

# QUARTERLY REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE | FALL '21



# OUR MISSION

*To promote environmental awareness and integrate sustainable practices throughout UChicago and surrounding communities .*

PSI aims to:

- Expand our network to enhance partnerships and collaborative opportunities
- Build an open, inclusive, and inviting community
- Promote project productivity through workshops, leadership trainings, and accountability measures
- Provide members with necessary skills to accomplish tangible outcomes in project work
- Encourage creativity in addressing issues and designing solutions to environmental problems

# OUR PROJECT GROUPS

*Centered upon a project group structure and partnership model, we create lasting change and impact by getting directly involved in planning, directing, and executing initiatives. Our project groups address issues of specific interest to our members and are relevant to local sustainability needs.*

This quarter, PSI has 9 project groups:

1. Campus Composting
2. Campus Waste Reduction
3. Green Data
4. Environmental Education
5. Hyde Park Business Partnerships
6. Professional Development
7. Public Engagement
8. Science, Art, and Sustainability
9. Service

# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## FALL RECRUITMENT

**229** interest form responses

**74** applicants

**32** new members

**68** total members

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Presented **4 posters** displaying project group accomplishments at the inaugural Sustainability Town Hall to UChicago **President Alivisatos**.
- Formed a working partnership with the **Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago** (EPIC) encompassing bi-weekly progress meetings.
- Created PSI's new website: [psiuchicago.com](http://psiuchicago.com).
- Hosted **2 PSI Member Talks**: "Aquaculture" by Sam Heitz and "Energy Usage at UChicago" by the Green Data project group.
- Sent PSI members to Northwestern's "**Panel on Environmental Justice in Chicago**" event.
- Sponsored 2 PSI members as representatives for the **UChicago Environmental Alliance** (UCEA) and the **Collegiate Energy Consortium**.

## MEMBER BONDING INITIATIVES

- Hosted a **Project Group Leader Retreat** for leadership training.
- Organized **Coffee Chats** for one-on-one member bonding.
- Held a PSI-wide bonfire **social** at Promontory Point.
- Offered 3 finals week **study breaks** for PSI members.

# CAMPUS COMPOSTING

*Campus Composting works to reduce organic waste produced by the University community through public education about waste sorting and the implementation of composting infrastructure on and off-campus.*

## PROJECTS

- Expanded our **off-campus subsidy program** through our partnership with The Urban Canopy. We signed up new members and planned an in-person information session for Winter quarter.
- Pushed for an **opt-in dorm composting initiative** for Renee Granville-Grossman Residents. Campus and Student Life awarded us a **Green Fund Grant** for our initiative, and our goal is to get compost buckets in student hands in the early weeks of Winter quarter.

## OUTCOMES

- Have **25 off-campus residences** enrolled in our off-campus subsidy program. We aim to expand this number in the coming weeks.
- Awarded the **Green Fund Grant** for our proposal for our on-campus composting initiative.
- Met with 9 individuals from Chartwells, The Office of Sustainability, UChicago Dining, and Facilities Services to **tour the Cathey Loading dock** to inform our Green Fund Proposal and general planning efforts for the on-campus initiative. Our partner within The Urban Canopy, Andrew Meland, joined us for the tour.
- **Connected** with heads of other composting programs at UChicago, such as The Lab School.
- Participated in the **poster fair** at the USG Sustainability Townhall; presented our initiatives to **President Alivisatos**.

# CAMPUS WASTE REDUCTION

*Campus Waste Reduction has the goal of reducing different forms of waste campus wide. The group focuses on working with campus administrators, campus facilities, residential houses, and the student population to carry out projects that raise awareness about sustainability and take actionable steps to reduce waste.*

## PROJECTS

- Researched, reached out to administrators, and created educational content to achieve a twofold goal of increasing education about plastic film recycling and establishing a **plastic film recycling program** at the University.
- Met with leadership at cafes to develop a plan for cafés for future quarters in terms of **reducing single use plastic waste at student run cafes.**

## OUTCOMES

- Sent a comprehensive **project proposal** to the assistant vice president for campus planning & sustainability on a plastic film recycling program.
- Created **posters** for resident halls that detail what plastic film is, how to currently recycle plastic film, and drop off locations.
- Created a relationship with **café leadership** and discussed plans to reduce single use plastic, which we will implement next quarter.

