



University of Massachusetts Boston  
*Awards Ceremony 2026*

SCHOOL FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, May 26, 2026  
4:00–6:00 p.m.  
University Hall 1300

*This program is for ceremonial purposes.  
The official list of graduates is maintained by the university registrar.*

## **ABOUT THE SCHOOL FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Established in 2013, the School for the Environment is University of Massachusetts Boston's premier transdisciplinary environmental school. The school integrates a diversity of ways of knowing from the natural sciences to the social sciences, from the health sciences to planning and design, to generate and apply new knowledge that enables a sustainable and prosperous future for us all.

## **ABOUT THE CLASS OF 2026**

Welcome to the 2026 School for the Environment Convocation! This year, the School for the Environment proudly welcomes 89 new colleagues with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Our graduates will enter their fields of environmental science and sustainability, community development, urban planning, and marine science and technology with expertise and enthusiasm. Their considerable strengths will enable them to enact change and make a difference in the lives of the residents of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the greater global community. Their dedication and commitment to their fields of study will serve them well as they embark on the next steps of their journeys.

We would also like to acknowledge the significant impacts of our graduating students on the School for the Environment and UMass Boston. Our students have conducted substantial service, stewardship, and leadership efforts during their years on campus, focusing on both natural and built environments and the impacts of policies on how our communities function. As we move forward over this next year, we acknowledge how these students have impacted the ways we teach, conduct research, and engage with our communities both in Boston and beyond.

## **THE GRADUATION PLEDGE FOR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Since 1987, the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility has been offered at colleges and universities throughout the world. At the School for the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Boston, we are dedicated to building a global community of responsible graduates who, through their professional work, improve society and the environment. The Graduation Pledge is a life-long promise. As forbearers of the future, our graduates are expected to make individual contributions and, collectively, make a profound positive impact in the world.

### **The Graduation Pledge reads:**

*"In accordance with the School for the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Boston tradition to generate, communicate, and activate knowledge to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of people and the natural resources upon which we depend, I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organization for which I work."*

## Program

<b>Welcome</b>	Carol Thornber <i>Dean School for the Environment</i>
<b>Provost's Remarks</b>	Joseph B. Berger, PhD, <i>Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Professor of Education</i>
<b>Announcement of Savicki and Robinson Awards</b>	Carol Thornber <i>Dean School for the Environment</i>
<b>Keynote Speaker</b>	Abigail Raymond, BA
<b>Undergraduate Distinction and Honors</b>	Elizabeth Boyle, PhD Elizabeth L. Sweet, PhD
<b>Outstanding Undergraduate Student Awards</b>	Richard Hung, PhD Helen C. Poynton, PhD Luis Santiago, PhD
<b>Outstanding Graduate Student Awards</b>	Richard Hung, PhD Luis Santiago, PhD Michael Tlusty, PhD
<b>Introducing the Class of 2025</b>	Richard Hung, PhD Helen C. Poynton, PhD Luis Santiago, PhD Michael Tlusty, PhD
<b>Graduation Pledge for Social and Environmental Responsibility</b>	Carol Thornber, PhD <i>Dean School for the Environment</i>
<b>Closing Presentation</b>	Carol Thornber, PhD <i>Dean School for the Environment</i>

## AWARDEES AND HONOREES

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### **The James M. Savicki Graduate Fellowship in the School for the Environment:**

Jim Savicki was a teacher, a coach, a sailor, and an environmentalist. The James M. Savicki Graduate Fellowship is given to an MS or PhD student in the School for the Environment who embodies Jim's love of the ocean, sustainability, and education.

### **The William Robinson Graduate Fellowship in the School for the Environment:**

Bill Robinson played a critical role in the creation of the School for the Environment and became the school's first associate dean. He had a productive research career at UMass Boston, making valuable contributions to the physiology and toxicology of metals in marine organisms, uptake and bioaccumulation of emerging contaminants, and impacts of ocean acidification. Bill was passionate about graduate education. He believed in the power of hands-on learning, and throughout his career always made time to be in the laboratory with his students. Bill loved teaching and was a beloved mentor to both students and junior faculty. Through this award, Dr. Bill Robinson continues to support future generations of graduate students in the School for the Environment.

