

20TH ANNUAL COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ENERGY SYMPOSIUM



2025

February 28, 2025





LETTER FROM THE TEAM

Dear partners and colleagues,

It was a privilege to organize this year's **Columbia University Energy Symposium** and carry the 20-year legacy of bringing together students and industry leaders from the Columbia University community and the wider sector.

Our vision was to celebrate the 20 years of common efforts to promote and advance energy transition and to elevate the conference to a new level, laying groundwork for more successes in the future. Fast forward to February 2025 and we met most of our aspirations as we brought together nearly **250 people from Columbia and beyond**, marking the largest Symposium since the covid pandemic. We were glad to welcome many high-profile speakers who agreed to share their insights and dedicate their time to connecting with students, including **Ms. Carrie Woerner**, New York State Assemblywoman, **Mr. David Turk**, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy, and **Ms. Shawyn Patterson-Howard**, Mayor of Mount Vernon. To the best of our knowledge, CUES continues to be the largest student-led event in New York City.

The success of the Symposium would not have been possible without the support of industry leaders including the Center on Global Energy Policy, GE Vernova, Igneo | Soltage, Solar Landscape and Rabobank. Our stellar organising team and student volunteers were the driving force behind making the Symposium a reality. Bringing together talent from Columbia SIPA and the Columbia Business School allowed us to build synergies across disciplines.

This impact report gives an overview of the Symposium and presents highlights about our partners, sponsors, program, speakers and wider legacy and impact. We thank everyone who joined us on this journey and, we believe that full impact of the Symposium is yet to be realised as connections and inspirations from this event will yield results for years to come.



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01

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The **Columbia University Energy Symposium** (CUES) is the largest student-led energy conference in New York City, bringing together students, alumni, policymakers, and industry leaders to explore the challenges and opportunities of the energy transition. Established in 2005 and hosted by student groups from Columbia SIPA and Columbia Business School, the Symposium has welcomed over 4,000 attendees over the past two decades.

This year, we mark the **20th anniversary** of this Symposium, recognising a milestone for bringing together leading minds of the sector with students and professionals.



COLUMBIA ENERGY ASSOCIATION

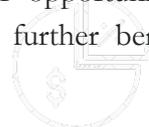
The **Columbia Energy Association** (CEA) is a student-led organization at Columbia University's **School of International and Public Affairs** (SIPA) dedicated to improving professional opportunities for students and alumni in the world of clean energy. Through networking events, professional development training, career treks, and the Energy Symposium, the organization seeks to connect those interested in the sector.



CBS ENERGY CLUB
AT THE VERY CENTER OF ENERGY

CBS ENERGY & INFRASTRUCTURE CLUB

The purpose of the **Energy & Infrastructure Club** is to foster an active energy community at **Columbia Business School** (CBS), to provide members with opportunities to enhance their business knowledge of the energy and infrastructure industries, connect our members with energy and infrastructure professionals, and provide access to energy and infrastructure career opportunities. Through education, career support, and the community, this organization aims to further benefit students.



CUES 2025 OUTCOMES

- **Engaged 190+ graduate and undergraduate students** from Columbia University schools, including SIPA and Columbia Business Schools, and other top universities, including Harvard, Princeton, UPenn and NYU
- **Welcomed 40+ professionals** from across New York City and beyond, including sponsors and speakers from the government, private sector, philanthropy and the UN
- **Published 20th anniversary report with 15 opinion pieces** about significant changes in the energy sector in the last 20 years by Symposium speakers, supporters, and organizers

THEMES

Panel sessions provided an array of insight into the sector for participants of the Symposium. Sessions featured speakers from across private, public and non-profit sectors.

The themes of the panel sessions included:

- Global landscape of energy transition: geopolitics, trade and energy security
- Policy as a catalyst for the deployment of renewable energy technologies
- Financing the energy transition in emerging and developing markets
- The role of private capital in unlocking the energy transition



SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS



Center on
Global Energy Policy
at COLUMBIA | SIPA



GE VERNOVA



Soltage
RENEWABLE ENERGY PROVIDER



SILVER SPONSORS



PARTICIPANTS

05



300+ attendees registered



220 students from Columbia University

including SIPA, Business School, Engineering School and SPS

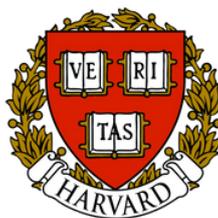


70+ guests, including alumni, professionals and others



5 universities and partner student clubs represented

including Harvard, Princeton, UPenn and NYU



PROGRAM

06

SPEAKERS

- ▶ 23 speakers from 9 countries
- ▶ 5 current or former ministers and C-suite executives
- ▶ 40% of international speakers
- ▶ 48% female speakers