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

*Environmental Education engages with students in the Chicago Public School system and spreads knowledge about various topics related to the environment, our relationship with it, and sustainability as a whole. The goal is to enlighten students about ways that they can interact with and help our planet.*

## PROJECTS

Each member prepared a presentation about a topic of their choice--which includes an ice-breaker, the content, and a group activity to be presented to middle school students.

## OUTCOMES

We will go to Ray Elementary, Kozminski Community Academy, and Gary Comer Youth Center to present in second quarter.

# GREEN DATA

*The overall mission of Green Data is to merge student's passions for environmentalism with their interest in data science in order to cultivate a new perspective in students as they embark to tackle issues of sustainability in their professional or personal lives. Along the way, we will produce results that have a tangible effect on UChicago and the community at large.*

## PROJECTS

- **R Basics and Application:** We completed an 8-module course on using R to conduct analysis on data sets.
- **Impact Investing Collaboration:** We investigated a potential collaboration with UChicago Impact Investing Group for a Case Competition. Green Data ideated and discussed prompt ideas.
- **Energy Usage Member Talk:** Members conducted analysis using the public Chicago Energy Benchmarking Dataset. We used R to analyze and visualize emissions/electricity use trends at UChicago.

## OUTCOMES

- Members gained a basic understanding of **R software** and how to analyze datasets using data wrangling and data visualizations.
- We gave a **20-minute presentation** to all of PSI to showcase the skills we've learned in R as well as to provide relevant insight into UChicago's progress towards their emissions reduction goals.
- We produced a poster for the **Sustainability Town Hall Poster Fair**, which featured our projects for this current quarter.
- For the Impact Investing Collaboration, we finalized on two ideas concerning the **startups** involved in the measurement of **air quality** and building of **solar power plants**.

# HYDE PARK BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

*HPBP aims to support and partner with businesses in Hyde Park in order to promote sustainable practices*

## PROJECTS

- Researched **grants** that small businesses could apply to in order to help finance the transition to larger sustainable swaps like **energy-efficient appliances and composting**, emphasizing grants designed for **women-owned or minority-owned** businesses.
- Reached out to the following local restaurants: Medici, Saucy Porka, Can't Believe It's Not Meat, Plein Air Cafe, Snail Thai, and B'Gabs to inquire about forming a **partnership**.
- Researched **eco-friendly utensils and take-out soup containers** and communicated with PSI's contact at The Urban Canopy to fulfill Saucy Porka's initial sustainability ideas. We prepared a **Green Partnership** flyer, business contract, consultation presentation, numerous email templates, and lists of businesses and campus cafés to potentially partner with.

## OUTCOMES

- Held an initial **consultation with Saucy Porka** to establish a Green Partnership and brainstorm steps to help them in their sustainability goals. First steps include: beginning **composting** with The Urban Canopy and switching to **sustainable utensils** and soup take-out containers. If the owner is interested, we are prepared to help her apply to one to three grants.
- Prepared to begin our Winter Quarter projects of partnering with **Hyde Park salons** and organizing another **plant-based restaurant week**.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*We aim to promote sustainability in the greater Chicago area by supporting PSI members in finding their niche within green careers, connecting resources, and providing opportunities to support that pursuit.*

## PROJECTS

- Hosted **3 career speakers** including EPIC, Conservation Law, and UChicago Green Careers to spark interest in varying green careers and opportunities available on campus.
- Formed a list of **15+** interested PSI members highlight on **LinkedIn** and began formulating posts.
- Created a plan and formalized partnership with EPIC to host a **case competition** in the 2nd week of Spring Quarter.
- Drafted an email to reach out to environmental nonprofits for **short-term work placements** in Spring Quarter.

