A SCHOOL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM SOLVERS

The Bren School trains environmental professionals to identify, understand, and respond to the complex environmental challenges we face today.

The Bren School is a graduate school at UC Santa Barbara offering a professional master’s program and a PhD track. It is home to 24 innovative faculty members who conduct research both within and across disciplines. Opened in 1996, the school is designed for our time, with the clear mission of solving environmental problems.

Those problems are numerous and complex. Simply understanding climate change, water pollution, ocean depletion, habitat loss, species extinction, and other related challenges requires teams of researchers collaborating across disciplines. Solving them does, too. At the Bren School, we seek scalable solutions that are based in science; informed by legal, economic, and political realities; and communicated effectively to engage stakeholders, inform policy, and shift behavior.

In 20 years, the Bren School has earned a worldwide reputation as a leading center of solution-focused collaborative research and a training ground for a new breed of environmental leader.

QUICK FACTS

95  Percentage of Bren alumni employed within four months of graduating, on average.

1  Bren School ranking in environmental sustainability, Net Impact.

70  Number of external clients Bren Group Projects served, 2011-2015.

8  UCSB ranking among public universities in the U.S.

30  Number of countries where Bren alumni work.

1  Upon completion of Bren Hall, total number of LEED Platinum laboratory buildings in the world.
The Bren Community

Faculty: The 24 full-time Bren School faculty are leaders in their disciplines who recognize the value of interdisciplinary collaboration to solve environmental problems. Some are members of the National Academy of Sciences, others have published groundbreaking books and papers, and still others direct research centers or serve as authors for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. All are important mentors for Bren students.

PhD Students: At many graduate schools, doctoral students spend years working on research that resonates with only a few dozen experts. Not at Bren. The school’s 45 PhD students pursue research that can be applied to solving environmental problems. They take coursework in related subjects, collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines, and build critical communication skills to ensure that their findings are accessible and useful.

Master’s Students: The roughly 160 students pursuing the professional Master of Environmental Science and Management degree complete a rigorous core curriculum and one of seven specializations. They may add a focus in Strategic Environmental Communication and Media (Communication) or Eco-Entrepreneurship (Eco-E). Every MESM student completes either a Group Project, collaborating to solve an environmental problem for a client, or an Eco-E Project, developing a business model for an environmentally focused new venture. Both experiences combine unparalleled training in leadership, analysis, and collaborative problem solving to give Bren graduates a substantial professional edge.

Bren Alumni: Students in the tightly knit Bren community graduate to become part of the school’s ever-expanding professional network, consisting of more than a thousand alumni. They become problem solvers and decision makers in government and academia, and at non-governmental organizations, corporations, and environmental consultancies.

Problem Solvers in Action

Faculty Research
Wildfire in the West
Wildfires cost billions of dollars every year. Three Bren professors are leading an ambitious collaboration focused on improving wildfire management in the arid western United States, especially at the wildland-urban interface. The goal is to define best practices that will save property, reduce costs, and protect increasingly endangered wildlands.

PhD Research
Shark Populations in Pristine Waters
How endangered are sharks? For her dissertation work, Darcy Bradley (PhD 2016) studied shark populations along the Palmyra Atoll, the world’s largest ocean marine reserve. Her findings in that pristine environment provided new insights on the precarious nature of even healthy shark populations, which can help managers protect these ancient top predators.

Master’s Group Project
Sitting Utility-scale Solar in California
Solar power is critical to meeting California’s ambitious renewable-energy goals. The 2016 Wildlight Master’s Group Project worked with diverse stakeholders to identify suitable areas for utility-scale solar development in the San Joaquin Valley. The project generated so much interest that the students were invited to present their findings in Governor Brown’s office.

Master’s Eco-E Project
Salty Girl Seafood
Much of the seafood sold today is mislabeled and caught using unsustainable methods. Three Bren master’s students started Salty Girl Seafood to address those issues by providing ultra-fresh, accurately labeled, guaranteed sustainably caught — and traceable — seafood to supermarkets and restaurants. It’s sustainable commerce at its best.

Specializations

- Coastal Marine Resources Management
- Conservation Planning
- Corporate Environmental Management
- Economics and Politics of the Environment
- Energy and Climate
- Pollution Prevention & Remediation
- Water Resources Management