



Institute for Energy
& the Environment

VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



MARK JAMES LLM'16
*Interim Director, Institute for
 Energy and the Environment,
 and Associate Professor*


MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Institute for Energy and the Environment (IEE) celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2025. Founded with the mission of teaching students about energy in the context of justice and the environment, and investing in the future, the IEE has grown into the most comprehensive energy law and policy program in the country. In the years since, hundreds of JD, LLM, and master's students have passed through this program. We know that our students are our best product, and our alumni are our best resource.

The winds of change are blowing in the energy world, but they always have. When the IEE was founded, coal was the dominant source of electricity generation in the United States. Now, renewables and storage make up more than 90% of new capacity additions. We have seen our energy systems begin to electrify and decarbonize, and we are watching our alumni drive change at the local, national, and global levels.

The mission and spirit of Eaton House exist wherever our community does. In the past year, we expanded our efforts to connect with the energy community. Our annual energy law and policy symposium returned to Climate Week NYC, pulling in alumni, students, and partners to discuss emerging energy law issues. We added an alumni event in Albany, New York, centered around shared energy issues in New York and the Northeast. We brought over a dozen energy practitioners to campus for guest lectures.

Our programs and partnerships continue to grow and flourish. Our year-round Energy Clinic celebrated its 11th anniversary of providing pro bono transactional law services for low-income communities and municipalities seeking to participate in the energy transition. This year, our clinical faculty and students worked on projects across Vermont and New Hampshire. We consulted with local and national nonprofit groups on offshore wind and community benefits, good neighbor agreements and wood pellet manufacturing, and energy sustainability in the ski industry. Our students published reports and articles on battery storage interconnection rules, natural gas line extension allowances, and thermal energy network legislation.

Eleven years ago, I arrived in South Royalton eager to join the effort to shape what our energy systems and world will look like in 50 years. Today, I am proud of what we have accomplished and excited by what is to come. 

MEET THE IEE TEAM

From Left to Right:


MARK JAMES LLM'16, *Interim IEE Director*
JENNY CARTER JD'86/MSL'87, *Professor and Senior Attorney*
WILL FRIDLUND, *Program Coordinator*
EDUARDO OTERO BAKAI LLM'25, *Global Energy Justice Fellow*
GENEVIEVE BYRNE, *Interim Energy Clinic Director*
KIRT MAYLAND LLM'04, *Visiting Assistant Professor*
CARLSON SWAFFORD LLM'25, *Energy Justice Fellow*





WELCOME LETÍCIA FELIX


We welcomed **Letícia Felix LLM'27** to the IEE in August as our new Energy Justice Fellow. Letícia joined us from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where she worked as a lawyer specializing in energy law. She holds a graduate degree in Energy Business and wrote her thesis on the economic feasibility of solar panel recycling. Letícia is passionate about renewable energy, climate change mitigation, and energy justice.

Letícia is leading a joint project with the Environmental Justice Clinic and the Brown University School of Public Health to craft a template Good Neighbor Agreement for communities in the Southeastern United States impacted by wood pellet manufacturing. We are thrilled to have Letícia join us for the next two years. 

THANK YOU EDUARDO OTERO BAKAI AND CARLSON SWAFFORD

The IEE is proud to share that **Eduardo Otero Bakai LLM'25** and **Carlson Swafford LLM'25** completed their LLM in Energy fellowship programs. Eduardo moved to Brattleboro, Vermont, and joined Costello, Valente & Gentry, P.C. as a legal assistant. Carlson returned to his native Tennessee and resumed working at Eco Demo Law, PLLC, which he founded to provide energy, environmental, and cooperative transactional services.

Both Eduardo and Carlson made significant contributions to the IEE. Eduardo led teams of research associates on projects on renewable energy transitions in the Caribbean, thermal energy networks, and natural gas line extension allowances. Carlson led teams of student clinicians on the development of several community solar arrays, including Pine Hill Homeowners Cooperative's array in Conway, New Hampshire, which was commissioned in 2024.

While we miss their presence at Eaton House, we are excited to see Eduardo and Carlson grow in their new roles. 



