

**INSTITUTE AT BROWN FOR
ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY**

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2023-28



BROWN
Institute at Brown for
Environment & Society



What is IBES?

Founded in 2014, the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (IBES) is a thriving interdisciplinary institute for climate, sustainability and environmental education and research, achieving national and international stature as one of the top programs of its kind. The IBES community includes The IBES community includes 22 core faculty drawn from seven different departments spanning the natural, physical, health, and social sciences and humanities, 7 core staff, and 140 undergraduate concentrators in its environmental science and environmental studies concentrations. A large and diverse set of Elected Fellows and Affiliate Faculty, Research Faculty, Postdoctoral Fellows, and Graduate Affiliates contribute to its interdisciplinary mission. The IBES Advisory Council supports IBES leadership with valuable insights and guidance. Rapid and sustained growth in the Institute's academic and research programming is evidenced by a 50% increase in undergraduate concentrators and a 500% increase in sponsored research over the last five years. IBES' goals over the next five years aim to build on this success by engaging and supporting its community of scholars, students, staff, alumni, and partners in advancing durable, scalable, and equitable solutions to the complex climate, sustainability, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

IBES STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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WHAT IS TRANSDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARSHIP?

The IBES Strategic Plan makes repeated reference to 'transdisciplinary' learning and research, whereby knowledge and approaches from different academic disciplines and different sectors are combined to advance solutions to the most complex challenges, in close partnership with stakeholders. "Transdisciplinarity today is characterized by its focus on 'wicked problems' that need creative solutions, its reliance on stakeholder involvement, and engaged, socially responsible science" (J. Bernstein, 2015). IBES aims to harness the transformative potential of transdisciplinary research and education in accelerating its impact over the next five years and beyond.



MISSION

The mission of the Institute at Brown for Environment Society (IBES) is to advance solutions to critical challenges at the intersection of environment and society through solutions-engaged interdisciplinary research and education.

VISION

IBES harnesses interdisciplinary innovation and excellence in research at the nexus of environment and society to advance knowledge and solutions on local, regional and global scales. Rigorous training ensures that IBES students possess the solutions-oriented knowledge, skills, networks and creativity they need to create a more just and sustainable future.

VALUES

We believe in IBES as an agent of transformative change in addressing the most complex challenges of our time.

We actively promote the exchange and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge and information.

We celebrate the unique and essential contributions of every member of our community, and recognize a diverse set of values, lived experiences, cultural identities and political ideologies as assets to our work.

We value risk-taking and adaptive learning where failure is recognized as a part of learning and growth for individuals, programs and the institute.

We recognize the role that structural, systemic and implicit bias play in shaping the experiences of many in our community, and work to combat bias in its many forms.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1

Educating Tomorrow's Leaders

Equip the leaders of tomorrow with rigorous inter- and transdisciplinary training to advance solutions to the most pressing climate, sustainability and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

We understand that tomorrow's environmental leaders and innovators are shaped today, and come from a broad range of communities and backgrounds. IBES is a center of excellence in environmental thinking and research for the entire Brown community, serving as a touchpoint for students across concentrations to gain crucial environmental literacy and problem-solving skills. Students in our undergraduate concentration, undergraduates in other fields and students in our affiliated graduate programs benefit from rigorous interdisciplinary training, direct contact with IBES faculty and research, and sustained IBES community connections that extend beyond graduation. Recognizing the value of co-curricular engagement for solving complex environmental problems, we connect students with communities in Providence, across the region and around the world through collaborative learning to address pressing climate and sustainability issues that challenge communities now, and into the future.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Create opportunities for every Brown undergraduate to gain literacy with core principles in climate, sustainability and the environment.**
 - I. Facilitate co-development and co-teaching courses with non-IBES faculty.
 - II. Expand opportunities for undergraduate research and internships in climate and sustainability for non-IBES students.
 - III. Increase student exposure to climate, sustainability and environmental content in their first years at Brown.
 - IV. Create one or more certificate programs to serve a broad cross-section of Brown students.
 - V. Curate a set of instructional resources to support cross-campus education in climate, sustainability and the environment.
2. **Develop innovative models for interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate education in climate, sustainability and the environment.**
 - I. Revise our environmental studies (ENVS) curriculum to better align with rapidly evolving societal needs and professional opportunities.
 - II. Create formal offerings for interdisciplinary graduate-level and professional training.
 - III. Expand curricular offerings that foster graduate and undergraduate student engagement in transdisciplinary research projects.
3. **Prepare Brown graduates to excel in professional roles across a growing and diverse market for climate- and sustainability-related jobs, professions and careers.**
 - I. Foster student engagement with a diverse range of climate, sustainability and environmental professionals, leveraging the Brown alumni network.
 - II. Promote IBES as a clearinghouse for job opportunities in multiple sectors.
 - III. Expand opportunities for students to work alongside city, state and federal policymakers.
 - IV. Leverage IBES research centers for technical skills development and professional training.
 - V. Expand curricular and co-curricular opportunities and faculty expertise related to sustainable finance; environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing; carbon finance and accounting; etc.
4. **Advance literacy and engagement in climate, sustainability and the environment in K-12 educational settings.**
 - I. Leverage opportunities for IBES faculty and staff to support new and existing K-12 educational programming.
 - II. Create opportunities for K-12 students to engage with IBES research.
5. **Increase opportunities for students to participate in advancing Brown's climate and sustainability goals via experiential learning.**
 - I. Leverage campus as a "living learning lab" for climate and sustainability coursework, internships and student research.
 - II. Enhance support for student entrepreneurial activities to accelerate progress on climate and sustainability goals.
 - III. Create opportunities for students to learn from experts in climate and sustainability communication, advocacy and leadership.
 - IV. Coordinate with campus student groups to advance shared priorities for institutional climate action.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 2

