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THE NEW SCHOOL
A UNIVERSITY

NEWS RELEASE

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THE NEW SCHOOL LAUNCHES FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM TO FOCUS ON NEW FRONTIER OF THE FIELD: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND URBAN ECOSYSTEMS

Innovative Undergraduate Program Brings Together Strengths of The New School and Parsons The New School for Design

New York, June 26, 2008—The New School has announced that it is launching a groundbreaking new undergraduate degree program* in Environmental Studies that is amongst the first to bring together urban ecosystems and sustainable design—two areas of study that together constitute a new frontier of environmental education. Using New York City as its laboratory, students in this cutting-edge program will engage with the community to create solutions to today's critical environmental problems, particularly those found in urban ecosystems. This interdisciplinary program includes both a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts. Both programs will enable students to take a variety of courses offered at The New School's acclaimed design school, Parsons The New School for Design, and liberal arts college, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts.

"The environment is not just about rainforests and the polar ice caps, but also the cities in which most of the world's population lives," said New School President Bob Kerrey. "This program is truly pioneering—no other university brings together the study of design and urban ecosystems in such a dynamic way. And where better than New York City to study this new frontier of environmental education."

A majority of the world's population currently live, work, and play in large urban areas. It is estimated by the year 2025, almost 5 billion of approximately 8 billion people worldwide will live in metropolitan areas like New York City. The New School, which is located in New York, is focusing its program on hands-on engagement with the city's natural ecosystems, which include a large estuary, fisheries, wildlife, and wetlands, to see firsthand how human activity in an urban setting can impact the environment.

The ambitious program, which will accept its first class of students in fall 2009, is administered by The New School's Tishman Environment and Design Center, the hub for environmental studies at the university. The center will develop curricula and provide student and faculty support, including research funding, fieldwork opportunities, internships, and other services. "The urban ecosystem and sustainability may be the most important areas of environmental study in this century," said Joseph Westphal, university provost and director of the Tishman Environment and Design Center. "We need to prepare the next generation of leaders who will help shape a sustainable world for future generations. In keeping with The New School's legacy, this program will foster students' creativity in their efforts to find solutions to these issues."

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In addition to its exploration of urban ecosystems, the New School's Environmental Studies program is distinct in that all students—whether enrolled in the Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts—will participate in design studios in addition to science labs and seminar classes. “New School faculty in the social sciences, urban policy and management, natural sciences, and ecology will work with Parsons design faculty to discover creative approaches to teaching and research," said Joel Towers, Associate Professor of Architecture at Parsons. "The fact that our students will be taking studio classes only broadens their perspective on how to solve the environmental problems plaguing cities worldwide.”

Through the program, Bachelor of Arts students will be able to choose to concentrate in urban ecosystems or public policy. Bachelor of Science students will have the option of choosing a concentration either in sustainable design or urban ecosystem design. Both degree programs are cross disciplinary and include fieldwork, internships, and collaborative final projects. Through these activities, the program will prepare its graduates to enter a range of careers in the green business sector, the largest growth job market of the new millennium. These include but are not limited to government, environmental advocacy, energy conservation, green building, community organizing, neighborhood development, recycling, and education.

For further information about Environmental Studies at The New School, please visit www.newschool.edu/environmentalstudies.

ABOUT THE NEW SCHOOL

Located in the heart of New York’s Greenwich Village, The New School is a center of academic excellence where intellectual and artistic freedoms thrive. The nearly 9,400 matriculated students and approximately 5,280 continuing education students who attend the university’s eight schools enjoy a disciplined education supported by small class sizes, superior resources, and renowned working faculty members who practice what they teach. Artists, scholars, and students from all walks of life attend its diverse programs and can earn everything from program certificates to Bachelor, Masters, and Doctoral degrees. When The New School was founded in 1919, its mission was to create a place where global peace and justice were more than theoretical ideals. New School students participate in programs that to this day strive for academic excellence, technical mastery, and engaged world citizenship. The eight schools that make up The New School are: The New School for General Studies, The New School for Social Research, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, Parsons The New School for Design, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts, Mannes College The New School for Music, The New School for Drama, and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. For more information, visit www.newschool.edu.

