

Paula Bontempi

Chair

Professor of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island



Paula Bontempi is Professor of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography, where she previously served as Dean. During nearly two decades at NASA Headquarters, she held senior leadership roles including Acting Deputy Director of the Earth Science Division, guiding national investments in ocean biology, biogeochemistry, and Earth observation.

An internationally recognized expert in ocean remote sensing and marine ecosystems, Dr. Bontempi helped lead landmark satellite missions including SeaWiFS, Suomi NPP, and PACE. She has contributed extensively to national science strategy through service on NASA and National Academies committees and currently serves as President of The Oceanography Society.

As Chair of the Research and Education Coalition for Ocean Sciences (RECOS), Dr. Bontempi works with academic, nonprofit, industry, and government partners to strengthen U.S. leadership in ocean science, education, and innovation.

She earned a Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island, an M.S. from Texas A&M University, and a B.S. from Boston College. Her honors include the NASA Exceptional Service Medal, the AGU Ocean Sciences Award, and the Texas A&M Geosciences Distinguished Alumni Award.