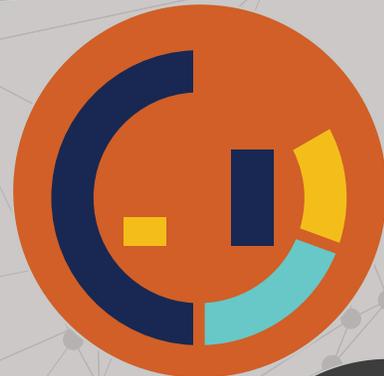
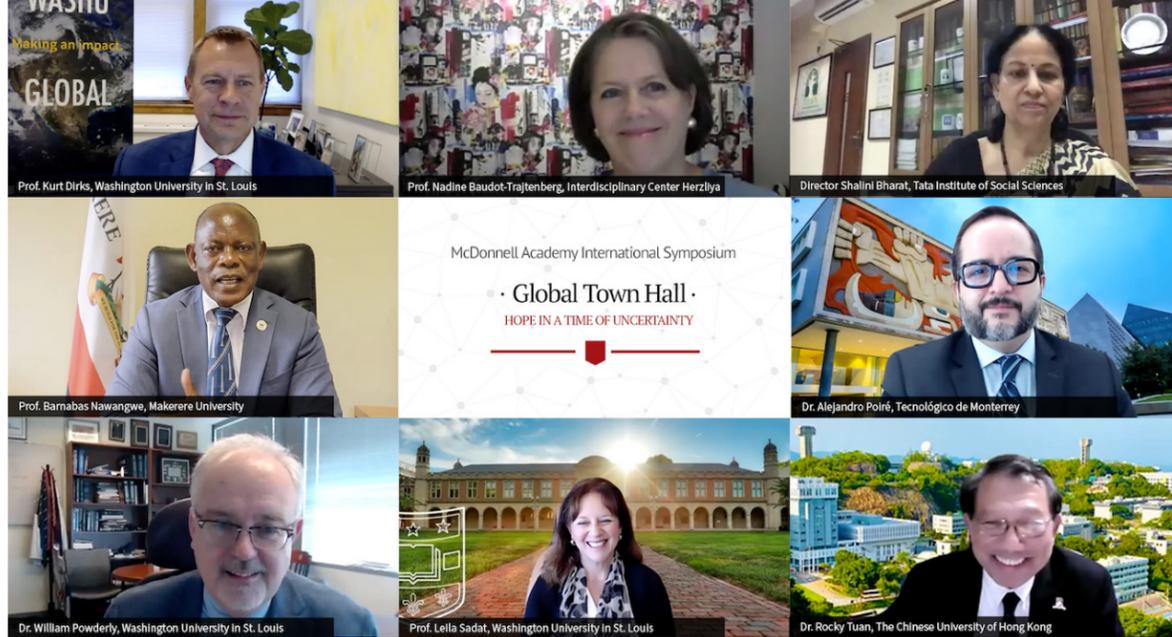


McDonnell International Scholars Academy

Highlights from the 2020 International Symposium





Introduction

Every two years, the McDonnell International Scholars Academy convenes an International Symposium to explore and connect with its global partners on pressing issues of common concern. The Academy is also committed to fostering dialogue and sharing ideas across disciplines. Founded in 2005, the McDonnell Academy organized its first International Symposium at Washington University in St. Louis in 2007. Since then, it has convened meetings in Hong Kong (2008), St. Louis (2010, 2014), Mumbai (2012), Brisbane (2016) and Beijing (2018).

The 8th International Symposium on the theme of “Forces Reshaping the World” was to be held in St. Louis in October 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Symposium could not proceed in person. Nevertheless, the McDonnell Academy continued to advance dialogue and engagement among partner institutions through a series of virtual events held throughout fall 2020 and also plans to hold an in-person meeting in St. Louis in 2021.