SCHOLARSHIP AND ACCOLADES

GENEVIEVE BYRNE TRAVELS ABROAD AND IN THE STATES

Genevieve Byrne joined the **U.S.-German Forum Future Agriculture 2025 cohort**, hosted by the Aspen Institute Germany. The nine-month forum brought together farmers, scholars, and policymakers to develop and **publish research-based policy principles** for reducing land use conflicts between renewable energy and agriculture in rural areas. Professor Byrne spent a week in Germany and a week in Colorado collaborating with her cohort colleagues. **N**




ENERGIZERS COMPETE IN MOOT COURT



Mya Schmeling JD'26, Samantha Privett JD'25, and Audrey Garcia JD'25 participated in the West Virginia University Energy Moot Court Competition in Morgantown, West Virginia. The competition posed a challenging problem involving alleged violations to the Clean Water Act and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, stemming from discharges from a coal ash pond. The team worked very hard on its brief and oral arguments, and we are incredibly proud of their performance. The IEE is grateful to the broad network of alumni, faculty, and friends that helped prepare the team. **N**



IEE FINDS OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN BATTERY STORAGE


Mark James's LLM'16 paper, titled "Challenges and Obstacles in the Deployment of Electric Battery Storage: Case Studies of Interconnection and Market Design in the United States, Great Britain, and the European Union," was published in the *Texas Journal of Oil and Gas Law*. Mark coauthored the paper, which compares the interconnection process and market opportunities available to storage resources in each region, with **Will Fridlund** and students **Samantha Privett JD'25**, **Ace Dantzler-Woodruff JD'25**, and **Taylor O'Hare MELP'24**. Samantha, Ace, and Taylor presented the paper at the 8th Energy Transitions Conference hosted by the University of Eastern Finland Law School in June 2024. 

MARK JAMES TALKS OFFSHORE WIND COMMUNITY BENEFITS IN WEBINAR

Mark James LLM'16 participated in a webinar hosted by the Nature Conservancy as a part of its **Nature Connects series**. He discussed his ongoing research on the use of community benefits agreements in the offshore wind development process at the federal and state levels. He was joined by **Lindsay Dougan**, senior community investment manager at SSE Renewables. 



MARK JAMES ON HEAT PUMP RATE DESIGN


POWER Magazine's January issue featured **Mark James's LLM'16** article, **"Importance of Rate Design in Moving Customers Toward Electrification,"** which presents how two Massachusetts utilities are introducing differentiated electricity rates to lower heating costs for homes with heat pumps. Rising electricity rates are a threat to decarbonization efforts and new approaches are needed to ensure that immediate financial benefits are available for customers who choose cleaner heating technologies. 




IEE AND BUILDING DECARBONIZATION COALITION TEAM UP ON THERMAL ENERGY NETWORKS

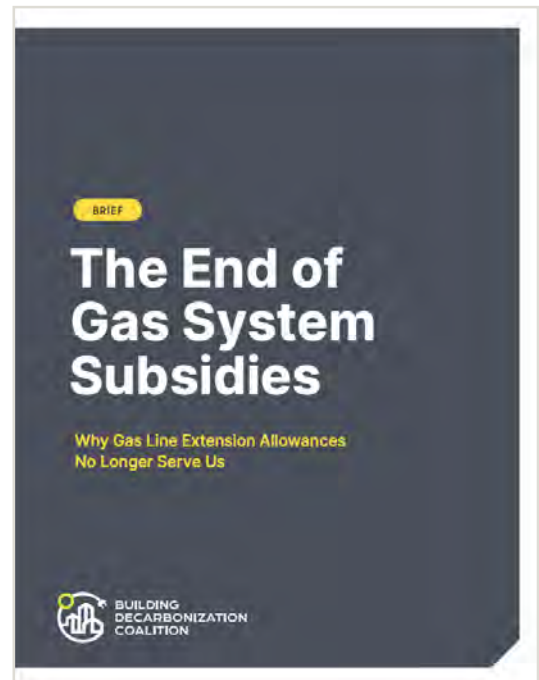


Eduardo Otero Bakai LLM'25 and **Mark James LLM'16** hosted a webinar with **Lawrence Garber** and **Ania Camargo Cortes** of the Building Decarbonization Coalition on the **Thermal Energy Networks: A Legislative Guidebook**—a resource for states, cities, and utilities advancing neighborhood-scale clean heating and cooling.

