effective diplomacy toward the Middle East can be exercised in the current moment, with the maxim

that the U.S. must first "do no harm" when addressing key regional issues such as the popular uprisings in Iraq, Lebanon, and beyond. Djerejian was also interviewed by several major networks for his outlook on the Israeli elections and the future of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in light of the Trump administration's policies and the highly disruptive approach by the Israeli government on West Bank annexation. **Gilead Sher**, the Brochstein Fellow in Middle East Peace and Security in Honor of Yitzhak Rabin, published a number of Baker Institute research papers and issue briefs warning of the consequences of unilateral actions by Israel and providing a framework for negotiations moving forward.

CME fellow **Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar** was quoted as an important source of commentary on Iranian issues in major national media platforms. In his *New York Times* op-ed in February 2020, Tabaar analyzed the victories by conservatives in Iran's elections, which portended more animosity in Iran's already strained relationship with the United States. In response to a wider range of geopolitical actors such as China becoming more involved in Gulf affairs, fellow **Kristian Coates Ulrichsen** wrote a major research paper on "Rebalancing Regional Security in the Persian Gulf"

and frequently provided analysis on Gulf politics for global media outlets.

As the coronavirus pandemic spread, CME fellows explored how this historic public health crisis is already reshaping the Middle East. **Kelsey Norman**, the Kelly Day Fellow in Women's Rights, Human Rights, and Refugees, conducted two webinars on the plight of refugees in the Middle East and beyond as they face an even more precarious situation due to COVID-19 and its effects on migration policies. Additionally, CME fellows, including **A.Kadir Yildirim**, participated in a webinar panel on "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Health Status and Economies of the Middle East," discussing how the pandemic has exacerbated social, economic, and structural issues within and across national boundaries.

The Center for the Middle East will continue to provide not only timely, data-driven research on these topics, but also policy recommendations to the public and policymakers.

# PUBLIC FINANCE

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The **Center for Public Finance** (CPF) has continued its research focus on U.S. economic and fiscal policies that are sustainable, efficient, and equitable, analyzing issues that informed policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels. This work is especially important given the U.S. government's massive fiscal response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic threat posed by the worldwide spread of the disease.

Before the pandemic, the center's work addressed the mounting federal deficit, which will require major fiscal policy changes such as entitlement reforms, reduced spending, and additional revenues. In briefs and journal articles, CPF fellow **Jorge Barro** evaluated the long-term consequences of large federal deficits and discussed why interest rates have not increased as federal debt rapidly expanded over the last decade. His research shows that an aging population has led to a surge in savings and created a financial market environment in which large deficits and debt over short-time horizons have muted impacts. However, he warns of rising debt servicing costs as interest rates respond to the rising demand for capital, should large debts persist over time. His forthcoming research evaluates the broad macroeconomic consequences of demographic

changes, including a persistent slowdown in U.S. economic growth.

CPF director **John Diamond** and Baker Institute Rice Faculty Scholar **George Zodrow** completed an ongoing project with the Congressional Budget Office to model the economic effects of Social Security reform, the results of which were published in a December 2019 issue of the *National Tax Journal*. Diamond and Zodrow also examined the economic effects of enacting a carbon tax, and discussed alternative uses of the revenues raised from such a tax — such as reducing deficits and debt, replacing other revenue sources, or paying a carbon tax dividend to households — as well as the equity-efficiency trade-offs of these different uses.

Fellow **Joyce Beebe** continued to examine tax issues and policy responses related to new technologies. Her Baker Institute publications on taxation of the sharing economy, digital products, cloud computing, crowdfunding, and Bitcoin attracted readers from both the private and public sectors. She also wrote about taxpayer responses to policies related to soda taxes, the SECURE Act, retirement security, and paid family and medical leave. In several external publications, she examined developments in the taxation of U.S. companies by

European countries, focusing on digital taxes and major EU state aid cases in particular.

