



Director of the Marine Laboratory
Duke University
Beaufort, North Carolina

THE SEARCH

Duke University, one of the nation's leading research universities, seeks a creative and collaborative leader to serve as the Director of the Duke University Marine Laboratory ("DUML" or "Marine Laboratory"). Located on the southern tip of the Outer Banks, the Marine Laboratory is a coastal campus within Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment (NSOE). Operating year-round as a national and international hub for research, education, and community engagement, the Marine Lab has a rich tradition — and international reputation — for its field-based inquiry, immersive learning, and science-informed action. DUML is noted for its strong sense of community among faculty, staff, and students; a robust portfolio of educational programs at the [undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels](#); and a long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration across the natural and social sciences, engineering, and policy. DUML is a vital contributor to advancing understanding of marine and coastal systems and to training future leaders equipped to address the environmental challenges facing oceans and coastal communities.

The next Director of the Marine Lab will join a remarkable community with a long history and a strong sense of place. Founded in 1938, DUML has been advancing marine science for nearly 90 years. As one of the first universities to establish a marine field station, DUML has become a leading center for research, education, and collaboration focused on marine environmental systems, their conservation, and their governance. The Director will build on this foundation by shaping an ambitious strategic direction that promotes faculty excellence, strengthens academic programs, and ensures responsible stewardship of the [facilities, vessels, and operations](#) that underpin DUML's work. In alignment with Duke's [Climate Commitment](#), the Marine Lab also advances research on how climate change affects coastal systems and human communities, and how they can adapt. The Director will sustain DUML's impact in these areas while deepening its connections to Duke's Durham campus, its partners and supporters—local, national, and international, and the surrounding community.

The Beaufort-Morehead City area hosts five other facilities that collectively form one of the greatest concentrations of marine scientists in the nation. These include the University of North Carolina's Institute of Marine Sciences, North Carolina State University's Center for Marine Sciences and Technology, the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Ocean Service Center for Coastal Fisheries

Habitat Research. The DUML Director will be a key leader within this community, with significant opportunities to expand partnerships and collaborative projects across this exceptional network.

Reporting to the Dean of NSOE, the Director will guide the overall direction and stewardship of Duke's coastal research and education campus, ensuring its continued contribution to the University's academic mission. The role spans academic, operational, financial, and external-engagement leadership, with emphasis on sustaining excellence in marine research and education, supporting a distinctive residential campus, and strengthening connections across Duke and with external partners. The Director will be a senior leader with a strong academic or professional record in marine, coastal, or environmental sciences, demonstrating pragmatic and collaborative leadership, sound administrative and financial judgment, and strong communication and consensus-building skills. They will also serve as an effective advocate for DUML, adept at navigating organizational complexity and leading within a dual-campus environment.

Duke University has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated prior to the Appendix in this document.

ABOUT THE MARINE LABORATORY

The Marine Lab was founded in 1938, initially as a summer field station, and has evolved into a year-round campus serving a close-knit community of resident faculty, staff, and students, as well as a large number of visitors. The Marine Lab provides educational, training, and research opportunities to approximately 3,500 individuals annually, including about 100 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, as well as visiting student groups and scientists -- including students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill) and North Carolina State University (NCSU) who can take classes at Duke through the Interinstitutional Registration Agreement, and others at institutions under the [Marine Sciences Education Consortium](#) (MSEC). The Marine Lab's [infrastructure](#) includes a modern research vessel, wet and dry laboratories, and residential facilities for students.

DUML offers unparalleled opportunities for Duke students through small classes, immersive research, and specialized, hands-on fieldwork in coastal sounds and marshes, coral reefs, the coastal and open oceans, and deep-sea polar regions, as well as in human communities, economies, and policy and governance processes related to these biophysical environments. The Marine Lab has a "sense of place" that enhances experiential learning in both research and education, situating individuals within the marine environment and employing a pedagogical approach that facilitates discovery of the environment and its inhabitants. Current students and alumni often cite the DUML experience as life-changing and regularly rate their experiences at the lab very highly.