Global Town Hall: *Hope in a Time of Uncertainty*

The virtual Symposium kicked off with a Global Town Hall on October 8, which focused on the reasons to be hopeful and optimistic about the future in these challenging and uncertain times. More than 300 students, faculty and university leaders from partner institutions participated. Experts from St. Louis, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Mexico and Uganda shared which societal problems concern them most and what gives them hope for the future.

Kurt Dirks, vice chancellor for international affairs and McDonnell Academy director, moderated the discussion. In his opening remarks, he underscored the importance of bringing partners across countries and disciplines together to address pressing global problems, many of which have gotten worse during the pandemic. “We also felt that it is important to shift from problems to solutions and from the fear and anxiety that many of us are experiencing to hope and optimism,” Dirks said.

Chancellor **Andrew D. Martin** gave opening remarks. “At the McDonnell Academy, we believe it is absolutely paramount to engage in dialogue and work across disciplines and across nations to address the problems facing our world as well as our respective locations and regions. What we do together benefits all of us both globally and locally,” Martin said.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The pandemic has only exacerbated existing social and economic problems and structural issues that were previously unaddressed. The silver lining is that the current crisis creates urgency and opportunity to fundamentally rethink and address those underlying issues.
- Solutions lie with resilient communities, universities and international networks like the McDonnell Academy. Connections and knowledge-sharing among the Academy’s partners is key to finding solutions to our common challenges, both locally and globally.
- The answers to the current pandemic will come from scientific inquiry; we must overcome misinformation and put trust in scientists to deliver and deploy vaccines.
- Despite recent backlash against international institutions, they remain vital to finding solutions to global problems.

Macroeconomics expert **Nadine Baudot-Trajtenberg** spoke live from IDC Herzliya in Israel. She reminded the audience what the last decade of economic development has delivered as well as its limits and underlying structural problems. What gives her hope, she said, is the “sense of urgency” arising from this pandemic not only to cope with the immediate economic fallout but also to confront the underlying reasons it is so painful to address these challenges from an economics perspective. She believes “the silver lining is that it is forcing us to think again about what is important to us individually, at the society level and at the global level, and to design the appropriate policies.” What also gives her hope is the renewed focus in her field on better data and measurement because “better measurement will also bring better policies.”

Shalini Bharat, director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, joined live from Mumbai, India, to address the social impact of the pandemic, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized who have been further pushed into a cycle of precarity and misery. Bharat discussed how faculty and students at the Tata Institute are working directly to address a multitude of social issues with a wide-range of the most vulnerable groups, including women facing domestic violence and mental health issues, incarcerated populations, and homeless people. Among the silver linings of the pandemic, she highlighted “the resolve of political leadership almost everywhere to invest in fighting the pandemic and mitigating the hardships caused, especially to the vulnerable sections; a recognition of and widespread use of technology; and above all the resilient communities—the ability of communities to resist collapse and to bounce back.”

Barnabas Nawangwe, vice chancellor of Makerere University in Uganda—the McDonnell Academy’s newest institutional partner—provided remarks on the impact of the pandemic on the African continent. He stressed the responsibility of universities to look for solutions to problems brought by COVID-19 and to other challenges such as climate change. What gives him hope is that “through our research, through partnerships with friends around the world, and through working with communities,” universities can help “change the trajectory from misery to prosperity.”

Alejandro Poiré, dean of the School of Social Sciences and Government at Tecnológico de Monterrey, joined live from Mexico. He addressed concerns about the quality and resilience of democracy around the world, noting that some of the underlying problems of democratic governance that existed before the pandemic have only been made worse by the current health and economic crisis. According to Poiré, some of these challenges have to do with the ineffective response of democratic governments and institutions to problems brought about by other trends such as the impact of technological change and growing inequality. Poiré sees hope for the future in the collective strength of universities and networks like the McDonnell Academy to help address these problems.