*The Awardees for these two fellowships will be announced during the ceremony.*

## UNDERGRADUATE DISTINCTION AND ACHIEVEMENT

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*Distinction is awarded to outstanding graduating seniors in their major. The School for the Environment confers Distinction to seniors who achieved Latin Honors and who were actively engaged in advancing the mission of the school through excellence and achievement in scholarship and research.*

### **Distinction in Environmental Science**

Leah Bosch, BS  
Sarah Whitney, BA

### **Distinction in Environmental Studies and Sustainability**

Jeremy D. Rolfe

### **Distinction in Community Development**

Zoe Zuckerbraun

## UNDERGRADUATE HONORS

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*The School for the Environment bestows Senior Honors on students who have received Latin Honors, maintained a GPA of 3.3 or higher in the major, and completed an Honors project.*

### **Honors in Environmental Science**

**Leah Bosch**, thesis title: "*Campus-Scale Wind Energy Integration: A CFD Approach*,"  
mentor: Marielle de Oliveira

**Amy Mary-Ruth Cote**, thesis title: "*Microplastics in Soils: Effects on Soil Properties and Lettuce Growth to Support Resilient Urban Community Garden*," mentor: Juanita Urban-Rich

**Emily Cruickshank**, thesis title: “*Tracing Anthropogenic Nutrient Inputs with Coral Nitrogen Isotopes Across the Belize Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System*,” mentor: Jesse Farmer

**Katherine L. Delesdernier**, thesis title: “*Hillock of Microplastic: The Use and Perceptions of Microplastics in Nantucket, Massachusetts*,” mentor: Laura Castro-Diaz

**Ian Hart Goentzel**, thesis title: “*Modeling Water Quality Indicators in the Neponset River Estuary*,” mentor: Marielle de Oliveira

**Katherine Dianna Miraglia**, thesis title: “*Indigenizing High School Science*,” mentor: Bob Chen

**Abigail Raymond**, thesis title: “*Green Gentrification to Green Reparations*,” mentor: Laura Castro-Diaz

**Shea Catherine Roche**, thesis title: “*Storm Surge and Hurricane Inundation Vulnerability of a Coastal Industrial Site: The North Weymouth Compressor Station*,” mentor: Mark Borrelli

**Isabella Smith**, thesis title: “*Kelp Forest Ecosystem Services: A Multi-faceted Evaluation and Valuation Approach*,” mentor: Jarrett Byrnes

## OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDEES

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### **Undergraduate Legacy Award, Environmental Science, in honor of Ellen Douglas: Emily Cruickshank**

Professor Ellen Douglas is a hydrologist and engineer who was a celebrated professor, mentor, and colleague when she retired in 2023. She helped guide the transition of the EEOS department to the School for the Environment and became the school’s associate dean in 2019. Her work has been highly influential and led to contributions to the Intergovernmental Plan on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th assessment report and the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment. She also coauthored the “Climate Ready Boston” report that has governed Boston’s climate agenda since its publication. Her work on climate change impacts in East Boston (2008) was some of the earliest research on climate justice. For these contributions she has received awards both from A Better City and the UMass Boston Chancellor’s Award for Distinguished Service. Her work has always centered on using rigorous analysis of both hydrologic and coastal systems to lead to just community resilience.

This year’s Legacy Award goes to **Emily Cruickshank**, whose impact has cemented the intellectual and cultural foundations of Jesse Farmer’s PaleoLab since she joined in 2023. Her exceptional acumen and tenacity led her to master complex protocols for measuring fossil-bound nitrogen isotopes—methods that challenge even the lab’s principal investigator. Through sharp perception and humor, Emily helped establish the PaleoLab as a joyful hub of scientific progress. Her honors thesis pioneered spatial analyses of nitrogen isotopes in coral skeletons to trace human pollution across Caribbean coral reefs. Emily graduates from UMass Boston with an extraordinary record of three scientific manuscripts currently in progress, including one as first author.