PROGRAM

7 plenary sessions

3 breakout roundtables with sponsors

2 networking segments

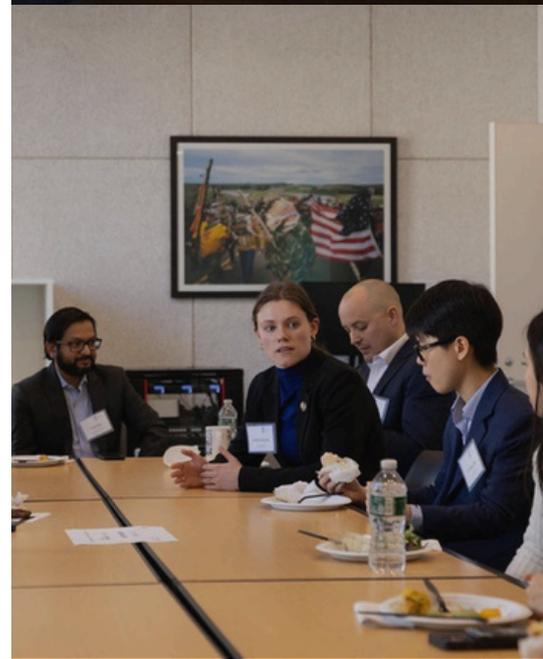
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The opening ceremony of the Symposium took place in the Pulitzer Hall at Columbia University campus. The opening keynote was delivered by **Ms. Carrie Woerner**, Assemblywoman, New York State Assembly, who highlighted challenges for decarbonizing the transportation sector in New York State and set the stage for the day. The first fireside chat featured **Mr. David Turk**, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy, and **Dr. Gernot Wagner**, Senior Lecturer, Columbia Business School, who discuss the recent development in federal energy policy and international implications of these changes.

The first morning panel explored the global landscape of the energy transition, discussing the issues of trade, energy security and technological development across diverse geographies. Speakers on the this panel included **Ms. Annisa Paramita**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN, **Ms. Shari Friedman**, Managing Director, Climate & Sustainability, Eurasia Group, and **Mr. Roger Martella**, CSO, GE Vernova.

The second panel focused on the role of policy as catalyst for renewable energy technologies deployment. The speakers presented perspectives from the public and private sectors: **Ms. Meave Tooher**, Managing Attorney, NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting, **Mr. Zachary Hanson**, Vice President, Project Finance, Rabobank, **Mr. Shaun Keegan**, CEO, Solar Landscape, and **Mr. John DiMarco**, Managing Director, Igneo Infrastructure Partner.

In the afternoon, attendees broke out into roundtable conversations over lunch on key issues for energy transition with representatives from sponsor companies of the Symposium. At these conversations, students had the opportunity to directly interact with leaders in the sector and learn about career opportunities. Companies participating in these conversations included GE Vernova, Solar Landscape, Igneo Infrastructure Partners and Soltage.





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Following the lunch, the second parts of the day kicked off with keynote address by **Ms. Shawyn Patterson-Howard**, 30th Mayor, City of Mount Vernon, who highlighted issues at the intersection of environmental justice and energy transition, and shared lessons learned from her leadership in this space.

participants attended additional panel sessions exploring financing the energy transition in emerging and developing markets and unlocking energy transition through private capital. Panelists for included **Mr. Diego Mesa**, Deputy Head of the Climate Policy Division, International Monetary Fund, **Mr. Riad Meddeb**, Director of Sustainable Energy Hub, UNDP, **Ms. Luisa Palacios**, Managing Director, Emerging Markets Energy Transition Finance & Deputy Director of Research (Acting), Center on Global Energy Policy, and **Ms. Suman Sureshbabu**, Managing Director, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet.



The final panel focused on unlocking clean energy technologies with private capital, including venture capital and private equity. The panel featured **Mr. Neil Suslak**, Managing Partner, Braemar Energy Ventures, **Ms. Mekala Krishnan**, Partner, McKinsey, **Mr. Christopher Poirier**, Partner, Breakthrough Energy Ventures, and **Mr. Daniel Egan**, Managing Director, Americas Head of Real Estate Sustainability, Blackstone. As the closing act, attendees had a chance to relax over a show by the **Climate Town**, a stand-up live comedy duo featuring Mr. Rollie Williams, Columbia University graduate, and Mr. Matt Nelsen. Intertwining humor into climate education, the pair highlighted issues related to misinformation perpetrated by the fossil fuels industry.



In the evening, attendees and speakers headed to an off-campus venue for a **networking reception** to connect with each other and celebrate a successful day.