**Pending approval of the New York State Department of Education*

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Environmental Studies at The New School

The New School has just launched a new degree program in environmental studies. This innovative new program, administered by The New School Tishman Environment and Design Center, takes students beyond natural ecology and resource conservation, emphasizing urban ecosystems, sustainable design, and public policy. The New School has always taken a proactive stance in addressing challenging social issues in New York City. In keeping with that tradition, the university offers this wide-ranging program that allows undergraduate students to study and work at the intersection of society and nature, relying largely on interdisciplinary courses that capitalize on the faculty's expertise and the students' interests.

Joseph Westphal
Provost, The New School
Director, Tishman Environment and Design Center at The New School
For more than thirty years, Joe has studied, taught, conducted research, and worked in areas related to the environment and natural resources. His work as a political scientist has included policy and economics in relation to sustainability, energy, environmental justice and security, and emergency management. His career has spanned the U.S. Congress, where he worked on environmental issues, trade, and national security; the U.S. Department of the Interior, where he worked on water resources, Indian water rights, and federal land issues; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where he worked on the development of an interagency clean water initiative; and lastly, U.S. Department of the Army and the Army Corps of Engineers, where his responsibilities included wetlands regulation, environmental restoration, infrastructure development, and water resources management. He also worked on national security and disaster relief efforts. He has also worked throughout Latin America and Europe with organizations including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the European Commission, and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
Courses Taught: Environmental Policy; Water Resources Policy; Politics and Natural Resources; The Legislative Process; The Federal Budget Process; American Politics.

Nevin Cohen
Assistant Professor of Urban Studies
Tishman Environment and Design Center at The New School
For twenty years, Cohen's scholarly and professional research has explored the process of involving citizens in urban environmental decision-making. Building on that work, his current research focuses on the urban food system. He is studying innovative approaches to integrating food production into the urban environment and conducting research on how citizens can be engaged in sustainable food production. He teaches courses on environmental planning, food and sustainability, urban environmental policy, and environmental activism. Prior to joining The New School, Cohen founded Topology, LLC, an environmental planning and development firm. He also served as managing principal for GreenOrder, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in sustainable business practices, where he advised companies such as GE, Office Depot, Pfizer, and Pitney Bowes on methods to improve their environmental performance. He has held senior research positions at Rutgers University's Center for Environmental Communication, Environmental Defense, the World Resources Institute, Tellus Institute, and INFORM. He was also responsible for developing landmark municipal recycling, water conservation, and clean

fuel laws in New York City as an analyst for the City Council and Manhattan Borough President. **Courses Taught:** Urban Environmental Issues; Garbage: The political Economy and Ecology of New York City; Planning Sustainable Cities; Designing the Sustainable Food System; Urban Environmental Policy; Grassroots Environmentalism.

Cameron Tonkinwise
Associate Professor of Design and Sustainability
Tishman Environment and Design Center at The New School
For more than a decade, Cameron's research and professional activities have brought together the philosophies of design and sustainability. His work centers on the belief that today's sustainability challenges have much to do with a widespread misunderstanding of the nature of design. His research focuses on the design of shared product use systems, exploring how the emerging discipline of service design might enable the development of less material-dependant economies. Prior to joining The New School, Cameron was the education director and executive officer of the EcoDesign Foundation, a not-for-profit consultancy and research organization based in Sydney, Australia. **Courses Taught:** Thinking and Designing Sustainable Futures; Sustainable Lifestyles Seminar.

Rob Buchanan
Assistant Professor of Writing
Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts
Buchanan is a lifelong magazine feature writer with an interest in travel, adventure, and alternative sports. He started at Sports Illustrated in 1981, worked for Rolling Stone, Details, and a host of other magazines, and is now a contributing editor at Outside and a regular contributor at Men's Journal. He writes about sailing, climbing and mountaineering, environmental politics, and the effects of tourism and development. At Lang, Buchanan teaches journalism and writing courses and helps run Lang Outdoors, a series of hands-on courses designed to get students off campus and out into the "urban environment." In his Lang Outdoors course, students build 26-foot Whitehall gigs—replicas of nineteenth-century rowing boats that served as the water taxis of their day—and use them to explore the harbor and the estuary. Old-school environmentalists sometimes decry "recreationals" for getting in the way of serious conservation, but Buchanan is convinced that active use is the key to genuine stewardship. **Courses Taught:** The City and the Natural World (introductory journalism, focused on local and environmental topics); Wilderness and the American Mind (American nature writing and the birth of the conservation movement); Lang on the Hudson (boat-building, rowing, and history and politics of New York Harbor).