**Universi Telluri Award, Environmental Science:**

**Amber M. Mulvey**

To honor the school's academic motto "*Unanimi, Universi, Unicae Telluri*" (Of one mind, we act together for the benefit of Earth), the school recognizes Amber Mulvey.

Amber Mulvey has distinguished herself at UMass Boston not only as a student but as someone deeply committed to society and the environment. Throughout her time on campus, she has actively supported and participated in sustainability initiatives, including her involvement with the Sustainability Club and her internship with the Office of Campus Planning & Sustainability. Her dedication reflects both leadership and a genuine commitment to advancing environmental responsibility within the university community. Amber embodies the spirit of the academic motto, "*Of one mind, we act together for the benefit of Earth,*" through her dedication, proactive mindset, and commitment to understanding and addressing humanity's impact on the natural world.

**Talloires Award, Environmental Science:**

**Ashanti Mclean**

The Talloires Declaration is the first official statement made by university presidents, chancellors, and rectors of a commitment to environmental sustainability in higher education. The University of Massachusetts Boston is the only public university in Massachusetts to sign this declaration.

This year we recognize Ashanti Mclean for the Talloires Award for her commitment to environmental justice and sustainability. She joined MassPIRG early in her undergraduate program and was quickly promoted to the statewide coordinator for the 100% Renewables Campaign where she organized and led lobbying meetings with state representatives and spoke at press conferences to advance a clean energy transition in Massachusetts by 2045. Ashanti also worked as a fellow in the Boston University's Clean Energy and Environmental Legacy Transition (CELT) initiative to help cities realize their climate action plans by conducting feasibility studies and recommending policies. Ashanti has also worked for Living on Earth and the Center for Climate and Environmental Justice Media.

**SFE Undergraduate Mentoring Award:**

**Katherine Dianna Miraglia**

Excellent mentoring can be either active and direct or the more difficult path of quiet and leading by example.

Katie has occupied many roles within and beyond SFE in a mentorship position. They have been an orientation leader, tutor, peer mentor for our first year communities, and teaching assistant for ENVSCI 120, and they have worked with the Ross Center. Katie is a thoughtful, creative, and kind mentor and goes out of their way to help students succeed. They are currently in the Accelerated Master's Program in secondary education and will finish with their master's in August.

**Dean's Award for BA in Community Development:**

**Abigail Raymond**

This annual award is given to a student who consistently excels in their academic work, provides significant leadership within the program, and engages in important community service work. This year's recipient is Abigail Raymond. Abigail is currently a Media Coordinator at the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement at UMass Boston and is also a Beacon Ambassador for Admissions and Events. She has also served as Student Trustee for UMass Boston. Abigail was the SFE nominee for the JFK Award and double-majored in community development and environmental science.

### **Chair's Award for Outstanding Service and Scholarship:**

#### **Marvin Aramthip**

This annual award is given to the undergraduate student who excels in their academic pursuits while also volunteering their time to community organizations. This year's recipient is Marvin Aramthip. Marvin volunteered at Rosie's Place, a multi-service community center that offers women emergency shelter, meals, and key support services. He has also participated in the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition (MassBike), and was selected for a fellowship program dedicated to addressing racial inequality and increasing the participation of marginalized identities in Boston's civic leadership.

## **OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS**

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### **Graduate Legacy Award, Environmental Science, in honor of Ellen Douglas:**

#### **Valeria Hernandez Talavera**

The Legacy Award is given in honor of a retired faculty member who, through their scholarship and teaching, advanced sustainable solutions to our most pressing environmental problems. This year we honor Dr. Ellen Douglas.