Driving Solutions-Inspired Research

Become a global leader and catalyst for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and training that advance solutions to the 21st century's biggest challenges.

The most pressing environmental and societal challenges of the 21st century lie at the nexus of multiple disciplines within academia, and between traditional scholars and actors beyond the academy. Finding solutions to these problems requires IBES to innovate in the types of research that we do, the way we define its impact, and the partnerships that we cultivate in its design and execution. Since its inception, IBES has built a strong culture of cross-disciplinary research. We will build on that foundation to partner with communities, stakeholders and sectors historically excluded from academic research to expand the breadth of perspectives, tools, networks and approaches that we leverage in our research.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Serve as a hub that connects experts engaged with climate, sustainability and the environment across campus, and that connects Brown researchers to external research partners.**
 - I. Establish a high-profile speaker series to raise the institute's national and international profile.
 - II. Convene thematic workshops and other events that accelerate knowledge transfer and action on climate, sustainability and environmental solutions.
 - III. Support the creation and dissemination of a diverse set of IBES research products.
2. **Enhance the institute's capacity to curate successful research proposals from seed grants to larger (\$1M+) external research grants.**
 - I. Redesign the IBES seed grant program to foster the growth of transdisciplinary research.
 - II. Provide sustained, tangible support for transdisciplinary research networks to build research capacity toward proposal readiness.
 - III. Grow the IBES affiliate faculty community and support their engagement in transdisciplinary research networks.
 - IV. Expand the research workforce in IBES to support accelerated growth in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.
 - i. Design and implement a strategic hiring plan for five to seven tenure-track faculty and three to five research faculty.
 - ii. Hire research staff to support large collaborative proposal development and pre- and post-award administration.
 - iii. Double the size of the IBES postdoctoral fellowship program.
 - iv. Create five to seven fully funded IBES graduate fellowships.
3. **Cultivate a network of local to regional strategic research partners, including other institutions of higher education, NGOs, governmental agencies and community organizations.**
 - I. Conduct an inventory of external partners playing active roles in IBES research.
 - II. Establish and maintain robust communication channels between IBES and other major climate and sustainability partners in higher education across Rhode Island and neighboring states.
4. **Launch three to five IBES-affiliated transdisciplinary research centers to consolidate and strengthen areas of research preeminence and increase their impact.**
 - I. Develop criteria and metrics that will guide the selection, resourcing and evaluation of IBES research centers.
 - II. Leverage IBES seed grants, graduate fellowships, postdoctoral fellowships and undergraduate research funding to support the development of new and existing transdisciplinary research centers.
5. **Support efforts that broaden participation in IBES research.**
 - I. Increase opportunities for a diverse set of Brown undergraduates to participate in IBES research.
 - II. Develop equitable policies, practices and resourcing models to increase the participation of organizational partners and individuals from historically underrepresented groups in the design and execution of IBES research.
 - III. Create opportunities for IBES researchers to engage in K-12 and/or workforce development activities based in historically underserved communities.
6. **Increase external funding to support growth in the IBES research enterprise.**
 - I. Increase engagement at the federal level to develop a proactive approach to federal fundraising.
 - II. Increase IBES faculty access to foundation and philanthropic funding.
 - III. Work with the IBES Advisory Council to engage the Brown alumni network in IBES fundraising efforts.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 3

Engaging for Impact

Serve as a hub of information exchange and a trusted source of expertise to a diverse set of internal and external collaborators and partners.