## OUTCOMES

*Our speaker series and LinkedIn initiatives **engaged PSI** as a whole with opportunities found within green careers*

*Our progress towards a case competition and Spring Quarter work placements will create **tangible opportunities** for PSI members to gain experience within green careers.*

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

*Public Engagement aims to corral greater interest in general environmental news and concerns. By introducing more students to climate change news and stories of the wonders of life, Public Engagement can infuse widespread appreciation for the natural world and for the paramount importance of our current environmental crisis to the daily lives of more UChicago students.*

## PROJECTS

- The **Instagram Takeovers** are an opportunity for PSI members to share how sustainability might play a role in their daily lives. For one full day, they can post stories to the page in order to engage with, entertain, and inform the broader UChicago community.
- We continued **Plant Tour Tuesdays** on Instagram to engage University students and **faculty** by enabling them to share their own plants and providing insight into how others around them make their own lives greener.
- We hosted a **Paint-a-Pot Movie Night**, partnered with **Kitchen Sink**. We watched Fantastic Fungi, provided snacks, and gave out succulents and clay pots to paint, and Kitchen Sink provided the paint supplies.

## OUTCOMES

- Reached **886 Instagram accounts** over 30 days, a **63.4% increase** from the previous month. Meghan's Instagram Takeover set **record story view counts**, reaching 259 accounts with the first post and having over 100 people view all of the stories throughout the day. The two clean-up event posts were the **most liked posts** in the past 3 months. We received **positive verbal feedback** about our posts that feature professors
- We had a turnout of **over 30 people** to our screening of the documentary Fantastic Fungi, where they learned new information about the different biology and utilities of mushrooms and created something artistic with other people that shared similar interests.

# SCIENCE, ART, AND SUSTAINABILITY

*SAS aims to find creative ways to engage with Hyde Park and the UChicago community by combining science with artistic projects to create meaningful discussions and reflections on our role in current sustainable practices.*

## PROJECTS

Hosted the **Great PSI Pumpkin-Off** to promote sustainability during the Halloween season by incentivizing students to **reuse pumpkins** as food after carving them. SAS distributed free sugar pumpkins at an event with music and a "pumpkin patch" photo booth. Afterwards, participants had two weeks to submit photos of their carved pumpkins and of the food that they baked or cooked using the rest of the pumpkin.

## OUTCOMES

**27 people** signed up to participate in the Great PSI Pumpkin-Off. Submissions included carvings, soups, seed roasting, and risotto. SAS members selected winners for two categories: **Most Sustainable Use** of the Pumpkin and **Best-Looking Pumpkin**. For our third category, **Fan-Favorite** Pumpkin, students voted via the PSI Facebook Page.

# SERVICE

*The mission of the service group is to get students excited about sustainability-focused volunteer opportunities on campus and in the surrounding community. The service group can provide simple and enjoyable events to demonstrate to students that small actions can contribute to sustainability in their neighborhoods, and that serving others is more accessible than they might think and can become a regular part of their lives.*

## PROJECTS

- Hosted a **2 hour beach cleanup event** at 57th Street Beach in collaboration with **Alliance for the Great Lakes**.
- Held a **waste clean-up** event on the Midway along with **UChicago Hillel**.
- Collected donations of clothes from the UChicago community and sold them in Reynolds Club in a **campus-wide yard sale**. This encouraged our community to buy secondhand, and all of the money made went to the **Urban Growers Collective**, a local nonprofit dedicated to the development of community-based food systems.

## OUTCOMES

- About **10 volunteers** removed **42 lbs of litter** from the 57th St Beach. They cleared plastic wrappers, bottles, and more from both the beach itself and the path running directly adjacent to the beach.
- Around **10 people** came and we were able to pick up the majority of the trash from Woodlawn Residential Commons to the section in front of the Wellness Center. The volunteers spent **1 hour** picking up trash and disposed of the trash in the bins along the Midway.
- We collected lots of clothing and **raised \$100** to go to the Urban Growers Collective. We **donated clothes** left over from the yard sale to a clothing drive another UChicago RSO was hosting.