More information can be found in the appendix of this document and on the [DUML website](#).

LEADERSHIP

Dr. Andrew Read will step down as Director of the Marine Lab in July 2026 after completing two five-year terms. He is the Stephen A. Toth Professor of Marine Biology, with a research focus on the conservation biology and ecology of marine vertebrates. Dr. Read has played a leading role in marine mammal conservation at both the national and international levels, including service as a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Cetacean Specialist Group, and, since 2022, as a Commissioner of the Marine Mammal Commission, following his appointment by President Biden. During his tenure as Director, Dr. Read has strengthened DUML's research and educational missions, reinforced its interdisciplinary and collaborative culture, and positioned the Marine Lab for continued impact and service under its next leader.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR

As the Marine Lab's chief administrative officer, the Director provides strategic, operational, and external leadership for the campus, its marine operations, and its institutional partnerships. Reporting to the Dean of the Nicholas School of the Environment, the Director is appointed for an initial five-year term, renewable upon review. The Director works within a dual-campus structure in which academic programs, administrative functions, and operational services span both the Beaufort and Durham campuses.

Historically, leadership of the Marine Lab and the faculty in the Nicholas School's Marine Science and Conservation Division (MSC) has been unified. The Director role is currently distinct from that of the Chair of the MSC division. Faculty in the Division are located on both campuses and report to the Chair of MSC, who is currently based in Beaufort. This recent evolution reflects the growing scope and complexity of both positions and is intended to enable focused leadership in each role. The Director and Chair will continue to work in close partnership to advance the research, academic, and institutional priorities of the Marine Lab.

The Director plays an active role in supporting research, teaching, and mentorship of DUML faculty, staff, and students. The Director enables faculty research by ensuring the operational, infrastructural, and administrative conditions necessary for high-impact research and scholarship. The Director also maintains a visible presence on campus and serves as an accessible resource and mentor to students, providing guidance, support, and engagement that contributes to the academic and intellectual life of the Marine Lab.

Supported by a full-time Associate Director, the Director manages the Lab's infrastructure, including marine facilities, research vessels, and campus systems, while ensuring financial sustainability through effective budgeting and by strengthening and expanding existing revenue streams. Within DUML's dual-campus administrative structure, many staff and services are currently centrally managed via Duke's Durham campus and report through functional lines outside of DUML and the Nicholas School, including information technology, research administration, facilities management, and residential life. The Director

provides on-the-ground leadership and coordination for daily operations at the Marine Lab and works closely with their administrative partners on the Durham campus to navigate shared reporting structures, ensuring effective, integrated support for the Lab's research and educational activities.

Externally, the Director serves as DUML's primary representative to donors and key stakeholders, leading fundraising efforts and cultivating partnerships to support the Lab's research and education missions. The Director will continue to build on these efforts across Duke's Durham campus and with external partners, including government agencies, NGOs, and donors, to secure resources, expand research collaborations, enhance experiential education opportunities, and elevate DUML's visibility and impact within and beyond the University as a beacon of science for oceans around the world.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Shape a strategic vision for DUML's future

As a top-tier marine research laboratory, DUML has a significant opportunity to define its next chapter through the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. The next Director will lead an inclusive process to articulate clear priorities for research and academic programmatic investment, engaging faculty and institutional partners across both the Beaufort and Durham campuses to review the Marine Lab's activities and decide on the best course for the future. The planning effort will highlight areas to deepen, including defining research focus areas, strengthening academic program support, and advancing community engagement for the Marine Lab moving forward, as well as areas to scale back. An important dimension of this work will be aligning DUML's financial model with its long-term research and academic goals while ensuring coherence with the Nicholas School and Duke's broader climate and environmental commitments.

Strengthen and support the Lab's research and educational enterprise

Research has long been central to DUML's mission and its role within Duke, grounded in an environment where discovery, teaching, and mentorship are closely connected. This foundation supports DUML's exceptional education and hands-on learning experiences. The next Director will further advance the research enterprise by helping translate shared research priorities into a strategic plan that aligns facilities, shared resources, and investments with current and emerging research directions. This includes guiding space planning, renovations, and capital investments to support faculty research, thereby creating environments that enhance student learning and mentorship. The Director will play an active role in enabling collaborative research, expanding opportunities for student engagement, strengthening academic connectivity between Beaufort and Durham, and deepening partnerships with other institutions, including UNC Chapel Hill, NC State, and Carteret Community College.