This year we award Valeria Hernandez Talavera, for her commitment to environmental science and social justice. She is graduating this summer with a PhD in environmental science. She has been the lead graduate student for the *Vieques, Ambiente, Salud, y Acción Comunitaria* (VASAC) project and led the field work and analysis of a pioneering community based participatory research (CBPR) study on the ecological health of Vieques, Puerto Rico, after military occupation of the island for over 60 years. Her work centered on community knowledge and needs, uncovered hidden stressors that were previously overlooked, and provided us with a framework for conducting CBPR in ecotoxicology.

### **Jack Wiggin Award for Professional Excellence:**

#### **Jonathan Kolodny**

This annual award is given to the student whose passion and skill in applying urban planning knowledge and skills to solving so-called "wicked problems" is exceptional. This award is given in the name of long-time planner, former Director of UMass Boston's Urban Harbor Institute, and Founding Director of the UMass Boston's Graduate Program in Urban Planning, Jack Wiggin. This year's recipient is Jonathan Kolodny. Jonathan has acquired valuable experience as a GIS intern and as a participant in the transportation planning GIS co-op offered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. He has also acquired valuable experience as a research assistant at UPCD, where he participated in community-engaged work in Boston and Sicily, Italy, in 2024.

### **SFE Graduate Mentoring Award:**

#### **Tyler Kulak**

Excellent mentoring can be either active and direct or the more difficult path of quiet and leading by example.

We recognize Tyler Kulak with the Mentoring Award for his dedication to student education and fostering students' curiosity about the natural world through experiential learning. He is graduating with a MS in environmental science and will begin a PhD program at University of Florida in the fall. Tyler has left a lasting impact at UMass Boston and on our students by co-developing and co-teaching two courses at the Nantucket Field Station. He helped shepherd the new "Bug Club" into existence at UMass Boston, which meets every Thursday evening to collect, identify, and learn more about the diversity of the largest animal phylum, Arthropoda. He has mentored undergraduate students in the Molecular Ecotoxicology lab and inspired them to continue their studies in environmental science.

**Marie Kennedy Award for Social Activism:****Hazen Emerson**

This annual award is given to the student and/or students who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to building the organizational capacity of community-based organizations struggling to advance social justice in the city. This award is given in the name of Marie Kennedy, a well-known progressive architect and planner from Boston who was a tenured faculty member and Associate Dean of the UMass Boston College of Public and Community Service. This year we recognize Hazen Emerson. He has a bachelor of arts in anthropology with a minor in urban studies from Boston University. He serves as a Visitor Services Representative at the Mass Audubon Boston Nature Center and as a Bike Instructor in Boston Bikes. He has also served as a Water-by-Bike Tree Ambassador Intern for the City of Cambridge.

**SFE Discovery and Innovation Award:****Irina Polunina-Proulx**

Innovation is the act of making changes to an existing product or process by introducing new ways or ideas. This year, we honor Irina Polunina-Proulx with the innovation award for her breakthrough work in developing the Crustacean Embryo Test (CET) assay.

Irina Polunina-Proulx is graduating this summer with a PhD in marine science and technology. She joined the School for the Environment with a strong interest in understanding the impacts of chemicals on the environment and wanted to address the vast quantities of different chemicals that are produced without any regard to their potential harmful effects. The CET assay addresses this concern by providing a screening assay for developmental toxicity, called a “new approach methodology,” or NAM. She developed, tested, and validated this assay by screening air pollution samples from Vieques, PR. The CET assay, along with other NAMs, has the potential to bring about a necessary paradigm shift in chemical safety testing.

**Luis Aponte-Pares Award for Social Equity Scholarship:****Esteban Alonzo**

This annual award is given to the student who produces an outstanding analytical study, report, or paper that illuminates a critical economic and social justice issue confronting a historically underserved community. This award is given in the name of Luis Aponte-Pares, a highly regarded architect and planner who played a critical role in advancing the community planning and design movement in the 1960s. Luis, a long-time South End resident, is Professor Emeritus from UMass Boston College of Public and Community Service. This year’s recipient is Esteban Alonzo. Esteban has worked as a Real Estate Development Associate Intern and as an Operations Intern at Own Up. He has also designed and facilitated environmental education programming for BPS middle-school students, including curriculum development, group facilitation, and field-based participation.