Bill Powderly, an infectious disease specialist, professor of medicine and director of the Institute for Public Health at Washington University, shared his perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that we are “in the early days of this pandemic” with much of the population still vulnerable to the virus. He expressed concern that science and scientists have become less trusted, which is often driven by misinformation on social media and deliberate manipulation for political reasons. Powderly is confident that “the answer will come from science.” What gives him hope is that “We are making great strides in terms of our understanding of this virus Most importantly, I am very optimistic that we will have a vaccine—in fact, we will have several vaccines—produced as a result of scientific inquiry by laboratories here and across the world.” The challenge will be to deploy those vaccines, to overcome misinformation about vaccines, and to make them available to everyone around the world on an equitable basis. Powderly remains confident that vaccines will be successfully deployed.

“This capacity brought about by Washington University in St. Louis and the McDonnell Academy is a very good example of what academia, universities and the networks we can build together can actually do during these times of crisis... Solutions to how to deal with populist narratives, how to deal with the disruptions brought about by technological change, how to harness technology to improve the well-being and living of a larger number of people, to improve liberties and freedom of the press—all of these questions are going to be better addressed by networks like this.”

– Alejandro Poiré

Hidden Costs of the Pandemic: *Local and Global Perspective*

The global pandemic has upended our way of life and dominated headlines in 2020. The McDonnell Academy partnered with the Institute for Public Health (IPH) at Washington University in St. Louis to share knowledge on the “Hidden Costs of the Pandemic.” The panel took place October 29 as part of the IPH Annual Conference on “COVID-19 Pandemic: Response, Lessons Learned and Recovery,” focused on the coronavirus pandemic: what went right, what needs improvement and what we’ve learned.

The panel featured presentations and discussions from experts in St. Louis as well as global perspectives. Three of the presenters were recently awarded seed grants by the McDonnell Academy for their collaborative work with international partners to address COVID-19-related issues. Learn more about these projects at mcdonnell.wustl.edu/global-engagement/fellowships-grants/.

Led by moderators **Rhonda BeLue**, professor and chair of the Department of Health Management and Policy in the College for Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University, and **Edward Lawlor**, William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor Emeritus and former dean of the Brown School at Washington University, this panel focused on the pandemic’s far-reaching impacts in many areas such as the economic fallout, health spillover effects, mental and maternal health, and the impact on children, among other issues. Expert presentations underscored several common themes: racial disparities, the underlying social determinants, and the pandemic’s severe toll on mental health.

Timothy McBride, Bernard Becker Professor at the Brown School and co-director of the Center for Health Economics and Policy at the Institute for Public Health at Washington University, discussed the economic fallout of COVID-19 and the devastating social impact of the COVID recession. He stressed its disproportionate impact on people of color, young people and women. Most notable was McBride’s assertion that it may be four to five years before unemployment returns to pre-COVID-19 rates. To contrast, he also shared data from South Korea—a country that has been able to get the pandemic under control and avoid a similar rise in unemployment.

Karen Joynt-Maddox, assistant professor at the Washington University School of Medicine and co-director for the Institute’s Center for Health Economics and Policy, said we do not know what the long-term consequences of COVID-19 will be, however, predictions currently show that the virus will most affect people with chronic illness (such as asthma and diabetes). COVID-19 has and will affect access to care and could lead to long-term problems.

Jessi Gold, assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry in the Washington University School of Medicine, discussed the hidden costs of mental health and how rationed care and lack of PPE are causing anxiety, insomnia and isolation among health care workers. These troubling signs are evident in data collected from both the United States and China. Gold also reported that 27% of Washington University residents (students and others living on campus) have experienced depression.

Jason Newland, professor of pediatrics at the Washington University School of Medicine, spoke on the hidden cost of the pandemic on children. He reported that Latino children are hospitalized eight times more often than white populations. Studies show that child abuse and neglect, mental health admissions, and eating disorders are up. The good news is that schools appear to be safe and following mitigation guidelines, Newland said.