Bolster revenue streams to solidify long-term financial sustainability

Tuition revenue remains central to sustaining DUML's core programs and operations. Within this context, the next Director will expand the Lab's revenue model to better support its facilities, marine operations, and research and educational infrastructure. A key emerging opportunity is the launch of a first-year undergraduate program, designed to broaden student engagement with the Lab while contributing to long-term financial stability. The Director will help ensure the conditions for this program's successful implementation. In parallel, the Director will deepen philanthropic and external investment, positioning the Lab to benefit from a more diverse and resilient mix of revenue sources in support of its long-term ambitions. To ensure the greatest impact of these efforts, the Director will work closely with the Nicholas School's Dean, advancement team, and academic and research leadership to articulate DUML's needs, priorities, and value within the University's broader resource landscape.

Sustain collaboration and connectivity across DUML's campuses and the broader community

DUML has a deeply rooted culture of collaboration and multidisciplinary inquiry. Sustaining this sense of community and collegiality—and the relationships that support it—will remain a critical priority for the Director. The Director will actively cultivate both formal and informal connections among faculty, students, staff, and institutional partners to ensure that collaboration, mentorship, and intellectual exchange continue to define the Lab's identity. The Director will also build and maintain strong relationships with leadership and administrative partners on the Durham campus, fostering regular cross-campus engagement. As DUML continues to evolve, the Director will work closely with the MSC Division Chair to support faculty hiring and renewal, and with Durham leadership on staff development and hiring, ensuring alignment with DUML's culture and institutional priorities. By maintaining a visible presence in both Beaufort and Durham, the Director will encourage reciprocal exchange of ideas, relationships, and institutional knowledge that strengthens community and culture across locations.

Enhance operations and infrastructure to support research and teaching excellence

DUML's research and academic missions rely on a distinctive physical campus and strong [marine operations](#), including assets such as the R/V Shearwater and an experienced and dedicated Marine Operations staff. The next Director will steward these facilities and operations through strategic investment and modernization to support DUML's long-term scholarly and educational goals. Targeted upgrades, attention to aging infrastructure, and maximizing marine operations capacity will enhance the Lab's ability to attract top faculty, retain talented staff, advance research, enrich educational experiences, and operate efficiently. Several building renovation projects are already underway. Sustaining these capabilities will require continued focus on stable funding and effective operational models.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody them all, the successful candidate will bring many of the following attributes:

- An outstanding record of scholarly achievement and teaching excellence or commensurate experience in government, industry, or the nonprofit sector, with recognized intellectual leadership in marine or environmental sciences, sufficient for appointment as a tenured Full Professor or Full Professor of Practice*
- A proven track record of leading a complex research organization or unit, including marine operations, research vessels, and field-based or coastal infrastructure;
- Demonstrated ability to articulate and advance a shared strategic vision; build consensus among diverse stakeholders; and foster a transparent, collegial, and collaborative organizational culture;
- A visible public presence and demonstrated commitment to transparency and collaboration, with the ability to represent DUML credibly to external audiences to generate enthusiasm around its mission and priorities;
- An adaptable and diplomatic leadership style, with skill in navigating complex organizational structures and indirect reporting relationships;
- Demonstrated financial acumen and experience managing complex budgets;
- Interest and skills to be an effective fundraiser;
- Outstanding communication and listening skills, with the ability to inspire, engage, and align faculty, staff, students, and external partners around DUML goals;
- Deep respect for interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration, paired with an appreciation for disciplinary rigor and excellence;
- A demonstrated commitment to inclusive excellence with the ability to promote and embody Duke's values;
- Resilience and stamina, coupled with personal humility, kindness, sound judgment, and emotional intelligence in managing day-to-day operations.