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CPF shifted its focus to analyze appropriate fiscal policies given the unique circumstances facing the U.S. and the world. Diamond and Barro evaluated the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act — which was enacted on March 27, 2020, and included \$1.8 trillion of spending increases and tax cuts — and advised policymakers to structure any funding in a temporary and targeted manner. Diamond and Barro further discussed these critical issues in detail in a widely attended Baker Institute webinar. In a similar vein, Diamond joined Rep. Dan Crenshaw to discuss U.S. economic policy responses to the pandemic for an episode of the congressman's podcast. The government's response was explored by Beebe, who produced a timely series of Baker Institute publications on the CARES Act's impact on small business owners, mid-sized entities, and new college graduates.

In May 2020, the CPF welcomed **Richard Evans** as the Advisory Board Visiting Fellow. Evans was associate director and senior lecturer in the Computational Social Science Program at the University of Chicago.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP & ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **McNair Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth** has focused on analyzing the many issues affecting entrepreneurs and small businesses arising from the government's response to the outbreak. The goal of the analysis is to propose policy and infrastructure modifications that will enable the government to respond more quickly and effectively to the needs of small businesses in the next economic crisis, whatever form it may take.

The McNair Center is also continuing its research to improve the systems used by businesses to communicate their opinions and preferences about property tax rates and local government budgets to their local elected officials. In

addition, the center has begun a new line of research with the objective of simplifying the business formation process so that entrepreneurs can realize the benefits of personal asset protection in the most time-efficient and cost-effective way. The center plans to present these and other projects at a symposium to be held in Spring 2021.

Directed by **Jennifer Rabb**, the McNair Center is a leading authority for translating academic research into actionable policy analysis and recommendations, with the mission of expanding the local and national economy through private enterprise. This year, the center welcomed a new research manager, **Lebena Varghese**. Varghese brings expertise in survey research that will enable

the McNair Center to gather primary data from businesses and individuals on topics within the center's research mission.

The McNair Center substantially fortified and expanded its student intern program, ending the fiscal year with six undergraduate interns from Rice, with plans to onboard a similar number of new interns in 2021. The intern program is important to the mission of the center, as it will equip tomorrow's leaders to think critically, identify bias, and apply nonpartisan, data-driven analysis to the policy issues critical to the success of private enterprise and economic growth in the U.S. The student intern program is led by entrepreneurship scholar **George Webb**.

***“The national debt is not going disappear on its own. At some point, we’ll have to raise taxes or make painful spending cuts to balance the budget. When that time comes, there are going to be costs associated with it.”***

**JORGE BARRO**

Fellow in Public Finance

# PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

In a time of unprecedented crisis, the 2020 election stood as the most consequential in decades. How would the COVID-19 pandemic, political polarization, and an economic recession affect the election process in particular and democracy in the United States in general?

These are the questions the **Presidential Elections Program**, the nation's first program solely dedicated to the study of U.S. presidential campaigns and elections, was established to answer. Program and political experts offer timely analysis during and after each presidential election cycle to provide a better understanding of presidential campaigns and their outcomes. Its activities include biennial conferences on topics of high political and policy salience.

On December 9, 2019, the Presidential Elections Program held its second conference, "A Presidential Election in an Uncertain Time." The event brought together a diverse group of academics, campaign consultants, journalists, and other prominent individuals to explore the political and cultural issues surrounding the 2020 election. Veteran political consultants James Carville and Mary Matalin served as the honorary directors and participated in a lunch conversation moderated by political consultant Karen Johnson Rove. Secretary James A. Baker, III, the institute's honorary chair, delivered the introductory remarks. "Our Presidential Elections Program strives to maintain a dispassionate approach to the study and analysis of presidential elections," he said. "It doesn't promote partisan points of view."

The conference's first panel, "Rising Polarization," examined the presence, evolution, and intensity of polarization in both the American public and Congress and discussed potential solutions to ameliorate it. The second panel explored the underlying reasons for the public's declining trust in government and the measures that can be taken to foster a more unified political environment. The day closed with a detailed analysis of the dynamics in early caucuses and primary states and an open dialogue on the November election.

**Mark P. Jones** and **John Williams**, who lead the program, organized a virtual series in December that examined the elections and the ramifications of the aftermath.