Maria Laura Costa do Nascimento, associate professor in the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the State University of Campinas in Brazil, gave an overview of the effects of COVID-19 on pregnant and postpartum women in Brazil. She also emphasized racial disparities, noting that deaths among black women are two times higher than among white women with a 4.8% positive rate of COVID-19 among pregnant women overall.

Hilary Reno, associate professor in the Divisions of Infectious Diseases and Hospitalist Medicine at the Washington University School of Medicine, talked about the hidden costs of COVID-19 on sexual health care, reporting that 28% of sexually transmitted infection and HIV testing sites closed during the initial COVID-19 shutdown while 63% sites modified services. Health care providers are using express visits, telehealth and data-sharing partnerships among community organizations and health departments.

George Kyei, assistant professor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the Washington University School of Medicine, explained the effect of COVID-19 on HIV care in Ghana. HIV physicians were reassigned to COVID-19 treatment. Additionally, there was a drop in visits to HIV clinics because patients feared COVID-19. HIV clinical studies were also halted. “It is estimated that more people will die in Africa during the pandemic from HIV and related co-morbidities than COVID,” Kyei noted. His team continues to study alternative ways to continue care, including additional telephone calls, an appointment system, and delivery of medication via motor cycle.

Kim Thuy Seelinger, research associate professor at the Brown School and director of the Institute’s Center for Human Rights, Gender and Migration at Washington University, presented her McDonnell Academy-funded study on the relationship between COVID-19 and intimate partner violence in St. Louis, Kampala (Uganda), and Santiago (Chile). She reported a surge in reported domestic violence cases in April in China, Spain and Greece as well as other countries, and studies indicate that job loss, food insecurity, mounting childcare burdens, and increased alcohol consumption have led to an overall increase in domestic violence.

During the Q&A session that followed, the expert panel reflected on specific solutions and innovations to address these wide-ranging problems. They urged bold actions, working closely with communities, and giving voice to others.

Visit our website to view additional content and event videos at mcdonnell.wustl.edu/global-engagement/international-symposia/8th-mcdonnell-international-symposium/.



Yanan Du, Vice Dean for International Affairs in the School of Biomedical Engineering at Tsinghua University



Guy Genin, the Harold and Kathleen Faught Professor at Washington University



Daphne Weihs, Professor of Biomedical Engineering at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology



Freddie Wills Jr., Assistant Vice President for STEM initiatives at Harris-Stowe State University in St. Louis



Feng Xu, Professor and Vice Dean of Life Sciences and Technology at Xi'an Jiaotong University in China

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

Faculty-driven research workshops on specific topics are a core part of the International Symposium. This fall, a series of workshops proceeded in a virtual format, with many more scheduled to meet in person next year.

September 16, 2020

Global Partnerships for Engineering in Public Health

Conveners: Guy Genin, Washington University in St. Louis; Daphne Weihs, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology; Yanan Du, Tsinghua University

October 15, 2020

Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Child Savings Programs in Israel and Uganda

Conveners: Michal Grinstein-Weiss and Fred Ssewamala, Washington University in St. Louis

October 21, 2020

Transforming Health & Medicine: Big Data & Digital Technologies Institute for Informatics (I2) & Universidad del Desarrollo (Santiago, Chile)

Conveners: Randi Foraker, Washington University in St. Louis; Maurizio Mattoli, Universidad del Desarrollo

November 7, 2020

The Origin of Eurasian Food-way and Cuisines: Environmental challenge and culinary solutions to Food Globalization in Prehistory

Conveners: Xinyi Liu and Petra Vaiglova, Washington University in St. Louis

November 23, 2020

The Likely Trajectory of Global Governance after the U.S. Elections: A Comparative Perspective

Conveners: Leila Sadat and Madeline George, Washington University in St. Louis

December 21, 2020

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on People's Engagement with HIV Care in Campinas, Brazil and St. Louis, U.S.A

Conveners: Shanti Parikh, Elvin Geng and Julia Lopez, Washington University in St. Louis

Workshop Highlights

Global Networks and Local Impact

Global Partnerships for Engineering in Public Health

The International Symposium's workshop series launched on September 16, 2020, with a workshop on "Global Partnership for Engineering in Public Health." This gathering advanced discussion on bridging fields and international boundaries to ensure a prepared, connected and diverse workforce to combat global emergencies such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Moderated by **Guy Genin**, the Harold and Kathleen Faught Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering at Washington University and McDonnell Academy Ambassador to Xi'an Jiaotong University, the workshop featured leading global scholars from McDonnell Academy partners and from the St. Louis region.