**Appointment as a Professor of Practice in the Nicholas School is based on a distinguished career that bridges academic and real-world problem-solving through an active, externally engaged "practice" focused on the direct application of scholarship to policy, management, technology, or institutional change. This may include peer-reviewed research, policy and practitioner publications, leadership in public or nonprofit initiatives, and the advancement of solutions in the field.*

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is complete. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/duke-university-nicholas-school-environment/director-duke-university-marine-lab>

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Duke is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to providing employment opportunity without regard to an individual's age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy and pregnancy related conditions), sexual orientation or military status.

Duke aspires to create a community built on collaboration, innovation, creativity, and belonging. Our collective success depends on the robust exchange of ideas—an exchange that is best when the rich diversity of our perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences flourishes. To achieve this exchange, it is essential that all members of the community feel secure and welcome, that the contributions of all individuals are respected, and that all voices are heard. All members of our community have a responsibility to uphold these values.

Isaacson, Miller, and Duke University are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Duke University. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Duke University would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

APPENDIX

About the Marine Laboratory

Purpose

Oceans cover a significant portion of the Earth's surface and have a profound impact on daily life. They regulate climate, play a critical role in the hydrologic cycle, sustain a large portion of the Earth's plant and animal species, supply food and mineral resources, and inspire the aesthetic nature of humankind. Ocean studies are central to resolving global environmental problems related to human interactions with ecological systems, biodiversity, climate, coastal land, environmental quality, and environmental health. Likewise, as home to an increasing number of human communities, coastal environments are critical to human well-being. These are the challenges and opportunities pursued by faculty and students at DUML.

Research

Research interests at DUML span diverse taxa and include both human and natural systems, with a focus on sustaining coastal and marine ecosystems and supporting the well-being of human communities that depend on them. Faculty research spans the intersection of marine biology, ecology, and oceanography with social sciences, economics, and policy, reflecting the Lab's integrative and applied approach. Study organisms for natural scientists range from bacteria to whales and encompass a diversity of marine environments from salt marshes to deep-sea hydrothermal vents. Social scientists address policy, behavioral, and governance processes across geographic and political scales relating to fisheries, marine protected areas, aquaculture, endangered species, coastal development, and tourism. Research is organized around two broad and interrelated themes – sustainable oceans and climate change impacts and resilience -- which together provide a unifying framework for the Lab's long-term research direction.

Academics - Undergraduate

DUML's undergraduate program has been a foundational component of the Marine Lab's mission and a significant point of interest for Duke undergraduate students seeking an experiential and immersive learning experience. Primarily a non-degree program, DUML offers undergraduate courses in fall, spring, and two summer terms. Enrollment is open to all undergraduate college students; students in any major are welcome to study at the lab. Courses are offered through biology, environmental science, and marine science and conservation, and courses fulfill requirements within these majors, including biology's marine biology concentration. Students also have the opportunity to participate in Marine Lab Travel Courses in the fall and spring semesters.

In 2021, Duke launched a major and minor in [Marine Science and Conservation](#), which currently enrolls approximately 16 majors and 11 minors. Coursework is offered across both the Beaufort and Durham campuses, including a gateway course, *Future of the Oceans*, taught each spring in Durham.

DUML also administers the [Marine Lab Scholars Program](#), which provides undergraduates with multi-year, hands-on research opportunities through three distinct program tracks. Under the mentorship of Marine Lab faculty, students receive funding to support research conducted over multiple semesters on both the Beaufort and Durham campuses, participate in professional conferences, and offset the costs of travel-based courses. The program also includes the [Bonaventura Summer Research Fellows Program](#), a ten-week intensive summer experience that currently supports nine Fellows.

In addition, DUML operates the Marine Sciences Education Consortium (MSEC), through which undergraduate students from more than 30 liberal arts colleges and universities engage in a structured marine sciences curriculum. The consortium offers supervised research experiences alongside Duke undergraduates, extending DUML's educational reach and fostering collaboration across institutions.