This year, as in every campaign year for the past decade, journalists around the world relied on Jones for astute commentary on the state of national and Texas elections. In the first eight months of 2020 alone, he was cited in 3,411 print, television, radio, and online articles from Houston to Santiago, Chile. Jones navigates the often-murky political waters in Austin and Washington, D.C., and explains how events on both sides of the aisle relate to lives and livelihoods. "The Baker Institute is unique because it provides what's lacking in the current political debate: neutral, objective, nonpartisan analysis," he said.

***"The Baker Institute is unique because it provides what's lacking in the current political debate: neutral, objective, nonpartisan analysis."***

**MARK P. JONES**

Fellow in Political Science

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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The COVID-19 pandemic brought the importance of science-based policymaking into sharp focus. Research from the nation's vast scientific and engineering enterprise — research universities, national laboratories, and private sector facilities — as well as the voices of America's scientific leaders should inform state and federal decision-making across a broad range of policy issues, most notably public health and economic and national security.

**The Science and Technology Policy Program** (S&T), led by fellows **Kirstin Matthews** and **Neal Lane**, has long worked to advance the role of science in policymaking. Through events, publications, and other outreach, program experts engage national decision-makers, the scientific community, and the public in discussions about the positive impact of science and engineering research, technological development and innovation, institutional leadership, and education. In addition, the program studies the governance of federal research and development (R&D).

This year, the S&T Program focused on three areas of policy: maintaining U.S. research and industrial competitiveness amid rapidly growing international R&D investment by other nations,

particularly China; improving the federal S&T advisory system; and the regulation of emerging biomedical technologies.

For the past two years, the program has partnered with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the United States' second-oldest scientific society, in a study of U.S. research and industrial competitiveness. Its findings, released in a major policy report in September, strongly recommended robust federal support of fundamental research in all fields of science and engineering, improvements in STEM education for all Americans, and the need to attract and retain international S&T talent in light of growing tensions between the U.S. and China. In a related webinar, Neal Lane and China Studies fellow **Steve Lewis** led a discussion on recent government moves to target U.S. and Chinese R&D collaborations and the long-term viability of science R&D cooperation between the two nations.

The S&T program is also leading a National Science Foundation-funded project, in collaboration with the Science History Institute, documenting the history of White House science advisors from President George H.W. Bush to President Donald Trump.

As part of the three-year project, the program hosted Kelvin Droegemeier, current director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and President Trump's chief scientific advisor. At this event, Droegemeier highlighted previous S&T reports as valuable resources for him and others.

The S&T Program continues its work promoting the ethical development of emerging biotechnologies, focusing on the regulation of gene editing and human embryo research in the United States and abroad. Matthews and nonresident scholar **Ana Iltis** disseminated their findings from a major 2019 work on U.S. human embryo policy at international scientific conferences and in peer-reviewed journal articles. The authors notably hosted a panel discussion and news briefing at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest scientific professional society. The panel outlined scientific, ethical, and legal challenges facing future human embryo research.

# DRUG POLICY

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The **Drug Policy Program**'s work this year developed amid the public health crisis of COVID-19 — which exacerbated the public health crisis of drug addiction. Because people with substance use disorders are often immunocompromised, they are at greater risk of contracting and dying from the virus, explained fellow **Katharine Neill Harris**, in a number of commentaries and interviews. Treatment for drug dependence, already insufficient and costly, is now more limited, even though the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies conditions that contribute to drug addiction, like unemployment and frayed social connections.

Harris and program director **William Martin** support policy reforms that treat drug use as a public health issue, with solutions such as alternatives to incarceration for drug offenders, needle-exchange programs, and expanded access to medication-assisted treatments. The war on drugs is a failure, they argue, and facilitates aggressive police tactics that have the potential to escalate. This summer, as social protests against police violence spread across the nation, the program co-hosted a series of criminal justice webinars that explored mass incarceration, public

health, and racial equity. Specific topics included the role of ending the drug war in addressing police violence, how to reform policing at all levels of government, and the impact of incarceration on women and families. “By including state and local leaders in these discussions and providing a forum for public education and engagement, we think it possible that these important conversations will provide an opportunity for more rational and equitable drug policies,” said Martin.

