Center for the Blue Economy: Reimagining International Marine Policy

For more than half a century, the ocean has been a part of daily life at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, whose campus is located four blocks up the hill from Monterey Bay. Going forward, that relationship will become the focal point for an innovative new research center devoted to the study and enhancement of international marine policy: the Center for the Blue Economy (CBE).

An urgent need exists today for marine policy professionals to address the many threats to the world’s oceans and coasts. In particular, there is rising demand for analysis that captures the realities of the so-called “blue economy,” addressing the impact of marine policy on everything from fisheries management to coastal tourism. The goal of the CBE is to educate a new generation of leaders while making the Monterey Bay region the premier location for graduate education and research in international marine policy and management.

In fall 2012, the Institute’s existing Master of Arts in International Environmental Policy degree program will be enhanced by a new certificate program in International Marine Policy—the first program of its kind in all of California. Current faculty members with expertise in conservation biology, environmental and natural resource economics, energy policy, and sustainable development will be joined by new faculty specializing in marine policy and management. The CBE will also host an annual marine policy conference at the Institute, as well as an international marine policy speaker series.

Complementing this academic programming, the CBE is now the home of the National Ocean Economics Program (NOEP). Funded for more than a decade by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), state governments, and foundations, NOEP’s methodologies have become the standard for countries around the world that seek to estimate the socioeconomic impacts of their ocean and coastal resources. The information provided by NOEP is sought by professionals at all levels of government, industry, NGOs, and academia who work in marine policy, and is often described as invaluable to their work. (For example, during the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill the NOEP Web site was deluged with people seeking information on how to estimate both economic and natural resource damages caused by the spill.)

This unique combination of world-class academic and research programs promises to make the Monterey Institute a top destination for aspiring marine policy professionals. Students will have opportunities throughout the academic year to engage in cutting-edge research as the CBE partners with government, business, and other academic institutions on economic modeling, public-private partnerships, and policy analysis. Students will also be placed in internships at top marine organizations, positioning them for leadership roles immediately upon graduation.

For more information on the CBE, please contact its director, International Environmental Policy Program Chair Jason Scorse, at jscorse@miis.edu.

Colleen Beye (MAIEP ’12), one of the seven students chosen to be in the first group of interns supported by the Center for the Blue Economy, spent the summer of 2011 working with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in the Ocean Innovations Program on fisheries cooperatives in Mexico.
The Global Reach of Monterey Institute Research Centers

The Center for the Blue Economy immediately joins the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) as a distinctive feature of the Monterey Institute, a research center with a unique mission and focus and tremendous potential to effect positive changes in the wider world beyond the Monterey Bay. Following in the footsteps of CNS, the CBE promises to become a focal point and incubator for innovative thinking about international marine policy, as well as a source of expertise for policy-makers, private enterprise, and the news media.

The CBE’s capacity for innovation will be enhanced by its proximity to complementary resources such as the Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University, the Institute for Applied Marine Ecology and related programs at California State University Monterey Bay, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Research Institute and Center for the Future of the Oceans.

Founding Gift of $1 Million Launches New Center

The Center for the Blue Economy was launched in March 2011 with the announcement of a $1 million gift from San Francisco residents and Middlebury College parents Robin and Deborah Hicks in their capacities as trustees of the Loker Foundation.

“The ocean has played a significant role in my family’s history,” said Deborah Loker Hicks, whose grandfather Martin Bogdanovich was the founder of StarKist Tuna. “We see this gift as an investment that will not only generate awareness about the issues that threaten our oceans, but also prepare professionals who can advance sound policy decisions to address these issues.”

The $1 million gift will support initial course development, fund a new faculty position, and provide research and internship opportunities for students. The Institute offers a master of arts degree in international environmental policy among its 11 graduate degrees.

“We are extremely grateful to Robin and Deborah for this visionary gift, which will enable the Institute to take full advantage of our unique location and open up significant new learning and research opportunities for students in our international environmental policy program,” noted Monterey Institute President Sunder Ramaswamy. “My hope is that their strong endorsement of the work we are doing at MIIS will serve as a catalyst for others with similar philanthropic goals.”

“With the seed capital the Hicks have generously provided, the Institute will be able to greatly increase its offerings in international marine policy,” said International Environmental Policy Program Chair Jason Scorse, who will direct the center.

For more information about funding opportunities, contact Kevin Wasbauer at 831.647.3595.

“The goal is no less than to make the Institute a global leader in both academic studies and research dedicated to ensuring that the full value of ocean and coastal resources is incorporated into policy and business decisions.”

— Professor Jason Scorse, Director of the Center for the Blue Economy