Academics - Graduate

The Nicholas School offers a two-year professional Master of Environmental Management (MEM) degree that trains students to understand the scientific basis of environmental problems and the social, political, and economic factors that determine effective policy options. There are approximately 320 NSOE MEM students at any one time, spread across eight concentrations. Students opting for a concentration in Coastal and Marine Systems (CaMS) spend the first year in Durham fulfilling required coursework and typically spend the second year at DUML, taking additional classes and often pursuing independent research. On average, approximately 60-65 CaMS students are enrolled in the program, with roughly 25-30 of those students at DUML in their second year.

Three PhD programs are offered through the Marine Science and Conservation Division: the Marine Science and Conservation (MSC) program, the University Program in Ecology (UPE), and the University Program in Integrated Toxicology & Environmental Health (ITEHP). The MSC program is offered at DUML, while the UPE and ITEHP programs are offered in Durham. On average, 35 PhD students are enrolled in the MSC program at any given time, with about six new PhD candidates being accepted each year. Students are advised by approximately 15 core faculty and typically receive their doctorates within six years, with about half undertaking academic careers and the other half pursuing careers in government, non-profits, or industry.

People

The Marine Lab is truly a close community of students, faculty, and staff who share a passion for their work. The Lab currently hosts approximately 42 undergraduate students, 25 professional master's students, and 35 graduate students. The lab expects to host 60 undergraduate students in the summer of 2026. There is residential space for up to 75 undergraduate students, but maintaining a high, stable enrollment remains a continuing challenge.

DUML currently has 20 core faculty members, 12 of whom are based in Beaufort and 8 of whom are based in Durham. Resident faculty at the Marine Lab are engaged in research, education, and service focused on understanding marine systems, including the human component, and on developing approaches for

marine conservation and restoration. The excellence of DUML faculty is recognized nationally and internationally, with several faculty members receiving major disciplinary honors, including election to distinguished professional fellowships such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and publishing influential scholarship in leading scientific and interdisciplinary journals such as *Policy Studies Journal*, *Conservation Biology*, and *Ecology Letters*.

DUML is supported by a dedicated team of approximately 25 administrators, managers, and professionals, as well as technical, clerical, and maintenance staff, whose expertise and commitment are essential to the Lab's day-to-day operations. The team is widely recognized for its deep expertise, professionalism, high standards, and dedication to students and the Marine Lab's mission.

Finances

The Marine Lab's finances fall under the umbrella of the Nicholas School of the Environment. DUML's annual academic operating budget is approximately \$5 million. Support for the operating budget comes from undergraduate and professional master's tuition (42%), the University and Nicholas School (19%), indirect cost recoveries from grants (17%), endowment income (11%), gifts (8%), and auxiliary revenue (3%). Resources available to support DUML's academic initiatives include investment returns on its \$40 million endowment and expendable fund balances, currently totaling \$5 million. Additionally, the lab receives about \$6 million in direct sponsored research each year. The Student Affairs DUML Campus Services operating budget of roughly \$1.1 million is supported primarily by revenue from housing and dining. A small portion of revenue support comes from conferences, special events, and sales in the campus store.

Facilities

The DUML campus hosts 23 major buildings, including dormitories, dining facilities, classrooms, research facilities, teaching facilities, care facilities for living resources, oceanographic staging facilities, maintenance facilities, and office buildings. The campus features several LEED-certified buildings, including the Marguerite Kent Repass Ocean Conservation Center and the Orrin Pilkey Research Laboratory. It also includes an Aquafarm, a 0.6-acre oyster farm opened in 2018, that provides experiential learning and community engagement opportunities for students. DUML also operates coastal oceanographic and training vessels, including the R/V Shearwater and R/V Richard T. Barber, as well as several smaller skiffs used to access shallow-water coastal habitats.