Joel Towers
Associate Professor of Architecture
Parsons The New School for Design
Joel heads Parsons programs in Design and Management, Foundation, Integrated Design, as well as new initiatives in environmental and sustainable design, urban design, and transdisciplinary design. He is also Senior Advisor to the Provost of The New School on issues pertaining to Architecture, Environment, and Design. Prior to his current appointments, Towers was the Director of the Tishman Environment and Design Center and Associate Provost for Environmental Studies at the university. Towers began his career working with William McDonough Architects, one of the leading sustainable design firms in the country, where he directed projects including "The Hanover Principles: Design for Sustainability." Following this, Towers formed SR+T Architects

with Karla Rothstein. Towers' focus on ecological issues and their relationship to both design and construction underlie his research and teaching, as well as his work at SR+T. Towers was previously a member of the faculty of the Graduate School of Architecture at Columbia University. He received a B.S. in Architecture from the University of Michigan and a Master of Architecture from Columbia. **Courses Taught:** Critical Ecologies; Senior Seminar: Designer's Ethos; Core Colloquium: Home Turf; Senior Seminar: Design, Ethics and Environment

Bhawani Venkataraman
Associate Professor, Science, Technology & Society
Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts
As a chemist and educator, Venkataraman is interested in helping students appreciate the role of chemistry and the sciences in addressing issues of societal concerns, in particular the role of the chemical sciences in understanding environmental issues. Many policies dealing with the environment such as water and air pollution, stratospheric ozone depletion, and climate change have used results from chemical research. She uses these policies as case studies to demonstrate the importance of a chemical perspective. Her work also includes assessing the effectiveness of teaching through contextual, active learning approaches, which is supported by a National Science Foundation grant. More recently, she has begun working with local environmental justice organizations on assessing and monitoring air and soil quality. Prior to joining Eugene Lang College, Venkataraman was a research scientist at Columbia University where she led educational initiatives at the undergraduate, graduate, and K-12 levels. She was a lead investigator on National Science Foundation grants, which supported undergraduate research experiences, the development of undergraduate chemistry curricula, and a program that supported graduate students in the sciences to work with K-12 science teachers. **Courses Taught:** Chemistry of Life; Chemistry of the Environment; Science and Environmental Policy; Nanotechnology.

For more information about Environmental Studies at The New School, please visit www.newschool.edu/environmentalstudies.

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What is an urban ecosystem?

An urban ecosystem is a system of living and non-living elements that are found in densely populated areas such as cities, and the complex interactions among all these parts. Urban ecosystems comprise humans and their built environment (such as buildings, roadways, and material goods), other living species, air, water, sunlight, and the movement of matter, energy, and information that link everything together.

The urban ecosystem and its sustainability may be the most important environmental issue in the coming century. For the first time in history, more than half the world's population will live in metropolitan areas like New York City and its environs. Climate change, air quality, food supply, loss of water, and other threats to natural resources—today's most pressing challenges—are indeed urban challenges.

Why is New York City a perfect model for students studying urban environments?

New York City is one of the largest and most complex urban environments, with a broad range of natural and manufactured flows of material goods, plants and animals, energy, and information. It is therefore an excellent laboratory for studying how humans influence the surrounding environment and how the surrounding environment affects humans. Within the New York City metropolitan area, students can study a diverse range of ecosystems, such as estuaries (where fresh water mixes with salt water), tidal and freshwater wetlands, lakes and streams, aquifers, forested uplands, landscaped parks, contaminated industrial sites, and many other complex human environments. New York City is also part of the Atlantic flyway, a major stopping off point for migratory birds.

The city is faced with daunting ecological challenges and is designing creative responses to them, some of which are part of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plaNYC, a plan for a greener New York, consisting of more than 100 far-reaching initiatives. Below are list of a few of the initiatives that serve as case studies for environmental education:

- New York City is being reforested through one of the most significant street tree-planting efforts in the United States.
- The closed Fresh Kills landfill is now one of the largest ecological restoration projects in the world.
- In one of the largest ecosystem management projects in the nation, the New York City watershed, urban settlements, agricultural lands, and forests are being protected and managed to avoid the need to filter drinking water and to support sustainable food production.