The program began the academic year with Neil Harris' continued efforts to establish productive relationships with local elected leaders. One of the program's more successful partnerships has been with the Harris County Sheriff's Office. The program began a dialogue with the Sheriff's Office in 2017 on the efficacy of providing the overdose reversal drug Narcan to people with a history of opioid use when they exit the jail. Initially hesitant, the office eventually endorsed the idea and, after securing a Narcan supply, began distributing it in Fall 2019.

In December 2019, the program, in conjunction with the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, published a report on

drug treatment availability for individuals involved in the Harris County justice system. The authors found significant limitations in the system's ability to provide effective drug treatment and offered several recommendations. That report was well-received and is now being used as a resource to promote integrated substance use and mental health services for Houston's homeless population.

In early 2020, Neill Harris and Martin co-wrote a timely report, “Vaping: Clearing the Air,” which examined recent trends in vaping, research on its effectiveness for smoking cessation, the role of industry marketing, and policy responses to increased use.

The program gained significant strength in May by appointing Austin attorney **Lisa Pittman** as a nonresident fellow. Pittman's expertise in laws regarding medical and adult-use cannabis and the hemp industry has earned her the title, “The First Lady of Texas Cannabis Law.”

# STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

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Rice undergraduates involved with our student programs stepped up this year when the pandemic upended normal operations. They obtained safe, work-based learning experiences through virtual internships, conducted policy research online, and, when possible, participated remotely in institute events.

Members of the **Baker Institute Student Forum** (BISF) quickly reorganized their signature event: an annual public policy competition for students, which this year focused on energy-related issues. BISF leaders moved in-person presentations and judging to a virtual format, requiring the finalists to submit recorded videos of their policy proposals to a panel of three judges. “Even though it was remote, the competition remained an engaging and creative way to explore a policy challenge,” said participant Sree Yeluri ’21.

Before the pandemic hit, BISF members sharpened their critical thinking skills at policy-related student debates and met with distinguished statesmen and scholars who visited the institute. “The core mission of the BISF is to educate and engage a new generation of leaders. It is a perfect organization for students to broaden their understanding of key public policy issues,” said fellow **Joe Barnes**, the BISF faculty advisor.

The **Jesse Jones Leadership Center Summer in D.C. Policy Research Internship Program** offers students the chance to work in a public policy environment during their summer break. While the COVID-19 outbreak put the 2020 internships on hold, the program traditionally offers living stipends to students who secure summer internships with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and think tanks in Washington, D.C. At the end of the summer, the students present policy reports based on their experiences to Baker Institute fellows and Rice faculty members. In Summer 2019, participants addressed topics ranging from legal services for immigrants to Chinese energy infrastructure investment in the Western Hemisphere. Program alumni often go on to rewarding careers in the U.S. government and at private think tanks and nongovernmental organizations, said fellow **Steven Lewis**, who directs the program.

Since 2011, a delegation of outstanding U.S. students sponsored by the institute’s **Space Policy Program** has attended an international workshop at the Youth Space Center in Moscow. The **Stafford-Leonov Student Exchange Program** gives the next

generation of scientists and space engineers the opportunity to emulate, at the university level, the successful collaborations behind the International Space Station. While the 2020 delegation conducted its program research virtually, the 2019 cohort worked with students in Moscow on simulated space missions. Program alumni have gone on to careers at NASA, SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Virgin Galactica.

The Baker Institute also hosts two graduate programs. The **Master of Global Affairs Program**, developed with Rice’s School of Social Sciences, engages students in modern approaches to global policymaking. “Now matriculating its sixth cohort, the Master of Global Affairs is making its mark as a top-choice graduate program for students interested in global diplomacy and public policy,” said associate director Abbey Godley.

Graduate students in the **Master of Energy Economics Program** study market and economic principles as they apply to the energy industry. Working with the Baker Institute **Center for Energy Studies** and Rice’s Economics Department, the students delve deeply into the intricacies of energy markets, future market orientation, and capital asset decisions.

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# MESSAGE TO DONORS

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As shown throughout this annual report on the activities and impact of the Baker Institute, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the institute's work on critical policy challenges confronting Houston, our country, and the world. Our mission to develop and promote nonpartisan, data-driven policy research is more important than ever.