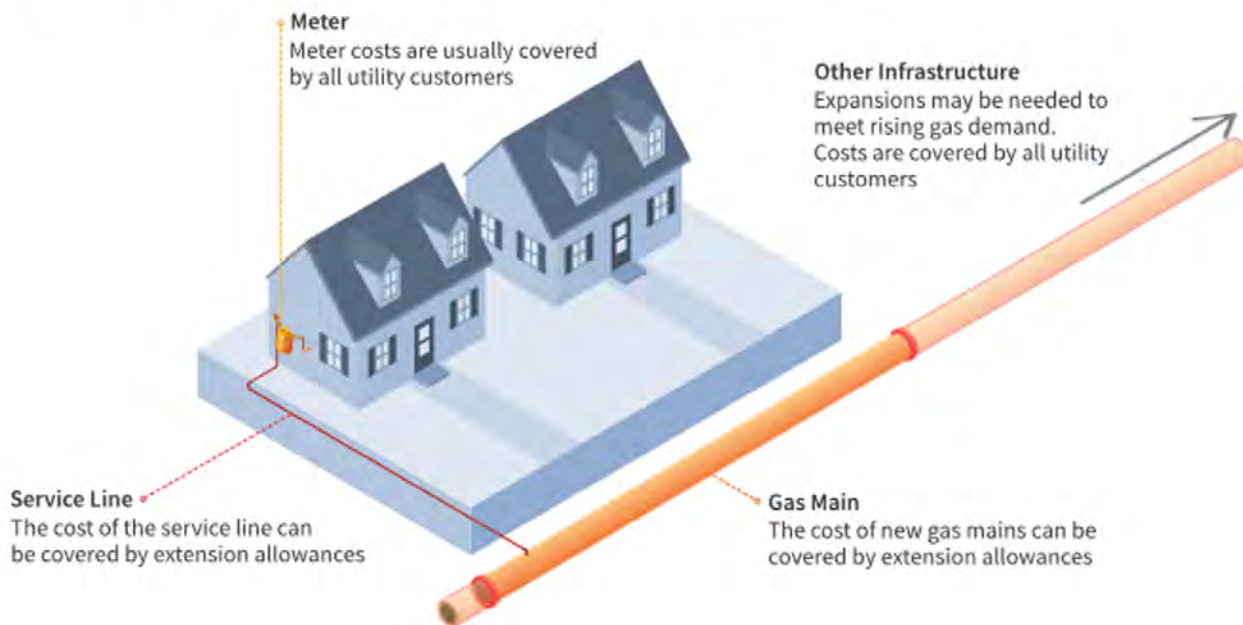
They discussed how states are passing laws to enable thermal energy networks—water-filled pipe systems that deliver heating and cooling without combustion. These networks can cut emissions substantially, as heating and cooling buildings makes up 43% of U.S. energy use. 

EDUARDO OTERO BAKAI EXPOSES ISSUE WITH LINE EXTENSION ALLOWANCES

In another collaboration with the Building Decarbonization Coalition, **Eduardo Otero Bakai** LLM'25 coauthored a **line extension allowances policy brief** with students **Ace Dantzler-Woodruff** JD'25 and **Sonja Rzepski** JD'25. The brief highlights how line extension allowances for new natural gas hookups shift costs onto existing ratepayers, distort the market, and do not align with state energy and climate policies. 



Infrastructure associated with extension allowances



GENEVIEVE BYRNE TESTIFIES AT VERMONT SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

Genevieve Byrne voiced support for **Bill S. 57 (2025)** at the **Vermont Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy**. The bill proposed an expansion of Vermont's standard offer program to provide a new model for community solar in Vermont after Act 179 eliminated virtual net-metering for most entities. Genevieve argued that community solar can bring down electricity costs for participants, insulate them against wholesale electricity price volatility, and provide better grid management. **V**



IEE RECEIVES AWARD FROM UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

The IEE was awarded the University of Vermont's annual Outstanding Service-Learning Community Partner Award. The award recognizes the IEE's creation of transformative learning experiences for University of Vermont (UVM) students through a partnership that began in 2017.

