

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

This year, the Yale School of the Environment is commemorating its 125th anniversary with the theme “Leadership, Innovation, and Impact” in recognition of the far-reaching influence our alumni, faculty, staff, and students have had and continue to have on every dimension of environmental science.

Since our founding in 1900 as The Yale Forest School to our present as the Yale School of the Environment, our school has been at the forefront of environmental science and scholarship, training generations of leaders who have tackled some of the most pressing challenges of their time. Today, we continue to build on this solid foundation by providing research, teaching, and public engagement aimed at creating a more sustainable world.

Our faculty, students, and alumni are bringing a science-to-solutions focus to tackling the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and a wide scope of critical environmental issues. They are engaged in novel cross-disciplinary scholarship and practice in energy policy, ecosystem science and biogeochemistry, hydrology, urban science, green chemistry, environmental justice, and environmental economics, among many other areas. The teaching and study of forestry has been, and remains, a core strength. The Forest School at YSE is a hub for practitioners and land stewards in forest-related fields worldwide, bringing together multidisciplinary research and practice to find solutions to the challenges that face the world’s forests.

Our alumni— who today number more than 5,800— are tackling complex, high-stakes environmental, social, and economic challenges in every corner of the world. They work in NGOs, government, industry, academia, law, public health, and communications, among other sectors. Our highly engaged alumni network is an invaluable resource for students, providing mentorship and support as they prepare to make their own impact in the environmental sphere.

In the past several years, we have made great progress in expanding our capacity to address global environmental challenges in many areas. In 2022, YSE partnered with the Three Cairns Group to launch the Three Cairns Climate Program for the Global South. The cornerstone of the program is Three Cairns Scholars, which allows YSE to meet 100 percent of the demonstrated tuition need for qualified master’s students from the Global South who are committed to combating climate change in their home countries and regions. At the Class of 2025 Commencement, the twenty scholars who made up the program’s inaugural cohort were awarded master’s degrees. The Three Cairns Fellows program, which supports mid-career environmental professionals from the Global South seeking to enroll in select YSE online certificate programs, admitted its third cohort in 2024–2025.

In the fall of 2023, we were thrilled to be able to launch the Bekenstein Climate Leaders Program, which, through a combination of scholarships, internship stipends, and postgraduate incentives, will help make it more affordable for emerging climate leaders across YSE and Yale to pursue high-impact careers in areas of high need, such as government and the nonprofit sector. With the window of time to reduce emissions

rapidly closing, the initial primary focus of the Bekenstein Climate Leaders Program will be on climate change mitigation.

To help prepare urban policymakers and practitioners to implement innovative climate solutions, YSE and the Hixon Center for Urban Sustainability launched a new certificate program in Urban Climate Leadership in 2024. Karen Seto, the Frederick C. Hixon Professor of Geography and Urbanization Science, and Mark Ashton, senior associate dean of The Forest School and the Morris K. Jesup Professor of Silviculture and Forest Ecology, co-lead the nine-month program. The Clean and Equitable Energy Development (CEED) Certificate Program, which was co-developed by The Yale Center for Business and the Environment and the Yale Center for Environmental Justice, also welcomed its inaugural cohort in the fall of 2024. The twelve-week program, designed for long-time and burgeoning energy professionals, covers foundational energy concepts, environmental and climate justice topics and issues, approaches to energy justice, and the practical aspects of energy project development. In 2025, YSE added the Green Chemistry for Climate and Sustainability Certificate to its growing portfolio of online certificate programs. Developed by the Center for Green Chemistry and Green Engineering at Yale (CGCGE), the program prepares professionals to implement safe chemicals and processes and help lead the chemical sector in addressing sustainability and climate concerns while simultaneously maximizing product function. The certificate program is lead by Paul Anastas, the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Professor of the Practice of Chemistry for the Environment and director of CGCGE at Yale, and Julie Zimmerman, vice provost for Planetary Solutions and professor of green engineering.

We are tremendously proud of our past 125 years of impact, bringing innovation and leadership to environmental challenges, as well as all of the advances we are making at the present time. Whether it is addressing the challenges of global urbanization or pioneering a novel method of observing how plants adjust the pressure within their cells in response to the environment, I have no doubt that we can and will continue this great work long into the future, propelling us toward another 125 years of “Leadership, Innovation, and Impact”!

Indy C. Burke

*Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. Dean  
School of the Environment*