Location

The Marine Laboratory is situated on Pivers Island within the beautiful Outer Banks of North Carolina, just across the channel from the historic town of Beaufort. Beaufort is the third-oldest town in the state and is surrounded by fishing and agricultural communities. The area is renowned for its historic and scenic attractions and is a popular seaside resort. Cape Lookout National Seashore Park and the Rachel Carson Estuarine Research Reserve are within easy boating distance. The area's system of barrier islands, sounds, and estuaries is rich in flora and fauna, and diverse habitats, including rivers, creeks, mud flats, sand

beaches, dunes, salt marshes, cypress swamps, spoil islands, and coastal forests, making the area an excellent haven for both nature lovers and those interested in the pursuit of marine science.

About the Nicholas School of the Environment

History

The Nicholas School is the result of a strategic merger of three entities that are almost as old as Duke University itself. The School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the Marine Lab (both founded in 1938) merged in 1991 to form the School of Environment, which was renamed the Nicholas School of the Environment in 1995 following a \$20 million gift from Peter M. and Ginny Nicholas of Boston. In 1997, the Department of Geology (formed in 1936) joined the School as the Division of Earth and Ocean Sciences. The School currently includes 78 core and 114 affiliated faculty. Current enrollment includes 129 PhD candidates, 305 professional students, and 152 undergraduate students.

Leadership

Dr. Lori Benneer, a professor of energy economics and policy, became the Stanback Dean of the Nicholas School on July 1, 2025, after serving as interim dean since 2023. Before her interim appointment, Dean Benneer held several key leadership roles at Duke, including executive vice dean, where she oversaw the School's academic and internal operations, senior associate dean for academic initiatives, and chair of the University's Priorities Committee. A member of the faculty since 2004, she brings distinguished experience as a scholar, teacher, and academic leader, a deep record of service to the University, and a national reputation in environmental policy.

Mission

The Nicholas School's mission is informed by Duke University's theme of *knowledge in the service of society* and motivated by the need to restore, protect, and manage the world's environmental resources while adapting to a changing climate and a growing population with aspirations for rising standards of living. The School fulfills this mission by:

- **Creating Knowledge** through basic, applied, and multidisciplinary research in the relevant physical, life, and social sciences designed to expand our understanding of the earth and its environment;
- **Creating Global Leaders** through:
 - An *undergraduate academic program* designed to spread understanding of the Earth and the environmental ethic to a new cadre of Duke graduates;
 - A *professional master's program* that trains a new breed of environmental professionals working in the public, private, and non-profit sectors with the skills needed to devise and implement effective environmental policies and practices, and;

- A *PhD program* dedicated to adding to a new generation of world-class scientists, researchers, and educators in the environment;
- **Forging a Sustainable Future** by strategically focusing the intellectual resources and capital amassed in research and education to address three of the most challenging environmental issues confronting society: Climate and Energy, Terrestrial and Marine Ecosystems, and Human Health and the Environment.

Structure

The Nicholas School is organized into four academic divisions that reflect its interdisciplinary approach to environmental research and education:

- **Earth and Climate Sciences** focuses on climate change, energy, and earth processes, with faculty conducting research across diverse global environments, from deep-ocean trenches to high-altitude landscapes.
- **Environmental Natural Sciences** brings together faculty engaged in laboratory- and field-based research on ecological, chemical, hydrological, and health-related dimensions of environmental change.
- **Environmental Social Systems** concentrates on the human dimensions of environmental challenges, including economics, policy, governance, decision-making, and issues of equity and justice.
- **Marine Science and Conservation** advances research and training in marine and coastal systems, spanning oceanography, marine biology and conservation, environmental health, biotechnology, and marine policy and management.

Research

Faculty and graduate students in the Nicholas School maintain a vibrant, globally engaged research enterprise. The School's research portfolio spans more than 40 disciplines across 16 focal areas and is carried out through a network of more than 30 research laboratories and centers. Research conducted at the Nicholas School also plays a vital role in advancing Duke's Climate Commitment, is closely integrated with graduate and undergraduate education, and informs policy, management, and practice at local, national, and international levels. The School has nearly \$33 million in active research grants, \$59 million in pending proposals, and \$22 million in yearly research expenditures, making it a key contributor to advancing the University's broader research mission.

