



Dr. Martin Keller

President of the Helmholtz Association in Berlin

Martin Keller was born on September 3, 1965, in Regensburg, Germany. He studied microbiology at the University of Regensburg, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1993. In 1996, his scientific career led him to the United States, where he spent ten years with Diversa Corporation in San Diego. There, he held various scientific and leadership roles and contributed significantly to the development of innovative biotechnological processes. In 2006, he joined the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in Tennessee. From 2006 to 2009, he directed the Biosciences Division and, beginning in 2007, also served as founding director of the BioEnergy Science Center (BESC). From 2010 to 2015, he served as Associate Laboratory Director for Energy and Environmental Sciences at ORNL, shaping the strategic direction of research in environmental science, energy and transportation science, and electrical and electronics systems research. Since 2006, he was appointed Adjunct Professor in the Department of Microbiology at the University of Tennessee. From November 2015 to November 2025, Dr. Keller served as Director of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Golden, Colorado. Under his leadership, NREL evolved into a globally connected research institution with more than 1,100 active partnerships across industry, academia, and government, and an annual research and development portfolio exceeding one billion U.S. dollars.

Since November 2025, Dr. Keller serves as President of the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers in Berlin.

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Dr. Keller is active in numerous international scientific boards and advisory committees. He serves as co-chair of the Global Power System Transformation Consortium (G-PST), is a member of the Board of Directors of the Center for Bioenergy Innovation (CBI), and serves on the Science Advisory Board of the Council on Competitiveness. He also chaired the Industrial Science and Technology Section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) from 2018 to 2019. Between 2021 and 2025, he was a member of the Helmholtz Strategic Advisory Board Energy and served on both the Scientific Advisory Council and the Supervisory Board of Forschungszentrum Jülich from 2022 to 2025.

Dr. Keller is the author of more than 70 scientific publications and holds 15 patents. His scientific achievements and leadership have been recognized with numerous honors, including the STEM Leadership Award for Excellence in Sustainability and the Lab Director of the Year Award from the Federal Laboratory Consortium for Technology Transfer in 2024. Earlier distinctions include the Corporate Leadership Award from the National GEM Consortium (2019) and the Global Excellence Award in Renewable Energy from the Energy and Environment Foundation (2017).

Dr. Keller places great emphasis on building strong networks that link scientific excellence with societal impact. He is deeply committed to mentoring and advancing young scientists and to fostering teams that combine creativity and high scientific ambition. Throughout his career, he has shown that strategic vision, scientific excellence, and a culture of trust are key drivers of sustainable innovation. He embodies a leadership philosophy that connects people, ideas, and institutions — transforming scientific discovery into progress and responsibility for a sustainable future.