

University of Washington

COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



The welfare of the Earth and its inhabitants is a defining theme of the 21st century. There are immense stresses on our environment that are complex, diverse, and evolving rapidly. As the world faces these challenges, higher education has a unique role to play. Through the powerful mechanisms of education, scholarship, and partnerships, universities influence policy and social thinking and provide innovative solutions. At the University of Washington, the College of the Environment is an unprecedented opportunity to transform this university into an acknowledged leader in the environment. Discovery is at the heart of our vision, and discovery is needed in this time of great challenge.

The Opportunity Before Us

Within a decade, the environmental leaders of academia will be decided, so the window of opportunity is now. Dealing effectively with rapid environmental change will involve integration of many sectors — the natural sciences, public policy, technology, business, global health, and the built environment, to name a few. These and others will come together in the College of the Environment to uncover the Earth's mysteries and translate this knowledge into solutions. The impact of this bold vision for a new college has far-reaching implications:

- **Understanding our world through research:** The UW already has great strength in environmental sciences. Future advances will be made by treating the Earth as a system, including interactions between the physical environment and living systems. By bringing together wide-ranging academic disciplines and enhancing their resources, the College will catalyze this discovery process.
- **Developing big solutions:** The College will be positioned to address our greatest, most sobering environmental issues by translating research into solutions and practice.
- **Informing public policy:** From climate change to global environmental health, the UW will be a prominent leader across a multitude of public issues, shaping the global perspective. At home, our region will benefit from knowledge generated by fruitful collaborations, leading to better resource management.
- **Stimulating the regional economy:** As an environment leader on the global stage, the UW will move Washington state to become a hotbed of environment-focused talent, giving rise to new ventures and spurring significant investment into the region.
- **Technology transfer:** Research developed into technological solutions will in turn drive new products for new markets that will be of broad benefit to both the economy and the environment.

Why the University of Washington?

- **Our people:** The UW is already recognized as home to one of the strongest constellations of environmental and intellectual talent in the world, with more than 5,000 students and 400 faculty working on critical environmental problems.
- **Our work:** The UW has key strengths to drive positive change in climate, water, and global ecosystem health. We have programs in environmental policy, law, and social sciences. Spanning 50-plus programs and centers with more than \$140 million annually in research, the UW environmental studies effort thrives on the creative interdisciplinary teamwork essential to solving the issues facing our planet.
- **Our partnerships:** The UW already benefits from powerful partnerships with industry, government, non-profits, and NGOs. These partnerships are growing exponentially and will drive positive change.
- **Our location:** Ideally positioned in the Pacific Northwest between the beautiful Puget Sound and the breathtaking Cascade and Olympic mountains, our thriving metropolis is surrounded by pristine and fragile beauty. The UW is uniquely situated within a delicately balanced microcosm of the global ecosystem.
- **Our mission:** Perhaps because of our location, we feel a special responsibility to lead solutions that ensure environmental health and sustainability. And, as a public institution, it is our mission and our responsibility to advance and disseminate knowledge in support of a better world.

Why a College of the Environment?

The College of the Environment will be the unifying, catalyzing hub for multidisciplinary environmental research, education, and application. With a commitment to building this college as an environmental centerpiece — a bold, resourced, enduring, effective organization — the UW has the opportunity to move into a position of leadership. The college structure is vital because it will provide:

- **Scale:** The College is the UW's highest level of academic organization, with the leadership of a dean. The College of the Environment, an innovative college structure, will span our campuses and forge connections among all UW schools and colleges.
- **Focus and collaboration:** Within this powerful structure, faculty, students, and practitioners will be able to focus their collective energies in new and unusual ways.
- **Unrivaled capabilities:** The scale and quality of these collaborations will provide the UW with the critical mass to make unprecedented contributions.
- **Degree-granting educational programs:** The College will create new environmental degree programs and provide students with a tremendous range of environment-linked educational opportunities across and within academic disciplines.

How will the College Work?

With the College of the Environment, the UW aims to play a leadership role in the future of the Earth's well-being. We will do this through cutting-edge interdisciplinary research and scholarship; by training the next generation of informed citizens, scientists, and leaders; and by working effectively with external partners — government, NGOs, and industry.

We can do this if we integrate currently dispersed environmental departments and research institutes under a united forum that will foster:

- **Discovery:** Foster the nexus between disciplines from which the next generation of discoveries will come.
- **Learning:** Provide the richest interdisciplinary learning experiences on the environment.
- **Development:** Create solutions to the most complex environmental problems.
- **Application:** Translate solutions into action.

The College will be made up of three key elements: degree-granting academic units organized around disciplines; dedicated faculty and staff from partnering departments and schools; and a central institute that will focus on particular issues and build partnerships with entities outside the UW. The UW has identified four grand challenge areas that will serve as the core foci of the College:

- Climate, Water, and Energy
- Global Environmental and Ecosystem Health
- Conservation and Urbanization
- Human Dimensions of the Environment

How Can We Make this a Reality?

The work of the College of the Environment must be pragmatic in orientation and interdisciplinary in scope, and must involve building strategic partnerships with leaders in diverse sectors of society. Partnerships are essential. The University of Washington is committed to build on our strengths and to establish new models of internal and external engagement — knowing we must create an intersection of worlds and an intersection of activities. Environmental considerations will become “mainstream.” Partnership between the University and donors is also essential. Private support in the range of \$70 million to \$100 million — both in endowments and for current use — will help to accomplish all aspects of making the College of the Environment a reality. This will be a concerted effort over a period of years, with the investment opportunity targeted at support for faculty, graduate students, college leadership, research, and other programmatic priorities.