What are the top environmental problems facing large cities?

- **Renovating Old, Energy-Inefficient Buildings:** Buildings consume 48% of all energy in the United States and 76% of all electricity. With new lighting and heating/cooling/insulation technologies now on the market, cities need to look toward improving energy efficiency in its built environment.
- **Decreasing the Number of Cars:** Cities have lower carbon footprints because those who live in them have shorter (within walking or biking) distances to travel or are able to make shared use of mass transit systems. However, most major cities are compromised by increasing numbers of cars. Design interventions, such as bike lanes, pedestrian streets, and better mass transit systems, are reinforcing efforts at creating car-free cities.

What are the top environmental problems facing large cities? (Continued)

- **Affordable Renewable Energy:** Cities are efficient but still energy intense. As fossil fuels both deplete and need to be avoided to mitigate the risk of climate change, renewable energy sources must be developed to sustain cities. As conventional energy rises in price due to scarcity, regulation costs, and the need to invest in alternatives, a key issue will be finding affordable alternative energy sources.
- **Unsustainable Food Systems:** Cities by definition dedicate their land to non-agricultural uses. This means that all cities are dependent on importing food for their populations. Large cities could not exist without the refrigerated transport of heavily packaged food. The challenge is to reduce the ecological footprint of cities by reducing the energy intensity associated with food production that sustains them. This means more local, more seasonal, more organic, less processed, less packaged food logistics and diets.
- **Environmental Health Risks:** Toxic chemicals, air pollution, poorly constructed or maintained buildings, inadequate sanitation and the lack of safe water lead to significant human and ecological health risks. Many major cities were once centers of rapidly developed and poorly planned large-scale heavy industry. As a result, these cities have extensively contaminated sites called "brownfields." Health risks for growing urban populations are demanding that those sites be cleaned up, presenting major technical challenges. In some cases, such as the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, the contamination of the estuary bed is such that experts believe that it might be better to cover and seal the bed, rather than risk stirring up the contaminants while trying to remove them.
- **Water Scarcity:** Globally, water scarcity has become one of the greatest urban environmental problems. Cities are faced with the dual challenge of providing a sufficient supply of clean drinking water for residential and industrial uses while safely recycling or disposing of wastewater. In the New York City metropolitan area, challenges include protecting drinking water sources (from the Catskill mountains that supply New York City to the sole aquifer source underneath Long Island), reducing consumption, and adequately treating wastewater so that marine ecosystems are not polluted with oxygen-depleting organic matter and toxic chemicals.
- **Urban Sprawl:** Urbanization often spreads outward instead of upward, consuming relatively inexpensive open space. Sprawling development patterns turn ecologically diverse natural areas into urbanized residential, commercial, or industrial uses. These lower-density communities also consume more energy per capita than denser communities of multifamily dwellings, shared services, and transit instead of automobile transport.

Explain the role of design in tackling the challenges of the urban environment?

The unsustainable urban environments we have today are the result of failed attempts to control the uncontrollable. Cities comprise multiple evolving systems that are too complex to regulate or plan in traditional ways. Great efforts must be made to develop more sustainable cities, but we must also be careful about the moves we make.

Design offers an approach to improving cities that is better suited to the complexity and urgency of current urban problems. Design is the skill of making strategic interventions. Designers creatively reframe problems so that they can be tackled in new ways, finding new points of access and leverage. They aim to find lateral solutions that deliver multiple benefits to many people, rather than compromised outcomes. They work across disciplines, building teams that combine fields of expertise that rarely communicate. Designers make prototypes that can be tested in the field and then quickly modified. They make use of the way people and things interrelate, recognizing the importance of providing the sorts of information and tools that help people to change.

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Give an example of how design can change the way we approach urban environmental challenges, i.e. a designed solution that is a "gold standard" of what can be done.