Throughout the year, the institute has continued to rely on individuals and foundations to fund its research teams and general operations. We thank all of our generous donors and supporters who sustained the Baker Institute throughout the year. By giving a gift, by joining or renewing your membership in the Roundtable or Roundtable Young Professionals, or by simply attending an event — you are making an impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the institute's outreach through remote webinars and fundraising. Looking ahead to 2021, we will use new and enhanced digital tools to engage with our supporters and provide them with relevant public policy research and programs.

With your help, the Baker Institute will continue to lend a meaningful voice to our nation's discourse.

***“Thanks to the steadfast support of our friends and to the generosity of our donors, our research programs continue to grow and our work as a global public policy institute consistently reaches the highest levels in the public and private sectors.”***

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*We strive for accuracy in acknowledging those who have given to the Baker Institute, and we regret any omission or error, which we ask you to bring to our attention.*

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The institute's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, the Baker Institute received \$11.81 million in revenue and spent \$11.78 million in expenses.

Distributed earnings from the Baker Institute's endowment and current use gifts from supporters represented the two largest sources of revenue during the year. Revenue from research grants constituted 15 % of the institute's total revenue. The institute remains self-financed, with less than 1% of revenue received from Rice University funds.

The institute's research centers and programs, including fellow and research staff salaries and research grant expenditures, remain the largest expense category. Remaining costs consist of general operating expenses, including administrative staff salaries; communications, marketing and fundraising expenses; as well as building maintenance and improvement costs.

While the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will create new challenges for raising institute revenues in the future, the institute remains on a secure financial foundation to support existing research activities and develop new initiatives through grants, current use gifts, and long-term endowment funding.

## ENDOWMENT HISTORY

FISCAL YEAR	MARKET VALUE	EARNINGS DISTRIBUTED	NEW CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENDOWMENTS
2010	\$ 60.85	\$ 3.19	\$ 1.05
2011	\$ 65.19	\$ 3.26	\$ 1.44
2012	\$ 78.16	\$ 3.37	\$ 3.86
2013	\$ 81.31	\$ 3.33	\$ 1.08
2014	\$ 88.69	\$ 3.61	\$ —
2015	\$ 101.09	\$ 3.77	\$ 2.35
2016	\$ 104.24	\$ 4.43	\$ 0.01
2017	\$ 99.12	\$ 4.53	\$ 3.10
2018	\$ 113.05	\$ 4.69	\$ 1.10
2019	\$ 119.75	\$ 5.01	\$ 4.70
<b>2020</b>	<b>\$ 130.06</b>	<b>\$ 5.27</b>	<b>\$ 1.00</b>

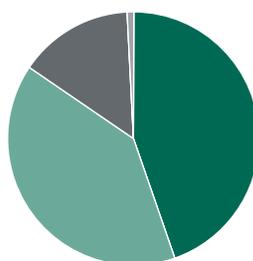
\*Market value as of June 30 of the previous fiscal year

(in millions of U.S. dollars)

## INCOME STATEMENT — FISCAL YEAR 2020

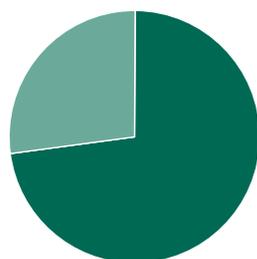
<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 11.81</b>
Baker Institute endowment distribution	\$ 5.27
Current use gifts from supporters	\$ 4.70
Research grants	\$ 1.74
Rice University funds	\$ 0.10
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 11.78</b>
Research programs and grants	\$ 8.58
Administration, communications, development and public affairs	\$ 3.20
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 0.03</b>

(in millions of U.S. dollars)



### REVENUE — FY2020

- Baker Institute endowment distribution (45%)
- Current use gifts from supporters (40%)
- Research grants (15%)
- Rice University funds (1%)



### EXPENSES — FY2020

- Research programs and grants (73%)
- Administration, communications, development and public affairs (27%)

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**MAILING ADDRESS**

Baker Institute for Public Policy  
Rice University, MS-40  
P.O. Box 1892  
Houston, TX 77251-1892

**CONTACT**

713.348.4683  
bipp@rice.edu  
[www.bakerinstitute.org](http://www.bakerinstitute.org)