**Chair’s Award for Scholarly, Professional and Civic Leadership: Co-Recipients:****Haydee Pena Gamez and Andrew Laquerre**

This annual award is given to the student or students who were able to successfully complete their degree requirements while holding leadership positions in professional and civic settings. This year we have two recipients: Haydee Pena Gamez and Andrew Laquerre. Haydee holds a bachelor’s degree in geography from the University of Utah and is currently an Options Counselor at Mystic Valley Elder Services, where she provides information on available resources to an aging population. Andrew holds a bachelor’s degree from the School of Public Affairs at American University in Washington, DC, and serves as a Research Assistant at the Urban Harbors Institute. He has also served as a Coastal Relocation Resource Fellow at the Nature Conservancy.

**Graduate Program Directors Award for Community Service:****Gantamir Lkhagva**

This annual award is given to a student who makes important contributions to a series of engaged scholarship projects during their time in the program. This year’s recipient is Gantamir Lkhagva. Gantamir has a bachelor’s in interior design from the Mongolian University of Science and Technology. She has served as a research assistant at UPCD in the areas of urban design and mobility and has served as an urban design consultant for various projects located in East Asia and Mongolia.

## GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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### CANDIDATES FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**Valeria Talavera Hernandez**, dissertation title: “*Genomic-Based Environmental Health Assessment: Vieques, P.R.*,” advisor: H. Poynton

### CANDIDATES FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE

**Anna Balkus**, thesis title: “*The Cultivation of Public Perception: Cultivated Meat Narratives and Misinformation on TikTok*”

**Joshua Duddy**, thesis title: “*New England Decarbonization*”

**Tyler Kulak**, thesis title: “*Spider Biodiversity and Insecticide Sensitivity Across Active and Restored Cranberry Bogs on Nantucket*”

**Patricia Leonard**, thesis title: “*Influence of environmental factors on the foraging locations of female northern fur seals from two Alaskan colonies*”

**Shubhechchhya Regmi**, thesis title: “*The Role of Technical Assistance in Pollution Prevention in Massachusetts Craft Breweries*”

## GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MARINE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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### CANDIDATE FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MARINE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Irina Polunina-Proulx**, dissertation title: “*Innovating a Crustacean Embryo Toxicity (CET) Assay for Screening Environmental Contaminants*”

### CANDIDATE FOR MASTER OF SCIENCE MS IN MARINE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Kristian Hosker**, thesis title: “*Understanding the Recent Cooling in the Gulf Of Maine*”

## GRADUATE PROGRAM IN URBAN PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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### CANDIDATES FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE

**Esteban Alonzo**, concentration: Community Development

**Hazen Emerson**, concentration: Community Development

**Hamada Hazzoum**, concentration: Community Development

**Bethany Kenneway**, concentration: Environmental Planning

**Jonathan Kolodny**, concentration: Environmental Planning

**Andrew Laquerre**, concentration: Environmental Planning

**Gantamir Lkhagva**, concentration: Environmental Planning

**Haydee Pena Gamez**, concentration: Community Development

**Tri Tran**, concentration: Community Development

## **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

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### **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

#### ***CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS***

Marvin Aramthip  
Abigail Raymond  
Zoe Zuckerbraun

### **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

#### ***CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS***

Audrey Margaret Catania  
Anthony Matthew Chukwu  
Ora Rose Kerr  
Evan Cole Lenn  
Ashanti Mclean  
Julia Ann Olszewski  
Kailyn Alissa Johns Robie  
Jeremy D. Rolfe  
Abigail Senior

