

Latest Social Policy Research Activities at Heller

The Heller School was founded in 1959 to answer a pioneering question: How can we use policy to work towards the well-being of all members of society? Through graduate education, the pursuit of applied interdisciplinary research and active public engagement, our faculty, researchers and students alike are committed to generating knowledge that can improve people's lives and effect structural change.

Read on to learn more about some of the latest social policy grants, projects and publications from the faculty and researchers at Heller.

Featured Events



[Anita Hill](#), University Professor of Social Policy, Law, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and David R. Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy, presented the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center's William H. Timbers '37 Lecture as part of Dartmouth University's 2024 Election Speakers Series on February 20, 2025. During her presentation, Hill discussed the overpoliticization of the Supreme Court confirmation process, the current state of the country's national policy and how citizens can both address this moment in time and act on their core beliefs.

The Laurence Simon Department of Economics at Woxsen University held the International Conference on Data and Diversity in February 2025. The hybrid conference was the inaugural event for naming the department in honor of [Laurence Simon](#), Professor Emeritus of International Development and Director of the [Center for Global Development and Sustainability](#) at Heller. Simon delivered a keynote address and Associate Dean [Ravi Lakshmikanthan](#), MA SID'99, was a distinguished speaker.

[Rajesh Sampath](#), Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Justice, Rights and Social Change at Heller, presented at "Fascism in Democracy and Intersectional Social Movements," a panel discussion sponsored by Northeastern University's Department of Sociology in November 2024.

Featured New Grants and Projects



Heller's [C-Change Mentoring and Leadership Institute](#), a group peer-mentoring program for medical school faculty led by Director [Linda Pololi](#), has received the 2025 Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation Award. The award will study the long-term effects of C-Change's mentoring effort on medical faculty's career advancement, as well as its differential impact on various demographic groups.

[Carole Carlson](#), principal investigator, has received funding from the Marion and Jasper Whiting Foundation for a project studying the social impact of tourism in Vietnam.

The Administration for Community Living, subcontracted to Brandeis from the University of Illinois at Chicago, is funding "Family Support Research and Training Center," led by principal investigator [Joseph Caldwell](#), director of the [Community Living Policy Center](#) within Heller's [Lurie Institute for Disability Policy](#).

Featured Publications



In [JAMA Internal Medicine](#), [Rajan Sonik](#), PhD'17, associate research professor at Heller, and fellow researchers examine legal aid organizations' expertise in addressing health-related social needs.

[Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld](#), Florence G. Heller Professor, and [Rajesh Sampath](#) contributed to "The Chilling of Data Sharing and Reuse: Lives at Greater Risk in the Current Era," a new article published in [Clinical Therapeutics](#). In the piece, the coauthors examine the risks of recent constraints on data sharing and reuse, as well as the potential for corrective action through multistakeholder consortia.

Associate Research Scientist [Graham Wright](#), MPP'15, PhD'16, contributed to a [new report](#) published by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. The study, based on a survey conducted in spring 2025, explores how faculty at U.S. universities navigate contentious political issues and provides insights about the role they play in shaping the climate on campus amid federal pressure over viewpoint diversity and antisemitism.

Featured Researcher and Faculty Achievements



Professor [David Weil](#) served as the Stone Visiting Scholar at the Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School from July 2024 through June 2025. During his tenure, Weil focused on research related

to economic inequality and labor market dynamics.

On May 22, 2025, [Sandra Jones](#), Executive Director of Global Programs at Heller and Interim Associate Dean for Social Policy and Management in the [School of Social Sciences and Social Policy](#) at Brandeis, was presented with the [We Rise Together Award for Social Justice](#) at Duolingo's Fifth Annual We Rise Together Awards Ceremony in Pittsburgh. Each year, this event honors a growing global community of changemakers for their outstanding contributions in improving education access and enriching the lives of students, especially those who are displaced and underserved.

[Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld](#) served as a 2024-2025 [Scholar in Residence](#) in the Academy of Management's Conflict Management Division. In this role, he advised the executive board, created events to mentor doctoral students and junior faculty and helped with idea generation and development of conference-related activities.

At Heller, our faculty and researchers are leaders in their field, actively applying social, economic and political science to solve pressing domestic and global problems and, ultimately, make our world a more equitable place.

For more information about the latest news, research and achievements from the faculty, researchers and students at Heller, read the 2025 issue of the [Heller Social Policy Impact Report](#).

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