In this unique collaboration, the IEE opens its research projects to students in UVM Professor **Jody Prescott's** Energy & Climate Law class. At the beginning of each spring semester, IEE faculty provide Prescott's class with descriptions of their current projects and relevant research questions. At the end of the semester, Prescott's students travel to VLGS to present their findings to IEE faculty and students and to share haikus summarizing their research. Over the last nine years, UVM students have contributed to IEE research on state net metering policies, agrivoltaics, renewable energy in the Caribbean, net-zero affordable housing, and offshore wind community benefits agreements. **V**

CLINIC ACHIEVEMENTS



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!


The **Energy Clinic** celebrated its 11th year of operation, continuing its mission to deliver energy justice solutions to local communities. The clinic assists clients in Vermont, New Hampshire, and beyond. **V**

TUNBRIDGE GETS 10KW

The Town of Tunbridge commissioned its new 10.7 kW solar array. Energy Clinic students, led by **Kirt Mayland LLM'04**, helped the town secure a \$255,411 grant to fund the array and energy efficiency upgrades. The project will bring Tunbridge closer to net-zero operations and lower its energy bills. **V**



AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT SALISBURY SQUARE

For more than five years, the Energy Clinic has partnered with the Randolph Area Community Development Corporation on an energy-resilient housing development at Salisbury Square. Energy Clinic students have helped secure permits, draft zoning amendments, and advise on energy-related financing for the project. Phase 2 includes 21 total energy efficient housing units and a solar project for which the Energy Clinic helped secure a \$40,000 tax credit. Tenants began occupying Phase 2 units in 2025. 



Left to right: Professor and Senior Attorney Jenny Carter JD’86/MSL’87, Professor Rod Smolla, Professor and Director of the JD Externship Program Beth Locker



WASTE TO ENERGY IN LEBANON

Energy Clinic students helped the City of Lebanon, New Hampshire obtain a 10% energy community adder on \$1.2 million of tax credits for the construction of its Landfill Gas to Energy Project at the Lebanon Solid Waste Facility.” The facility converts the landfill’s waste methane gas into electricity that covers the electricity costs for many of the city’s buildings and facilities. 🍃



A WIN FOR COMMUNITY SOLAR

The long-delayed solar project at the Aberdeen West Cooperative moved forward after a favorable decision from the New Hampshire Superior Court. Former clinic professor and attorney **Jeannie Oliver LLM’14** represented Aberdeen West, and the Energy Clinic resumed project planning. 🍃


SOLAR IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

In partnership with the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund, Clean Energy New Hampshire, and the Tri-County Community Action Program, the Energy Clinic explored holistic energy solutions for North Woods Mobile Home Park Cooperative, including weatherization, efficiency upgrades, and community solar. The Energy Clinic is assisting the community in seeking a grant from the New Hampshire Renewable Energy Fund to finance the project. 🍃





NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS FOR VLGS

The IEE has helped VLGS replace its existing electric vehicle chargers and expand the number of available chargers. **Jenny Carter JD'86/MSL'87** and student clinicians worked to identify the vendor and secure financial support from the State of Vermont and Green Mountain Power. 

REVIVING A MOUNTAIN BY CUTTING ENERGY COSTS

The Energy Clinic **partnered with Burke Mountain Resort** to reduce its high energy costs and explore sustainable solutions, including energy efficiency and renewable energy integration. After nearly a decade of operating in receivership, Burke Mountain Resort's new ownership is leading a dynamic revival to reinvigorate the local economy and renew the cherished local mountain's role as a major regional employer and tourist destination.

"We are excited to partner with the energy experts at the IEE to make this as sustainable and cost efficient an operation as possible," said Jon Schaefer of Bear Den Partners, the resort's new owner. "We look forward to continuing the great local tradition of Burke Mountain Resort after years of uncertainty." 




Student Clinician Raluca Velcu JD/MERL'27

EVENTS

ALUMNI IN ENERGY SYMPOSIUM RETURNS TO NYC

The **2025 Alumni in Energy Symposium** returned to New York City and Climate Week NYC. The event broke records for in-person Energy Symposium registration and attendance at a New York City VLGS alumni reception. The symposium convened engaging panels on the energy impacts of data center growth, the challenges facing independent power producers, and investing in climate tech.