Academic Programs - Undergraduate

The Nicholas School participates in three levels of educational programs – professional master's programs administered within the Nicholas School, master's and doctoral programs administered through the Graduate School, and undergraduate programs awarding degrees through Trinity College.

Bachelor degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science) with majors in environmental sciences and policy, earth and climate sciences, and marine science and conservation are offered through the Trinity College of Arts and Sciences and directed by the Nicholas School; these majors are available to Duke undergraduates interested in the interdisciplinary study of environmental issues or in all branches of the earth sciences. Courses and research are conducted at both the Durham and Beaufort campuses.

Academic Programs - Graduate

The Nicholas School offers academic programs leading to the professional degrees of Master of Environmental Management (MEM) and Master of Forestry (MF), preparing students for leadership positions in the private, public, and non-profit sectors, with a focus on natural resource and environmental management and sustainability. The Nicholas School, in partnership with the Sanford School of Public Policy, offers an International Master of Environmental Policy (iMEP) degree based at Duke Kunshan University. Special degree tracks/programs for practicing professionals, as well as several concurrent degrees (e.g., Business, Policy, Law), are also available. Students can pursue doctoral degrees through the Nicholas School's four divisions, including affiliated University programs in Ecology, Toxicology, and Environmental Policy.

Finances

The School's fiscal year 2025 operating fund budget is approximately \$40 million. About 40% of the operating budget is derived from the School's undergraduate, professional master's, and executive education tuition income. Most of the balance of the operating revenue is derived from endowment income (\$10 million), gifts (\$5 million), net indirect cost recovery (\$4 million), and unassigned income from the University (\$7 million). The School's current endowment is \$164 million.

About Duke University

One of the world's leading research universities, Duke University was created in 1924 with a gift from James Buchanan Duke to Trinity College. However, the university traces its roots to 1838 in rural North Carolina. Duke is comprised of 10 schools and a health system, with over 7,100 undergraduate students, 10,800 graduate and professional students, 4,200 faculty, 6,000 employees, over 205,000 active alumni, and an endowment of \$12.3 billion as of June 30, 2025.

Duke has a culture of innovation and collaboration rooted in an environment that promotes interdisciplinary research and education. Five themes advance intellectual priorities: interdisciplinarity, internationalization, knowledge in service to society, engagement, and research. In addition to supporting schools and departmental programs, eleven university institutes and centers (UICs) focus on interdisciplinary research and education spanning brain sciences, humanities, global health, ethics, health policy, energy and environmental solutions, innovation and entrepreneurship, data, science and society, documentary arts, and social sciences. Across this institutional landscape, faculty and students address enduring and emerging intellectual and policy problems from multiple perspectives.

Duke's culture is grounded in shared values of respect, trust, inclusion, discovery, and excellence, which guide both its academic mission and strategic direction as the institution seeks to adapt to and shape a changing world. Since its founding, Duke has been committed to a broad-based liberal education and the ethical pursuit of knowledge across undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. This commitment is reflected in a distinctive educational model that integrates undergraduate teaching with a collaborative research culture, supported by a diverse and exceptionally talented campus community, world-class professional schools, a vibrant arts environment, and an internationally renowned athletics program. Duke is also home to a leading academic health system that serves as a vital regional hub and a center of innovation in research and healthcare delivery. These strengths have established Duke as one of the world's leading research universities and academic medical centers.

While dedicated to achieving excellence in research, graduate education, and professional training, Duke maintains a strong commitment to undergraduate education that encourages students to take ownership of their learning. Duke's undergraduate model emphasizes flexible, self-directed academic pathways; interdisciplinary inquiry into complex, real-world challenges; global engagement through collaborative learning and service; and a robust culture of undergraduate research, with more than half of students completing faculty-mentored projects. Duke further supports experiential and applied learning through signature initiatives such as [Duke Engage](#), an eight-week summer service-learning program, and [Bass Connections](#), a university-wide effort that brings together faculty and students from across disciplines to address societal challenges. Programs that integrate research, service, and experience into the curriculum are a defining feature of Duke's undergraduate culture, and the Duke University Marine Lab is a central part of this experiential learning ecosystem.