In order to translate the innovative work of the IBES community into real-world impacts, we must reach audiences and partners outside of academia, here in Rhode Island and around the world. In order to achieve this goal, we will create programs to enhance collaborations with diverse research and teaching partners and build communications and outreach infrastructure and programs to reach new audiences. We will also work to nurture a culture of thought leadership within IBES by supporting access to relevant training and networks and by recognizing public engagement as a critical component of our work. By engaging for impact, IBES will become a respected voice and partner for solutions-oriented ideas and work at the interface of environment and society.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Support mechanisms that promote the translation of our research and academic activities into climate, sustainability and environmental solutions.**
 - I. Establish and maintain active channels with policymakers at the city, state and federal levels.
 - II. Build a network of community partnerships characterized by frequent communication, action on shared priorities and mutual trust.
 - III. Foster strategic ties to a diverse set of private sector partners as potential funders, partners and end users of our research and its products.
2. **Cultivate public engagement and thought leadership across faculty, postdoctoral scholars and students.**
 - I. Enhance the number and quality of media appearances and social media engagement by IBES faculty, staff and students.
 - i. Offer media training to members of the IBES community.
 - ii. Assist faculty in developing sustained relationships with national media contacts (e.g., journalists in residence, media roundtables).
 - iii. Create mechanisms to reward faculty for public engagement.
 - iv. Create tools and products that synthesize and disseminate IBES scholarship of high policy relevance.
3. **Serve as a regional convener for information sharing, capacity building and network development focused on climate, sustainability and environmental solutions.**
 - I. Host a marquee annual event focused on solutions-inspired research, education and engagement.
4. **Develop and execute an IBES Communications Plan designed to advance Strategic Plan goals and objectives.**



Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 4

Building a Foundation for Success

Develop the resources, human capital and organizational capacity to grow, strengthen and support the work of every member of the IBES community.

Over the next five years, IBES aims to establish itself as the top academic institute focused on solutions-inspired, interdisciplinary research and education at the interface of environment and society. In order to achieve that goal, we must make purposeful investments to grow and strengthen the IBES community. These investments include a focus on innovative policies and practices, strengthening shared cultural norms and expectations, promoting transparency and accountability, and cultivating shared governance via effective leadership and communication. The Strategic Plan goals 1-3 outline our vision for success and impact; Goal 4 will bring that vision to life.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Enhance transparency, accountability and effective communication through shared governance.**
 - I. Develop a new IBES leadership team structure to reflect continued growth in the number of student concentrators, research expenditures and strategic partnerships.
 - II. Develop robust internal and external communications strategies.
 - III. Create policies and practices to manage and resolve conflicts between members of the IBES community.
2. **Maintain best-in-class operational excellence/practices to meet the needs of a growing interdisciplinary research and educational institute.**
 - I. Develop an IBES staffing plan to support the execution of the Strategic Plan, including a build-out of sponsored research personnel.
 - II. Optimize the allocation of physical space and related policies to reflect current workplace norms and practices around remote and hybrid work while optimizing conditions for in-person interaction and community-building.
 - III. Continually advance IT infrastructure and research instrumentation to support IBES programming.
 - IV. Modernize the framework for budget management and planning that leverages available technology and resources and maximizes efficiency.
3. **Ensure that IBES actively promotes an environment defined by high ethical standards and mutual respect.**
 - I. Increase awareness of sources of bias in research and education methodologies and assessment frameworks.
 - II. Train faculty, postdoctoral scholars, graduate students and undergraduate students on research ethics.
 - III. Create an IBES Code of Conduct to govern interactions between members of the IBES community.
4. **Empower every member of our community to achieve their personal and professional goals.**
 - I. Demonstrate a commitment to uplifting a diversity of identities, lived experiences and ideas.
 - II. Promote professional development opportunities for faculty, postdoctoral scholars, students and staff.
 - III. Create a slate of internal IBES faculty, staff and student awards to recognize unique contributions to the IBES mission.
 - IV. Create opportunities for IBES faculty and staff to develop their personal and professional goals via access to peer mentors and IBES leadership.



5. **Recruit, support and retain faculty and postdoctoral scholars who reflect the growing diversity of Brown's student population.**
 - I. Develop a written set of faculty search criteria that reflect evidence-based practices for ensuring equitable search processes and outcomes.
 - II. Develop and apply a proactive model for addressing issues of systemic bias, exclusion and/or marginalization of individual members of the IBES community.
 - III. Actively recruit faculty and postdoctoral scholars with expertise in environmental and climate justice.
6. **Create incentives for work that advances justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.**
 - I. Develop standards and criteria for tenure and promotion that recognize the integral role of DEI work in achieving our educational and research goals.
 - II. Direct IBES resources to support dedicated leadership and programmatic work in DEI.
7. **Nurture a vibrant IBES alumni network as an integral part of our community.**
 - I. Create opportunities for current students to learn from and access professional experience through alumni-related programming.
 - II. Increase the awareness/engagement of a diverse set of IBES alumni with IBES activities.
8. **Increase engagement and community across the institute's postdoctoral scholars and affiliated graduate students.**
 - I. Create dedicated space and related programming for postdocs and graduate students in IBES.
 - II. Empower postdocs and graduate students to invest in the development of their community through self-governance, advocacy and access to IBES resources.
 - III. Promote opportunities for postdocs and graduate students to participate in IBES-related instruction and other academic programming.






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