The event was capped with a keynote address by **James Van Nostrand**, outgoing chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

The symposium supported the **Kevin B. Jones Fund**. Event sponsors included Bracewell LLP and Richard B. Miller, Esq. 




Former Chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities
James Van Nostrand

REGIONAL ALUMNI IN ENERGY SYMPOSIUM LAUNCHES

The IEE hosted its first-ever regional symposium in April at St. Anne's Institute in Albany, New York. The symposium explored key topics shaping the Northeast's energy future, including energy affordability, generator interconnection processes, regional transmission planning, the future of nuclear energy, and vehicle-to-grid tariffs. The event featured a distinguished keynote address from **Brenda Brickhouse MERL'18**, technical director of EPRI's Equitable Decarbonization Initiative.

The IEE benefits from a robust network of alumni working at public utility commissions, regional transmission organizations, law firms, nonprofits, and more all over the country. Regional symposia allow us to engage with our graduates and build new partnerships.

Special thanks to **Jaclyn Brilling JD'79**, **Laurie Wheelock JD/MELP'10**, and **Angela Sicker JD/MERL'19** for their assistance. 



Left to right: Sonja Rzepski JD'25 and Laurie Wheelock JD/MELP'10

GUEST LECTURES AND FIELD TRIPS

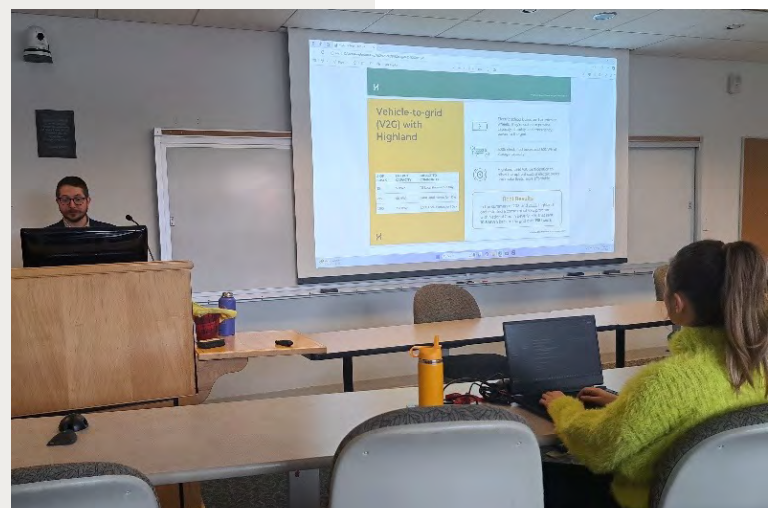
ENERGY EXPERTS RETURN HOME

An essential component of the IEE student experience is direct connection with energy practitioners, many of whom are alumni that help students land jobs and internships. Here are some of last year's highlights:

Mark Sciarrotta JD'96, vice president and general counsel at VELCO, lectured in Mark James's Energy Regulation, Markets, and the Environment class. Mark shared his expertise and insights into FERC Order 1920 and transmission planning in New England.

Dave Farnsworth JD/MSL'93, principal at the Regulatory Assistance Project, discussed the need for time-matching renewable energy credits (RECs) in the transition to a clean energy economy. Hourly RECs ensure that every hour of generation comes from clean energy resources and can incentivize the construction of dispatchable renewable energy sources.

Ethan Severance MELP'16, in-house counsel at Highland Electric Fleets, lectured in **Kirt Mayland's** Climate Change and the Law class. Ethan discussed the financial incentives for school bus electrification and the many other benefits, including reduced noise, improved comfort, and lack of emissions.





Vermont Department of Public Service Commissioner **Kerrick Johnson** guest lectured in the Spring Semester Energy Clinic. Commissioner Johnson provided valuable insights on energy affordability, the future of net metering, and Vermont's renewable portfolio standard.

Angela Sicker JD'19, senior attorney at New York Power Authority, previously at New York Independent System Operator (NYISO), lectured in the Energy Clinic. She discussed her work at NYISO, where she advised teams in the Interconnection and Planning departments on regulatory, business, and compliance matters, as well as developing positions on FERC rulemakings.

