

NOTRE DAME JUST TRANSFORMATIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

2025 YEAR-END UPDATE

The Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative at Notre Dame advances a distinctive model of sustainability rooted in hope, justice, and connection. Through leading-edge research, holistic education, and equitable partnerships, we seek to catalyze transformative change towards a just and sustainable future, grounded in the best available science and foundational ideas of integral ecology.

“The JTS Initiative is advancing a positive vision for a sustainable future in which human dignity and ecological integrity flourish together. In our first year, we have built a strong foundation of people, partnerships, and exciting new programs that together position Notre Dame to be a global leader in translating sustainability research and education into transformative global action.”



Arun Agrawal

Director, Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative; Pulte Family Professor of Development Policy, Keough School of Global Affairs

EXPANDING INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH & EDUCATION

In its first year, the Just Transformations to Sustainability Initiative launched new research collaborations and expanded opportunities for students and postdoctoral scholars.



Launched summer study abroad course in Italy

JTS partnered with Notre Dame's Institute for Educational Initiatives and Office of Undergraduate Education to develop a [week-long immersive learning course](#) on the principles of integral ecology. In May 2026, the first group of students will participate in classroom and hands-on learning at the Borgo Laudato si', an educational center established by Pope Francis that demonstrates how the principles of *Laudato si'* can become a reality.

JTS launched its [Nurturing Excellence in Sustainability at Notre Dame Program](#)

to spur new collaborations that advance leading-edge research, knowledge creation, and partnerships focused on sustainability transformations.

JTS funded 3 teams, each leading programs anchored by long-term, place-based partnerships and committed to creating hands-on training opportunities for students and young researchers.

The Initiative received

19
proposals

that included

36
faculty

across all 7 of Notre Dame's colleges and schools.

As part of a larger international effort, JTS also launched the [Integrated Responses to Climate and Biodiversity Change Program](#) in partnership with the University of Michigan's Institute for Global Change Biology. They are jointly supporting **2 interdisciplinary teams** focused on synthesizing knowledge linking the biodiversity and climate change crises.



EXPANDING INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH & EDUCATION (CONT'D)

Creating opportunities for postdoctoral fellows

JTS is building a vibrant, cohesive, and cross-disciplinary postdoctoral fellows program that supports action-focused sustainability research by Notre Dame faculty, provides postdoctoral scholars with structured support and publication opportunities, and increases the use of data science and AI to advance sustainability research at Notre Dame and beyond. JTS is partnering with the **Data, AI & Computing Initiative**, the **Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies**, and the **College of Engineering** to recruit outstanding scholars to join the inaugural cohort of the program.

CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIPS AND STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

Established sustainability-focused lecture series

Through the **Notre Dame Seminars on Sustainability series**, JTS hosted 3 globally recognized sustainability scholars who engaged with Notre Dame faculty, staff, and students and delivered talks open to the Notre Dame and South Bend communities.

8
speakers planned for
spring 2026



Partnering with the Vatican

With support from the Porticus Foundation, JTS is partnering with the **Borgo Laudato Si' Center for Higher Education** to establish the Global Alliance for Integral Ecology as a hub for connecting, amplifying, and spearheading research, curriculum, and action initiatives inspired by the principles of the *Laudato si'*. This partnership will **convene 150 researchers and institutional leaders from around the world** in Castel Gandolfo, the pontifical residence outside Rome, to develop a long-term vision for the alliance.



Launched an undergraduate fellows program

JTS is supporting a growing network of Notre Dame students dedicated to building a more just and sustainable world. **Sustainability in Action Fellows** are Notre Dame undergraduates planning to engage in sustainability-focused research, service, or a professional internship during summer 2026. In addition to receiving financial support for their summer activities, fellows will benefit from structured mentorship, networking, and peer-to-peer learning.



MOBILIZING REGIONAL RESEARCH EFFORTS

In August, JTS brought together **sustainability leaders from 10 universities** to launch the **Midwest Sustainability Platform**—advancing collaborative research, driving curricular innovation, and building partnerships with policymakers, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to tackle the region's biggest sustainability challenges. Over two days, participants worked to identify shared strengths, areas of complementarity, and actionable next steps to shape the platform's future direction. The group's first two joint research efforts will launch in early 2026.