The first plenary lecture was delivered by **Yanan Du**, vice dean for international affairs in the School of Biomedical Engineering at Tsinghua University, who showcased technologies for screening diseases and cures using rapid laboratory systems that replace animal experiments and that can be tuned to a patient's individual genetic make-up. **Daphne Weihs**, professor of biomedical engineering at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, and president of the Israel Biomedical Engineering Society, presented in the next plenary a much-celebrated invention from her lab that enables screening for ovarian cancer in a matter of hours, using biophysical principles. The plenary lecture from **Freddie Wills, Jr.**, assistant vice president for STEM initiatives at Harris-Stowe State University in St. Louis and a leader in the U.S. NSF-sponsored Missouri Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (MOLSAMP) program, highlighted successes, challenges and opportunities in developing an effective system for training students of diverse backgrounds in cutting-edge STEM research and enhancing their ability to contribute solutions to local and global challenges through STEM-related career opportunities. Plenary sessions were rounded out by **Feng Xu**, professor and vice dean of life sciences and technology at Xi'an Jiaotong University in China, who illustrated how innovative material systems are effective and essential for turning creative new ideas in biophysics, drug screening and diagnosis into solutions to global challenges.

Follow-up panel discussion amongst the approximately 100 participants from the St. Louis community and around the world emphasized the importance of global connectivity for addressing local problems in pandemics. Discussion also highlighted how networks across universities and research institutions enable the diverse and global STEM workforce needed address the challenges that are too big for one university, or indeed one nation, to face alone. Discussion brought out many examples of Washington University serving both as a leader and as a bridge in bringing global partnership to the St. Louis region. Participants contributed ideas for how Washington University can continue to benefit the St. Louis region through leadership in the international networks that enable global responses to local challenges — and enable local impact on global issues.

Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Child Savings Programs in Israel and Uganda

On October 15, 2020, Washington University's Social Policy Institute (SPI), the International Center for Child Health and Development (ICHAD), and the Next Age Institute (NAI) hosted a discussion about asset building for long-term child development and child savings account (CDA/CSA) programs, with particular focus on programs in Israel and Uganda, which differ greatly in their structure. Such accounts are typically opened in the name of a child at birth or young age and aim to promote savings and

asset accumulation for long-term purposes, such as post-secondary education.

Michael Sherraden, George Warren Brown Distinguished University Professor and director of the Center for Social Development at Washington University provided an overview of the body of work on asset building and programs in both the United States and around the world. He noted Washington University's leadership in this field and longstanding partnership with National University of Singapore through the Next Age Institute. He explained the reasons to focus on asset building as a policy idea, and not just on income, including the growing body of evidence that building assets helps promote household stability and development. Some basic principles for these accounts are that they are universal, progressive and lifelong, and the underpinnings of asset-based policy include social development outcomes. Sherraden stressed that these assets can accumulate for everyone across both race and class. He also shared some of the lessons learned. For example, full and meaningful inclusion is not possible without automatic account opening and initial deposits, and CDAs have to be funded early with a sizable deposit to accumulate meaningful levels of assets over time.

Sherraden noted that this is a bi-partisan concept, and policy progress in the U.S. includes legislation for universal and automatic CDAs in Maine, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Illinois and California with discussions underway in other states like Missouri. Many countries around the world have adopted this idea, starting with Singapore in the early 2000s, and later in the United Kingdom, Uganda, South Korea, Israel, Taiwan and Azerbaijan, among others. Sherraden believes there is much more room for advancing asset building policies and hopes that one day we can have a CDA for every child on the planet.

