On Campus

Institute of Global Politics Launches American Democracy Initiative

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The Institute of Global Politics at the School of International and Public Affairs has launched an initiative aimed at generating new ideas for strengthening democratic norms and institutions in the US.

The American Democracy Initiative, led by Columbia political economist Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, will convene outside scholars and practitioners to collaborate with Columbia faculty to conduct research, facilitate high-level dialogue, and translate their insights into actionable solutions for lawmakers, civil-society groups, and the wider public.

Hertel-Fernandez, who previously served at the US Department of Labor and the White House Office of Management and Budget, emphasized the initiative's commitment to real-world impact: "Our goal is to ensure that the best ideas reach the people who can put them into practice."

The American Democracy Initiative will host public events, commission original research, and publish policy-relevant analysis. It will focus on the connection between government, markets, and democracy, including the role that economic-policy design and implementation plays in sustaining support for democracy; how business and labor can defend and deepen democratic norms and institutions; and how government agencies and programs can underpin a more responsive, inclusive, and resilient democracy.

"This work could not be more urgent," said Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton '22HON, a professor at SIPA and chair of the IGP faculty advisory board. "American democracy is facing serious threats, and it will take rigorous research, fresh thinking, and broad and bipartisan coalitions to meet them."

The new initiative is supported by the Reynolds Foundation, which recently also announced gifts to help finance Columbia's Obama Foundation Scholars program and a fellowship that brings journalists from Latin America to campus for professional-development programs.



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