Sophia Donforth, executive director of the Vermont and New Hampshire Energy Education Program (VEEP), joined the Energy Clinic to share her insights on teaching sustainability and energy efficiency in Vermont and New Hampshire schools.

Clinicians had a blast trying out some of VEEP's educational activities and learning how they can make more energy-efficient choices in their everyday lives.

Jaqueline Pinto, doctoral researcher at the University of Eastern Finland, gave a public lecture on hydrogen that discussed its applications, reviewed the hydrogen color classification system, and compared the US's and the EU's hydrogen regulatory frameworks.


Mark Zankel, director of community solar at ReVision Energy, lectured at the Energy Clinic. Mark explained the difference between investor- and member-owned community solar, discussed what makes a good solar site, and offered his thoughts on how the solar industry will manage the loss of the IRA tax credits.

Seth Mullendore, president and executive director of Clean Energy Group, joined the Energy Clinic to discuss Clean Energy Group's efforts to phase out peaking gas facilities through behind-the-meter solar and storage solutions. Seth highlighted several novel clean technologies like balcony solar and portable batteries that renters can use to lower their electric bills and provide backup power.

Windsor County State Senator **Becca White** returned for her annual guest lecture in Mark James's Energy Law and Policy class. Senator White and students brainstormed ideas for legislation that addresses energy affordability in Vermont.

Mari McClure, CEO of Green Mountain Power, lectured in Mark James's Energy Law and Policy class. Mari discussed how GMP's regulated monopoly status does not obviate its need to innovate, especially as the declining prices of distributed energy technologies make grid defection more feasible. Mari talked about the value of company culture in driving GMP's evolution from an energy company to an energy transformation and technology company. She highlighted the utility's innovative home battery program and the virtual power plant it operates at the Hillside East housing development in South Burlington.

TJ Poor MSEL'06, director of regulated utility planning at the Vermont Department of Public Service, returned to Mark James's Energy Law and Policy class for a guest lecture. TJ discussed the Department of Public Service's dual role as ratepayer advocate and state energy office. TJ spoke about the Department's role in developing the state's Comprehensive Energy Plan and how equity has emerged as an important planning criterion. TJ led the class through the integrated resource planning process and how affordability, reliability, and sustainability shape utility plans.

Jamie Henn, co-founder of 350.org and founder and executive director of Fossil Free Media, gave a lecture in Mark James's Energy Law and Policy class on the essential role of messaging in supporting public policy and the importance of positivity in combatting fossil fuel propaganda. Jamie discussed three key campaign areas to combat fossil fuels: the expansion of petrochemicals and LNG exports, ensuring that polluters pay, and protecting public lands and open waters. He emphasized that clean energy is the future of our energy system and that our messaging should tell the story of its economic, environmental, and security advantages. 



IEE STUDENTS IN THE FIELD

IEE students get to see the energy sector up close through field trips and real-world experiences. Here are some highlights:



DARTMOUTH SUSTAINABILITY

The Energy Law and Policy in a Carbon Constrained World class toured Dartmouth College with the Sustainability Office. Students learned about Dartmouth's geothermal heating system that is under construction, the bunker sea oil-powered steam system it is replacing, and Dartmouth's off-grid, solar-powered electric vehicle charger. [V](#)

VELCO BACKUP OPERATIONS CENTER


Students also visited Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) to tour its new backup operations center and substation. Students learned about how VELCO operates Vermont's transmission grid, the security measures it takes, and how VELCO's operators kept Vermont's lights on during the 2003 blackout. [V](#)



ADVANCE TRANSIT


The Energy Clinic went on a field trip to Advance Transit's Van Chesnut Transit Operations Center in White River Junction, Vermont. Advance Transit is the Upper Valley's fare-free public transit provider. Students learned about the company's sustainability practices, including its electric buses. [V](#)

RAVENSWOOD GENERATING STATION

Students attending the Alumni in Energy Symposium also toured the Ravenswood Generating Station in Long Island City, Queens. At 2,050 MW, Ravenswood is the largest generator in New York City. Students learned about Ravenswood's modernization endeavors, including its retirement of several peaker units and planned retirement of the 1,000 MW "Big Allis" turbine, which was the world's largest generating unit when it became operational in 1965. Students also learned about Ravenswood's efforts to address historic energy injustices through community engagement and the long-term plans to convert the facility into an offshore wind staging area. 



