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, located just up the hill from Monterey Bay. Now, the natural ties between school and setting have become the focal point for an innovative new research center devoted to ocean and coastal sustainability: 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 complex interplay of development and industrial activity with policies that impact coastal tourism, fisheries, coastal estuaries, wetlands and coral reefs, as well as the myriad management challenges posed by climate change.

CBE Launch Heralds Academic Program Expansion

With the launch of the CBE, the Institute’s existing Master of Arts in International Environmental Policy (MAIEP) degree program has been enhanced by a new concentration in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM)—the first of its kind in all of California. Founding program faculty had expertise in conservation biology, environmental and natural resource economics, energy policy and sustainable development; with the advent of the CBE, a new faculty position has been added in marine science and policy. The CBE offers a unique summer fellows program for its students to work with prestigious organizations around the world, as well as local internships during the academic year, positioning them for leadership roles immediately upon graduation.

In addition, the program offers students research assistantships during the academic year providing opportunities to work with faculty and staff on efforts informing ocean policy decisions. The CBE also hosts an international marine policy speaker series and a visiting scholars program, attracting experts from around the world to carry out important research while in residence.

Complementing the academic program, 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, Environmental Protection Agency, state governments, and foundations, NOEP’s methodologies have become the standard for countries around the world that seek to estimate the economic value and socioeconomic impacts of their ocean and coastal resources. The information provided by NOEP is sought by professionals at all levels of government and throughout industry, NGOs, and academia; it is often described as invaluable to their work. (For example, during the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the NOEP website was deluged with people seeking to estimate both economic and natural resource damages caused by the spill.) Plans are underway to greatly extend NOEP’s national datasets to provide the economic and social information required to address climate change impacts along the coasts and to expand NOEP into an international database with more powerful analytical tools.

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In winter 2014, the CBE will encourage greater vitality and diversity in the field of ocean and coastal economics by launching the online *Journal of Ocean and Coastal Economics* along with an annual symposium featuring cutting-edge research presented by distinguished guest speakers.

**Top Destination for Aspiring Marine & Coastal Management Professionals**

This unique combination of world-class academic and research programs makes the Monterey Institute a top destination for aspiring marine and coastal management professionals. Our admission standards are high so that our students can excel at the array of training they receive, in leadership, economic modeling, building public-private partnerships, and policy analysis. Graduates of the MAIEP program are recipients of a disproportionate number of awards in the field of ocean policy and economics, including Fulbright Research awards and Sea Grant Fellowships.

The Monterey Bay area is today the nexus of marine research and policy studies on the North American continent, with resources including the Center for the Blue Economy, Moss Landing Marine Labs, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Center for Ocean Solutions and Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University, UC Santa Cruz Institute of Marine Sciences, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, research labs in the Division of Science and Environmental Policy at California State University Monterey Bay, and dozens of government agencies and the world’s leading marine NGOs. Throughout the year, Monterey Institute students have the opportunity to interact and collaborate with marine science and policy professionals from these outstanding institutions.

**“Nothing Like It in the World”**

Professor Jason Scorse, director of the CBE and chair of the International Environmental Policy program, believes “There is nothing quite like the CBE in California, the country, or the world. Unlike other marine policy programs, the CBE’s central focus is on the economics, management, and human dimensions that are key to addressing our most pressing ocean and coastal resource management challenges. The CBE provides the economic context and social implications for many of the scientific discoveries and innovations, as well as the changing landscape of human activities along the coasts and in the oceans. The CBE’s work is helping to document the economic and social contributions of ocean and coastal resources, research the incentives and partnerships that can lead to positive behavioral change, and build international capacity in ocean economics and management to accomplish both of these goals globally.”

The CBE continues to seek major funding, as it has for the past two years. To date, the CBE has received several major grants including a million dollars over four years from Deborah and Robin Hicks of the Loker Foundation. The Hicks’ gift supports new faculty positions, course development, and internship opportunities for students. In 2011, the CBE launched its Summer Fellows Program, placing seven Monterey Institute students in fully-funded summer projects with the top marine organizations in the world. The program continues to grow. In 2013, 14 students were awarded fellowships to work worldwide, in the U.S., Pacific Islands, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Hong Kong. An additional donation from the Hicks family will underwrite the new *Journal of Ocean and Coastal Economics*.

Monterey Institute alumna Linda Hothem (BAPS ’85) has also made a generous commitment of $450,000 over three years to support CBE staff, student research, and the expansion of the summer fellows program.

Deborah Hicks views the center as “an investment in our youth and our future. These issues affect us all, but it’s the next generation of leaders who will be the agents of change.” Adds Robin Hicks: “I invite all to join us in supporting this important initiative.”

MIIS President Sunder Ramaswamy frames the center’s work this way: “We envision the Center for the Blue Economy as a nexus for responsible stewardship of coastal and marine resources both here in Monterey and—we hope—around the world. We recognize that responsible stewardship requires understanding how the health of the coastal ecosystem influences economic drivers such as fishing, agriculture and tourism, and vice versa.”

“The timing for the CBE is perfect,” concludes Professor Scorse, “because the most powerful currency in current policy discussions, for better or worse, is economics and jobs. With enormous ocean science discoveries that affect us all, economics provides the bridge of evidence between science and what people want to know with respect to ocean and coastal conservation and management, and the CBE is perfectly positioned to provide rigorous analysis to make the economic arguments for sustainable marine management.”

For more information on the CBE, please contact Program Manager Monica Galligan at mgalligan@miis.edu.

“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