### **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE**

#### ***CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS***

Emma O'Kelly Adams  
Shouaib Shakeel Ahmed  
John William Carbone  
Ashim Chalise  
Katherine Rivera Chavarriaga  
Katherine L. Delesdernier  
Jin Deng  
Gianna Catherine Gray  
Amanda Rose Hughes  
Linsey Ngoc Huynh  
Ethan Salvatore Kennefick  
Martin O. Kyere  
Claire Malone  
Nava June Minaie  
Taina Morales  
Chatham Cadence Morton  
Amber M. Mulvey  
Owen Charles Myka-Smith  
Brandon Nguyen  
Dean H. Nguyen  
Abigail Raymond  
Maya Rubinstein  
Isabella Smith  
Allen Sun  
Melanie Anne Natalya Weintraub  
Sarah Anne Whitney

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***CANDIDATES FOR THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE***

Ivonne Crystal Alfaro  
Aaron Michael Berry  
Leah Bosch  
Aurora D. Brown  
John David Burnett  
Nicole Ivette Carmona Martinez  
Cassidy Marie Chiasson  
Tevin C. Clarke  
Amy Mary-Ruth Cote  
Emily Cruickshank  
Ian Hart Goentzel  
Calvin Hammond  
Kurt Hummel  
Elsie Kanagat  
Jonathan Louis Lutz  
Conor Peter Mcdonnell  
Katherine Dianna Miraglia  
Erica Christina Murdock  
Jessica Myshrall  
Anthony Hoang Nguyen Huynh  
Grace Perihan Ozturk  
Eamonn Connolly Perry  
William Thomas Phie  
Shea Catherine Roche  
Raven Dela Rosa Roldan  
Arianna Seepersad  
Shakir A. Shibli  
Moise Ernest Obeng Tetteh  
Tiya Dipak Varde  
Kidus W. Wolde

# ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-2026 FACULTY AND STAFF

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## DEAN

Carol Thornber

## CORE FACULTY

Sowmya Balachandran  
Laura Castro-Diaz  
Bob Chen  
Shijuan Chen  
Katherine Dafforn  
John Duff  
Lorena Estrada-Martínez  
Jesse Farmer  
Richard Hung  
Karen H. Johannesson  
Sua Kim  
Greg Koman  
Georgia Mavrommati  
Marielle de Oliveira  
Helen C. Poynton  
Antonio Raciti  
Enrique Ramos  
Christian Rivera  
Luis Santiago  
Elizabeth L. Sweet  
Michael Tlusty  
Juanita Urban-Rich  
Yang Yang  
Zong-Guo Xia

## STAFF

Jennifer Bender  
Elizabeth Boyle  
Aimee Bonanno  
Paula Cameron  
Jill Carr  
Steve Curwood  
Helenmary Hotz  
Shannon Hogan  
Schanna James  
Melissa Morey  
Allison Novelly  
Francesco Peri  
Kimberly Starbuck  
Andrew Skerritt  
Kristin Uiterwyk  
Yvonne Vaillancourt  
Prassede Vella Foote

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## CONTRIBUTING FACULTY

Abra Berkowitz  
Mark Borrelli  
Kayla Bradley  
Jarret Byrnes  
Lindsey Butler  
Amy Costa  
Robert Brock  
Paul DiGiacomo  
Charles DiMaggio  
Justin Drew  
Seth Garfield  
Erin Graves  
Kimberly Hamad-Schifferli  
Valeria Hernandez Talavera  
Michael Johnson  
Vijaya Jyoti  
Beth Kaplin  
Paul Kirshen  
ZhongPing Lee  
Benyamin B. Lichtenstein  
Lucy Lockwood  
John Mandelman  
José E. Martinez-Reyes  
David Merwin  
Rosalyn Negrón  
Lisa Rivera  
Crystal Schaaf  
Maureen Scully  
C. Eduardo Siqueira  
Luke Simpson  
Robert Stevenson  
David Timmons  
Jianwei Wei  
Timothy Werner  
Christopher White  
Nick Whitney  
Jack Wiggan  
Stephanie Wood  
Douglas Woodhams  
J. Cedric Woods  
Roberta L. Wollons