ATTENDEE SATISFACTION

44 attendees responded to a satisfaction survey:

- **8.8 out of 10** was the average score for likelihood of recommending the Symposium to a friend or colleague.
- **71% of respondents** selected **4 or 5 out of 5** when asked to what extent they learned something new on energy topics and issues at the Symposium.
- The most highly rated segments were panel discussions and keynote addresses, with average scores of **4.2 out of 5** and **4.2 out of 5**, respectively.

Out of the panels and talks, the favorite segment among the attendees was panel discussion on Unlocking energy transition through private capital as well as the keynote address from Ms. Shawyn Patterson-Howard, 30th Mayor, City of Mount Vernon.

TESTIMONIES

“As a student who is not in the energy sector, **the event offered a great platform to become more familiar with the field**, hear in on key issues and discussions that are happening, and connect with industry experts!”

“The Symposium offered a **valuable exposure to an impressive lineup of experts** across the many facets of the energy industry. It was also a great networking opportunity for a student like myself. I have no regrets coming up from Princeton to attend!”

“Thank you for organizing such a fantastic event! As someone with extensive experience in organizing large-scale conferences, I truly appreciated the well-executed marketing and outreach efforts leading up to the symposium, ensuring strong engagement and attendance. On the day of the event, everything was well-structured and smoothly run, creating an environment that encouraged meaningful discussions. The CEA team is very strong and work closely together, which is truly inspiring. The selection of high-profile industry speakers added significant value, and **I particularly enjoyed the lunch session, which provided a unique opportunity to establish real connections with experts in the field**. Looking forward to future events—thank you again for such a well-executed symposium!”

CUES 2025 ORGANISING TEAM

CUES 2025 was organized by a team of 9 students from SIPA and the Columbia Business School, members of the Columbia Energy Association and the CBS Energy and Infrastructure Club. Additionally several student volunteers supported during the day of the event.

Beniamin Strzelecki - Co-Executive Director,
Xueru (Coco) Zhao - Co-Executive Director

Muriel Jacques - Director of Marketing
So Ukawa - Director of Sponsorships
Heather Hartel - Director of Program
Madison Davis - Director of Publication
Elisa Gan - Director of Partnerships & External Relations
Tulika Gupta - Co-Director of Marketing
Yifei Wang - Director of Logistics

We extend our thanks to Mr. Andrew Donini, Prof. Travis Bradford and Dr. Gernot Wagner for their support in preparation and execution of the event.

We would like to also thank Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs and the Columbia Business School for providing space for student leadership. Thank you to our sponsors, advisors, speakers, and attendees for contributing to the success of this symposium!

SPEAKERS

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Opening keynote address

- **Ms. Carrie Woerner**, Assemblywoman, New York State Assembly

Opening fireside chat

- **Mr. David Turk**, former Deputy Secretary of Energy, U.S. Department of Energy
- **Mr. Gernot Wagner**, Senior Lecturer, Columbia Business School

Panel discussion #1: Global landscape of the energy transition

- **Ms. Annisa Paramita**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN
- **Ms. Shari Friedman**, Managing Director, Climate & Sustainability, Eurasia Group
- **Mr. Roger Martella**, CSO, GE Vernova

Panel discussion #2: Policy as catalyst for renewable energy technologies deployment

- **Ms. Meave Tooher**, Managing Attorney, NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting
- **Mr. Zachary Hanson**, Vice President, Project Finance, Rabobank
- **Mr. Shaun Keegan**, CEO, Solar Landscape
- **Mr. John DiMarco**, Managing Director, Igneo Infrastructure Partners

Keynote address

- **Ms. Shawyn Patterson-Howard**, 30th Mayor, City of Mount Vernon

Panel discussion #3: Financing the energy transition in emerging and developing markets

- **Mr. Diego Mesa**, Deputy Head of the Climate Policy Division, International Monetary Fund
- **Mr. Riad Meddeb**, Director of Sustainable Energy Hub, UNDP
- **Ms. Luisa Palacios**, Managing Director, Emerging Markets Energy Transition Finance, Center on Global Energy Policy
- **Ms. Suman Sureshbabu**, Managing Director, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet

Panel discussion #4: Unlocking energy transition through private capital

- **Mr. Neil Suslak**, Managing Partner, Braemar Energy Ventures
- **Ms. Mekala Krishnan**, Partner, McKinsey
- **Mr. Christopher Poirier**, Partner, Breakthrough Energy Ventures
- **Mr. Daniel Egan**, Managing Director, Americas Head of Real Estate Sustainability, Blackstone

Stand-up live show

- **Mr. Rollie Williams** and **Mr. Matt Nelsen**, Climate Town



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