New York is not relatively large in area nor is it particularly hilly. So the city should have as much bicycling as Amsterdam or Barcelona. Design can encourage increased bicycling in a range of ways. Different bicycle designs could make it easier to ride, or easier to carry if necessary, or better at carrying things and used for shopping. New York City has some bike lanes, however many are poorly designed; there should be (as there is in Amsterdam) a sidewalk, a bike lane, parked cars, and then the regular traffic, so that the parked cars protect the bicyclists from traffic. Subways and buses could be redesigned to better accommodate people carrying bikes. Bicycling to work could also be encouraged by changing expectations about work wear, or developing clothes that can be stored in backpacks and then changed into once at the workplace. By encouraging bicycling, New Yorkers would be healthier, freeing up budgets for other investments in renewable energy or education.

In Staten Island, city officials were faced with the prospect of having to build new sewers and a sewage treatment plant to divert storm water away from developed areas. Instead, they chose a design solution that uses "natural capital," the land itself, to perform the same function. By purchasing, restoring, and protecting a significant amount of open space circling the island, the city was able to provide sufficient storm water absorption so that the human infrastructure was not needed.

For more information on urban ecosystems and The New School Environmental Studies program, visit www.newschool.edu/environmentalstudies.

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Tishman Environment and Design Center at The New School

Learning about and engaging with the environment involves the integration of many disciplines and combines the classroom experience with work in the field, fusing theory and practice. At The New School the nucleus of this engagement is the Tishman Environment and Design Center, made possible through the support of New School Trustee John L. Tishman. It is a place for students and faculty from all colleges and schools that comprise The New School to gather, interact, and explore shared experiences. It facilitates research, curriculum development, internships, and fieldwork opportunities. The center is exactly that, a center of creative work and experience that allows students and faculty to explore the curriculum, share and interact on projects, and research and work with the community at large to create opportunities for collaboration.

As a progressive institution, The New School committed to tackling important global issues with a cross-disciplinary focus. The Tishman Environment and Design Center draws upon the strengths of several divisions, including: Parsons The New School for Design, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, The New School for Social Research, and The New School's graduate program in International Affairs. The center also takes advantage of the resources offered through global initiatives such as the India China Institute, which was established by the university in 2004 to foster study, research and connections among India, China and the United States.

The New School environment is the larger New York metropolitan area. There are many opportunities to work with towns, cities, states, non-governmental groups, corporations, other universities, and other organizations. Through the Tishman Environment and Design Center, we hope to connect students and faculty to this broader coalition to enhance learning, civic engagement, and research.

For more information, please visit www.newschool.edu/environmentalstudies.

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THE NEW SCHOOL

The New School was founded in New York City nearly a century ago as a bastion of intellectual and artistic freedom. Today, it is a leading urban university containing some of the nation's most respected programs in design, liberal arts, the performing arts, and social and political thought. Artists, scholars, and students from across the country and around the world attend The New School's diverse programs to earn bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees, complete certificate programs, or take continuing education classes. The 12,200 matriculated students and 10,600 continuing education students who study on campus in Greenwich Village or online enjoy a disciplined education supported by small class sizes, superior resources, and renowned working faculty who practice what they teach. The New School's eight divisions are: The New School for General Studies, The New School for Social Research, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, Parsons The New School for Design, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts, Mannes College The New School for Music, The New School for Drama, and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music.

History

The New School is a unique place for many reasons. The quest for original ideas and the respect for democratic ideals led to its creation in 1919, and that is still among the school's most important traditions. The New School has always sought out the most relevant and pressing challenges facing society and been willing to wrestle with them in ways that structurally transform the institution and reinvigorate the learning process. That is why, today, the university is on the verge of transforming the whole institution into what can only be called the *new* New School.

A Vision for the Future

This transformation builds upon the unique history and tradition of civically engaged, progressive education but updates it to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world. The plan will expand the undergraduate programs, integrate the primary themes of The New School—design, liberal arts, social sciences, urban studies, and performing arts—and construct an intellectual program that is distinctive and altogether fitting for the 21st century. The "new" New School will be populated by students in crosscutting, university-wide programs, some of which will be collaboratively developed with overseas partners.

The Environmental Studies program is the first to take advantage of this cross-pollination of ideas that is only possible in a university with a world-class faculty. Other programs to follow include media studies and international studies. The ambitious plans across the university are feasible because of the vision and hard work of the men and women at The New School. The New School is especially indebted to its trustees, boards of governors, the entire volunteer community, faculty and staff, and other friends whose contributions have carried the school so far and whose commitment helps to achieve this daring vision for the future.

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