The rest of the session focused on how these policies and programs are working on the ground in Israel and Uganda. **Michal Grinstein-Weiss**, SPI director and Shanti K. Khinduka Distinguished Professor at the Brown School, and **John Gal**, professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, shared developments with CDAs in Israel. Grinstein-Weiss noted that about a third of children in Israel live in poverty. Yet due to its existing infrastructure that allows for a universal, inclusive policy, Israel had the potential for automatic savings. Grinstein-Weiss tracked progress in Israel from 2010 when the WashU team helped frame this idea as a policy proposal to the government of Israel to its eventual adoption in 2017. Today, Israel's CDA program is universal: every Israeli child gets a savings account opened in their name, and the



government deposits approximately USD 15 per month to these accounts until age 18. Participating parents can transfer additional funds from a separate child allowance into the long-term savings accounts and select a specific savings account for their children.

Gal presented data on recent developments in Israel and highlighted two challenges. First, he noted that in the aftermath of the pandemic, given high deficits and potential budget cuts, the program may be in danger of being cut or modified. Second, he raised the question of the degree to which this program addresses inequality, noting that active enrollment has dropped from 75.2% to 45.9% since policy adoption but only 7.4% of the lowest quintile actively enrolled in the program and only 20% of the lowest quintile contributed an additional amount. Thus, even though the program is universal, children from higher income backgrounds tend to receive a higher-yielding investment. Gal urged building in more progressive features to particularly reach low-income families.

Fred Ssewamala, William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor at the Brown School and ICHAD director and **Timothy Opobo**, executive director of the AfriChild Center at Makerere University, discussed CDAs in Uganda. CDA programs are not just about money; they are about "impacting young people's behavior in a meaningful way," Ssewamala said. In Uganda, ICHAD leads five NIH-funded applied research studies that seek to improve health and educational outcomes in communities heavily affected by poverty and HIV/AIDS. To this end, the team utilizes combination interventions that include a CDA component. ICHAD seeks to use this data-driven research to guide the national discussion around the benefits of CDAs. Ssewamala compared this work to building plumbing that will deliver these programs, and he noted this involves coalition building by engaging civil society, the business sector, government and the media.

Opobo explained the policy aspects of this work, noting that the team in Uganda is focused on bringing evidence to policymakers and helping translate this evidence into policy. To do that, he stressed the importance of building relationships with policymakers and influencing actors at different levels, including getting buy-in from local leaders.

The session concluded with reflections on the key takeaways by **Ozge Sensoy Bahar**, research assistant professor at the Brown School.

To watch a video recording of this session, visit: socialpolicyinstitute.wustl.edu/challenges-and-opportunities-in-developing-child-savings-programs-in-israel-and-uganda-oct-15/.



MCDONNELL INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS ACADEMY

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

FORCES RESHAPING THE WORLD

A RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Looking Ahead to 2021

We anticipate holding the next McDonnell Academy International Symposium in fall 2021 on Washington University's campus in St. Louis. The core of the symposium will be faculty-driven workshops, intended to advance collaborative research. In addition to these focused workshops, plenary sessions will consider the broader topics from a cross-disciplinary perspective. We also look forward to bringing alumni back to campus to engage with Symposium participants and celebrate the McDonnell Academy's 15th anniversary.



About the McDonnell Academy

mcdonnell.wustl.edu

Since its founding in 2005, the McDonnell International Scholars Academy has forged partnerships with more than 30 premier research universities around the world. The Academy has a dual mission. First, we recruit top scholars from partner universities and mentor them as they pursue graduate and professional degrees at Washington University, preparing them to become future global leaders. Second, we leverage the Academy's international partnership network to incubate new ideas and foster collaborative research across countries and disciplines.