



**Institute for Sustainability,  
Energy, and Environment**

# Strategic Plan

**The Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment  
is one of the campuswide interdisciplinary research institutes overseen  
by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation**



## **OUR VISION**

iSEE elevates the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a pioneer in sustainability, energy, and environmental leadership. We achieve this through cutting-edge research, high-quality educational programs, high-profile events, and innovative campus sustainability initiatives.

## **OUR MISSION**

At iSEE, we foster actionable, interdisciplinary research to tackle the core challenges in sustainability, energy, and the environment. Our commitment extends beyond research; we cultivate value-added and inclusive educational programming that nurtures the next generation of sustainability leaders. We strive to make our campus a leader in sustainability by strategically and collaboratively pursuing opportunities to become carbon neutral, eliminate waste, and sustainably manage our land, water, and other resources.

## OUR BELIEFS

*Creative solutions to complex sustainability challenges require ...*

- 1. DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:** We recognize that addressing complex sustainability challenges demands a wide variety of thoughts and voices. Our breakthrough science emerges from multi-faceted viewpoints, entrepreneurial spirit, and novel problem-solving that bridges disciplines.
- 2. CATALYSTS FOR COLLABORATION:** By stimulating creativity, breaking down barriers to inter- and transdisciplinary team science by connecting experts across disciplines, departments, colleges, and institutes — and partnering with external stakeholders — we amplify campus scholarship through a vibrant ecosystem for impactful research.
- 3. INCLUSIVITY:** Our commitment extends to welcoming everyone to the sustainability movement. Students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members from all walks of life and all perspectives contribute to advancing sustainability — both on our campus and beyond.

*Together, we shape a future where sustainability is not just a goal, but a way of life.*

## AREAS OF DISTINCTION

- Uniting sustainability research, education, and campus operations under one Institute.
- Leading inter- and transdisciplinary campus research in climate solutions, energy transitions, secure and sustainable agriculture, sustainable infrastructure and transportation, and water and land stewardship.
- Building bridges across campus and with external stakeholders to expand and support transformational research that addresses complex societal problems and achieves impact.
- Empowering students through experiential education opportunities, both within and beyond core curricula.
- Evoking thought leadership on critical issues through inclusive conversations with equitable outcomes.
- Harnessing the power of the Illinois spirit by engaging students, staff, and faculty to actively participate in campus sustainability decisions.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR REGIONAL IMPACT & GLOBAL INFLUENCE

**ACTIONABLE RESEARCH:** *The world's biggest sustainability, energy, and environmental challenges require innovative, interdisciplinary, inclusive solutions. Our research teams tackle complex, real-world problems to catalyze societal transitions to sustainable energy, agriculture, resource, and infrastructure systems while mitigating and adapting to climate change. iSEE forges and bolsters collaborations, expedites cutting-edge science, and establishes stakeholder partnerships to elevate campus research and impact by:*



- Growing the tent: Fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation by expanding the network of faculty, research scientists, and stakeholders engaged in our teams.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, CONTINUED

- Mentorship: Providing opportunities for adopting best practices for interdisciplinary research, nurturing team science skills, and developing a common language and shared perspectives.
- Lowering barriers: Reducing the transactions costs for all campus units wanting to participate in interdisciplinary research through support of large team proposals to funding agencies, foundations, and corporate partners.
- Investing strategically: Making investments to grow the interdisciplinary research enterprise from incubation of emerging opportunities to externally funded centers.
- Raising visibility: Engaging in translational science communication to diverse stakeholders in the private and public sectors to amplify the impact of campus research in the area of sustainability.

**IMMERSIVE EDUCATION & OUTREACH:** *The next generation of sustainability leaders, advocates, communicators, and professionals are right here on the University of Illinois campus! Through our educational and outreach programs, we provide these students with enriching and meaningful learning opportunities that enhance their skills and knowledge. We also facilitate productive and respectful conversations among diverse stakeholders to find common ground on sustainability issues through:*



- Networking and showcasing: Providing opportunities for collaboration and interaction with wide-ranging experts and diverse stakeholders through iSEE Congresses and Critical Conversations to develop impactful, equitable solutions for critical sustainability challenges.
- Strategic educational offerings: Strengthen sustainability leadership skills and literacy among undergraduates, graduate students, and professionals.
- Key partnerships: Engage donors, foundations, and companies committed to making high-impact, inclusive, experiential, and innovative educational and outreach activities accessible to diverse members of society.

**MAKING OUR CAMPUS A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABILITY:** *We demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and making a positive impact worldwide by coalescing the aspirations and the action of our dedicated students, faculty, staff, and leadership to make our campus a living lab for cutting-edge and inclusive solutions through:*



- Charting the path to campus carbon neutrality: We develop the Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) every five years in collaboration with campus leadership, facilities and services, students, staff and faculty.
- Building productive and strategic coalitions: We seek creative and effective ways to advance on sustainability projects on campus by collaborating with campus, university, and state leaders to implement the recommendations for achieving iCAP goals.
- Promoting sustainable behavior: We communicate data-driven messages to inspire sustainable habits campuswide and create programs that facilitate sustainable actions.
- Strengthening student engagement: We support student initiatives on sustainability to amplify their voice and influence.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### **Interdisciplinary**

*We leverage the disciplinary excellence at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to foster integrative science and innovations that address complex challenges to sustainability.*

### **Collaborative**

*We aspire to serve as a trusted convenor among constituents with different goals, fostering constructive conversations that can lead to common ground and impactful solutions.*

### **Innovative**

*Our Institute serves as a catalyst for a network of thought leaders, possessing a breadth of expertise and creativity that can solve sustainability, energy, and environmental problems to better life on this planet — including and especially for at-risk communities.*

### **Data-Driven**

*Just as scientific evidence guides our research projects, decisions in our education and campus sustainability programs are supported by qualitative feedback from students, faculty, and staff and quantitative data collected from the campus community.*

### **Impactful**

*iSEE helps identify opportunities for breakthrough research and campus sustainability solutions that will have lasting societal benefits, and our educational programs prepare students for leadership in the professional world.*

### **Agile**

*Our Institute is flexible, adjusting its approach to problem solving as it keeps pace with evolving technology, knowledgebases, opportunities, and administrative structures.*

### **Inclusive**

*We welcome and actively seek diverse opinions, theories, and approaches in our discussions — and we strive to represent multiple viewpoints in our community-based, equitable approach to research, education, outreach, and campus sustainability.*