

Powering Progress, Changing the Climate Symposium

November 10, 2026

Husky Union Building, South Ballroom & Lyceum

Overarching Rationale: The UW [Clean Energy Institute](#) (CEI) is launching “Powering Progress, Changing the Climate,” a symposium that rethinks how clean energy research and innovation translates into public benefits. In a critical time of retrenchment and disinvestment by the U.S. government, collaboration among academic institutions, industry, philanthropists, and state governments is essential to: discovering, translating, and manufacturing next-generation climate technologies; advancing and responsibly wielding AI and automation; and supporting the equitable deployment of clean energy to deliver resiliency and prosperity for all.

Amplifying UW Leadership in Climate Action for Public Good: The symposium will highlight UW strengths—multidisciplinary scholarship and education, innovation, scientific leadership, and deep external relationships—and channel them toward collective, high-impact climate action. In particular, it will showcase CEI’s proven Testbed model for translating academic discoveries into public benefits. Through the [Washington Clean Energy Testbeds](#), CEI convenes and integrates UW experts and trainees across disciplines with innovators and communities. The Testbeds are an open-access lab facility for fabricating, scaling, testing, and deploying novel climate technologies, serving 900+ users, 180+ companies and research institutions, and 15+ Washington communities and tribes. Since 2017, startups that have used the Testbeds have raised over \$1 billion in follow-on capital and contracts.

UW Outcomes: A key goal is to spark and strengthen cross-sector partnerships to scale the UW’s delivery of clean energy benefits across Washington, the U.S., and the world by:

- Recruiting new industry partners to work with UW researchers, work in UW shared facilities, and hire UW students
- Garnering philanthropic support for UW scholarship, facilities, and community engagement
- Attracting private investment to seed early-stage ideas and accelerate technology scale-up
- Engaging policy and economic development leaders to leverage and disseminate this successful model for turning public investment into public good

Participants: The inaugural symposium will convene global thought leaders in climate tech policy, corporate and philanthropic investing, and academic innovation.

- Policy Leaders: former U.S. Sec. of Energy Moniz (confirmed); former WA Gov. Inslee (confirmed); former U.S. Sec. of Energy Granholm (invited); Gov. Ferguson (pending)
- Investors: Antha Williams, Bloomberg Philanthropies (invited); Aina Abiodun, VertueLab (pending); Melanie Nakagawa, Microsoft (pending)
- Innovators: David Baker, UW (confirmed); Chad Mirkin, Northwestern (confirmed); Tonio Buonassisi, Swiss Center for Electronics & Microtechnology (confirmed); Y. Shirley Meng, UChicago & Argonne Natl Lab (confirmed); Yi Cui, Stanford & SLAC (confirmed)

Audience: CEI and its advisors are building a program that is expected to attract approximately 250 attendees, including scholars, industry leaders, private-sector and philanthropic funders, and policymakers to the UW HUB.

Format: The annual, day-long event will feature a mix of fireside chats, panel discussions, and short talks. CEI faculty will provide introductory context for scholarship. It will also feature several emerging leaders—former CEI Graduate Fellows—who are now faculty at leading U.S. universities, have shepherded start-ups to successful outcomes, or both.

Pre- and Post-event: CEI is planning pre- and post-event activities offering opportunities to engage with external and UW thought leaders. CEI invites ideas and partnerships from across campus.