Elinor Ostrom's interdisciplinary research into the ways humans have created institutional mechanisms to protect the world's natural resources and ecosystems has established her as the founder of a distinct school of political theory. Her research has shown that principles such as maintaining clearly defined boundaries and collective efforts to monitor inappropriate behavior can result in successful management of common-pool resources, such as watersheds, irrigation systems, and fishing grounds.

Through the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, which she and Vincent Ostrom founded 35 years ago, she has explored issues that today would be reflected in the current worldwide interest in sustainability. Her research has taken her around the world—to Africa, India, Australia, and Indonesia. Family origins in Norway have given that country a special place in her research, and Norwegian researchers have been welcomed frequently to the Bloomington workshop.

In recognition of her many decades at the vanguard of political theorists and her long connections with Norway, the Norwegian University of Technology and Science in Trondheim awarded her its honorary degree Doctor Honoris Causa.

“Elinor Ostrom has always been at the forefront of her profession,” says Patrick O’Meara. “The impact of her scholarship has not only influenced generations of scholars from all over the world, but through her numerous projects she has also affected countless lives. She is one of the great treasures of Indiana University.”