BETA TECHNOLOGIES

Student clinicians toured BETA Technologies' production facility in South Burlington. They learned about the numerous benefits of electric aircraft, including their low operating costs and zero tailpipe emissions. The visit also highlighted BETA's pioneering batteries designed specifically for electric aviation and the facility's geothermal heating and cooling system. 



2025 SUMMER SESSION



The IEE's 2025 Residential Summer Session provided students with an unparalleled opportunity to build energy law and policy expertise. Over nine weeks, students learned about grid engineering, advocating before public utility commissions, offshore wind permitting, renewable energy project finance and development, and how Europe is tackling its decarbonization goals. Many thanks to Professors **Chris Root**, **Caroline Reiser**, **Steve Letendre**, **Josh Belcher JD'08**, **Brian Potts JD'04**, and **Sirja-Leena Penttinen**.

Students supported communities in their energy transitions in our summer Energy Clinic. They participated in projects including the Town of Tunbridge's solar array; North Woods, Pine Gate, and Sodabrook community solar; Burke Mountain's sustainable energy revitalization; and South Royalton thermal

energy network research. This summer's Energy Clinic seminars featured a wide variety of clean energy practitioners, including **Will Veve**, landman at DESRI, who guided students through a mock land lease exercise, and **Greg Poulos**, CEO and atmospheric scientist at ArcVera Renewables, who discussed the importance of weather forecasting in wind development.





The IEE hosted several events to bring the energy community to campus. Special thanks to **Brian Potts JD'04** for offering a guest lecture on nuclear fusion.

Our 2025 Distinguished Energy Scholar was Professor **J. Mijin Cha** from UC Santa Cruz. Professor Cha's research examines the intersection of inequality and the climate crisis and how to advance a just clean energy transition. During her VLGS residency, she gave a Hot Topics lecture titled, "**A Just Transition for Whom? Understanding the Opportunities and Limitations of a Just Energy Transition,**" and participated in a luncheon with **Johanna Bozuwa**, executive director of the Climate and Community Institute. They discussed their vision of a just clean energy transition and how to build political support through policy. **V**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Technological change and competing political preferences create constant shifts in the energy law and policy landscape. IEE faculty regularly engage with the press to keep the public informed.

Mark James

- *The Family Handyman*, “The Real Reason Costco Gas Is So Cheap”
- *ZDNET*, “Worried About AI’s Soaring Energy Needs? Avoiding Chatbots Won’t Help - But 3 Things Could”
- *CNET*, “DeepSeek Turned the AI World on Its Head, but Don’t Fall for the Hype Just Yet”
- *News From the States*, “Electric Vehicle Industry Will Persist, Experts Say, Despite Trump Funding Cuts”
- *White River Valley Herald*, “Federal Policy Changes Darken Future, Say Energy Leaders”
- *The Energy Mix*, “Biden Offshore Drilling Ban Marks Climate Win, Which Trump Vows to Undo”
- *Sidley Austin*, “Speed to Power or Policy Paralysis? The OBBBA and America’s Clean Energy Future”
- *VJEL*, Co-authored with Emily Dwight JD/MERL’26, “Rage Against the Wind: The Markets Won’t Do What the OBBB Tells Them”

Kirt Mayland

- *WCAX*, “Vermont Ski Resort Paves the Way for a More Sustainable Industry”
- *The Day*, “Trump’s Tariffs Stymie Renewable Energy Efforts in Connecticut”
- *ABC22/FOX44*, “Tunbridge Town Offices Are Going Solar in 2025”
- *CNA*, “American Solar Industry Powers Through Despite Trump’s Policy Reversals”

Jenny Carter

- *CNET*, “Experts Say It Won’t Be Easy for Trump to Roll Back Appliance Efficiency Standards”

Mark James, Jenny Carter, and Kirt Mayland

- *This Old House*, “Solar Incentives by State”



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Vermont Law and Graduate School
164 Chelsea Street, PO Box 96
South Royalton, VT 05068
vermontlaw.edu

