The Miller Center at the University of Virginia

The Miller Center is a national public policy research institution, based at the University of Virginia. It applies the lessons of history and contemporary humanities and social sciences to today’s public policy challenges. The Miller Center embraces a non-partisan, distinctive and leading role in studying the executive branch of the United States federal government.

The Miller Center was founded in 1975 through the philanthropy of Burkett Miller, a 1914 graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law and prominent Tennessean. Troubled by the partisan rancor he saw developing throughout the nation, Miller envisioned a place where leaders, scholars, and the public could come together for discussion grounded in history, to find consensus solutions. He founded the Miller Center in memory of his father, White Burkett Miller.

Through Mr. Miller’s lead gift, as well as through past and present gifts by the Center’s thousands of supporters, the Miller Center’s combined endowment now stands at more than $75 million. The Center, under the oversight of its Governing Council, is an integral part of the University of Virginia, with maximum autonomy within the University system. Its programs are supported fully by funds it solicits (through the Miller Center Foundation) and its endowment.

The Miller Center’s faculty is composed of its own full-time Miller Center faculty (many of whom teach courses at the University), as well as full-time faculty from schools of the University who have part-time research affiliations with the Center through which they are able to reach a wider public audience than would be afforded by academic pursuits.

The Center’s founders intended for the Center’s products to be aimed at policy-makers and the public. As stated in the bylaws, “It should be a major objective of each project to engage the attention of the public and the national government and thereby to strengthen the possibility of contributing to the solution of the particular problem involved.” The faculty works together to:

- Discover new insights through scholarly research into American politics and history, with special attention to the presidency;
- Broadcast through a variety of media, especially the American Forum program, fresh ideas that address America’s contemporary policy challenges;
- Engage students, teachers and local and national audiences in an on-going discussion about American domestic and international policy, past and future;
- Convene the best minds in the country from academia and from the policy community to consider key sets of problems that need creative solutions; and
- Propose concrete recommendations to address institutional and policy challenges facing the American people, particularly through the lens of the presidency.

The Center does not confer degrees. It does, however, provide a range of opportunities for student engagement. In addition to fellowships and research grants, undergraduates and graduate students participate in various programs. Center faculty provide a range of seminars and lectures on a variety of topics that contribute to the student experience at the University.
Academic Programs: The Center provides a home for research on public policy and political institutions across a range of substantive disciplines. This includes:

- **Presidential Studies**: The Center is the leading research institution for the study of the American Presidency and Executive Branch. Signature undertakings include:
  - **Oral History**: The Center has conducted the official oral history for the last five presidential administrations. Center scholars conduct extensive interviews with dozens of senior White House and executive branch officials, and publish research about those administrations.
  - **Presidential Recordings**: The Center has led in transcribing and analyzing the secret Oval Office recordings of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations.
  - **AmericanPresident.org**: The Center has built and sustained the most visited and authoritative website on the biographical histories of all 44 presidential administrations.

- **Public-Facing Academic Research**: Through a number of undertakings, Center scholars comb the best of academic research in the social sciences, law, business, education, engineering, etc., and find contemporary public policy applications for them. Work includes:
  - **Chairs and faculty**: The Center’s faculty comprises over two-dozen scholars, including endowed chairs, resident and non-resident fellows, researchers and affiliates. We provide support for research, convening, publication, and promotion for both full-time Miller Center scholars and faculty we share with the College, Batten School, Law School, Darden, etc.
  - **Graduate fellowships**: The Center manages the National Fellowship Program, the premier award for graduate students in political history, across history, politics, law and business.
  - **Public events and convening**: The Center finds top quality academic research from across the country, and helps to set public agendas, shape debates, and design policies.

Policy Programs: The Center sponsors conferences, stakeholder meetings, and commissions with eminent policymakers and scholars to explore and report on topics of national concern, including:

- **The First Year: POTUS 2017**: The Center’s signature policy undertaking through 2018 will address the next President’s first year in office. The project – coordinated by the Center’s policy team – draws from across the Miller Center and University of Virginia, and leverages the Center/UVA’s national convening power and network of policy-makers and scholars.
- **A Record of Impact**: Previous commissions have addressed: National War Powers; Rebuilding the American Dream; State Health Care Costs; Presidential Transitions and Foreign Policy; Transportation Policy; Selection of Federal Judges; etc. Many have led directly to legislation introduced and passed by Congress and signed into law.

Public Programs: The Center hosts a range of distinctive programs for the University community and the general public in Charlottesville. Our most distinctive is American Forum, which is also produced into a weekly television program that airs on over 250 PBS stations across the country. Guest are drawn from high-ranking public officials and others involved in shaping public policy, from the academy, and from journalists covering national and international events. The program is produced and directed by Doug Blackmon, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, and takes place in the John and Rosemary Galbraith Forum Room.