

# QUARTERLY REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE | SPRING '23





# OUR MISSION

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

PSI aims to:

- Expand our network to cultivate partnerships and collaborative opportunities.
- Build an open, inclusive, and inviting community.
- Promote project productivity through workshops, leadership training, and accountability measures.
- Provide members with the skills necessary 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 implementing initiatives. Our project groups address issues of specific interest to our members and are relevant to local sustainability needs.*

**This quarter, PSI has 8 project groups:**

1. Campus Composting
2. Campus Waste Reduction
3. Community Action
4. Green Data
5. Green Partnerships
6. Environmental Education
7. Public Engagement
8. Science, Art, and Sustainability





# 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.*

## EVENT COMPOSTING

This quarter, we continued to work with RSOs such as Sensasia, BITE, and SASA, as well as University partners such as Alumni Weekend to bring composting to campus events. We interacted with close to **800** RSO event attendees and educated them about composting, and countless others at Alumni Weekend.

## CAFE COMPOSTING

We have continued to work with cafe employees and our own Environmental Program Analyst to facilitate compost bin swaps each week. We are hoping to transition this task and potentially funding to cafe employees this summer and next academic year. We diverted about **300 pounds per week** of coffee grounds from Ex Libris. In total, we have collected **5,000 pounds** of compostable coffee grounds from Ex Libris.

## DEPARTMENT COMPOSTING

We reached out to many departments and building managers and had a productive conversation with the building manager at the Logan Center who is excited to explore new projects next academic year.



# CAMPUS WASTE REDUCTION

*Campus Waste Reduction works with campus organizations, residence life, and off-campus students to increase sustainability awareness, support waste reduction and diversion, and increase reusable options.*

## **reSTORE: ON-CAMPUS THRIFT STORE**

This quarter, the majority of our group's work was focused on reSTORE, the semi-permanent, not-for-profit thrift store in the basement of Stuart Hall. We spent the first two weeks of the quarter preparing for the opening of the store, which involved not only members of our project group but a number of other PSI volunteers and around **20** students from across campus whom we recruited to form a "Creative Team."

- Set-up included significant interior design work, spearheaded by our interior design team: painting, sourcing second-hand clothing racks and hangers, and installing aesthetic ceiling improvements, among many other tasks.
- Funding was provided by the Green Fund, for which we are very grateful.
- Many hours of volunteer work were spent sorting and pricing the clothing donations collected in the Winter Quarter.
- We hosted official store-opening events on **March 31** and **April 2**.
- reSTORE was open on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays from 1 pm-5 pm, March 31-May 21.
- We accepted clothing donations in-store and regularly monitored our clothing donation bins in three dining commons—Woodlawn, Baker, and Cathey—allowing us to continually replenish our stock and providing an outlet for community members to donate unwanted clothes.
- We also researched recycling options for unsellable textiles.
- We collected thousands of pounds of end-of-year clothing donations to prepare for next year.
  - This year, Housing and Residence Life declined to offer their normal Trash to Treasure program, so Campus Waste Reduction and reSTORE provided the primary donation option for students at the end of the year.
  - We collected end-of-year donations in-store and in our three dining commons locations.

## **GREEN FUND PROJECT: PERMANENT CLOTHING DONATION BIN**

We finalized and executed our Green Fund Project, started in the Fall Quarter, of installing a clothing donation bin in the basement of Reynolds Club. This will provide our community with a long-needed, convenient donation location on-campus.



## reSTORE OUTCOMES

We raised over **\$15,000** in revenue in less than two months, selling **2,499 garments** through **1,188** transactions (with many more customers coming in to browse.) We raised roughly \$9,000 for our local non-profit partners and created viable on-campus employment opportunities.

Clothing items were sold inexpensively, providing access to high-quality used clothing for the campus community. The median garment price was **\$5**.

reSTORE also introduced thousands of UChicago community members to PSI and sustainability efforts on-campus. We brought together students from across campus through collaborations with student artists and student organizations:

- We collaborated with a number of student artists to sell their art work in-store, incorporating people from outside PSI into the reSTORE project.
- We hosted opening and closing events with featured student DJs, providing a venue for student artists to perform.
- We worked with WHPK to create second-hand screen-printed merch for their organization.
- We provided shoe donations to an OLAS initiative.
- We built close relationships with Campus and Student Life, UChicago Dining, and the Center for Leadership and Involvement.

**reSTORE has been renewed for Fall 2023.**

# COMMUNITY ACTION

*Community Action aims to engage students in environmental activism and service initiatives across campus and the Hyde Park community. Students will partake in hands-on projects in order to promote systemic environmental change and advocate for a sustainable relationship between students, community members, and natural spaces.*

## CLEANUPS

During the quarter, Community Action collaborated with **Environmental Education** and **Hillel** to host **three cleanup events** open to the student body to help beautify the Midway Plaisance Park and prevent trash build-up. For the Earth Day cleanup, we also designed a competition that gave prizes to the group that collected the most trash.

At our Earth Day cleanup, we removed **299 lbs of trash** from the Midway Park – the most largest amount of trash ever removed from a site during one of cleanups. We also collected substantial amounts of trash from the Midway at our other cleanups this quarter.

## PAINT THE POINT

Community Action collaborated with **Science, Art, and Sustainability** and **Environmental Education** to bring together PSI members, other UChicago students, and the general Hyde Park community. After the Point officially became a landmark, we wanted to celebrate the accomplishment, as well as continue advocating for its preservation through chalk and paint artwork on the limestone.

We brought awareness to **Save the Point** and the limestone revetment, building upon our continuing collaboration with **the Point Conservancy**. Strengthening this connection will continue our partnership with them the following academic year. We also engaged with Hyde Park community members and students.





## SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM

One of our biggest projects this quarter was the **Sustainability Symposium**. While the original idea was to hold a discussion with President Alivisatos about investment on Campus, the event pivoted to focus on sustainability within the curriculum with current Provost and future Dean of the College Melina Hale. This event provided students an opportunity to share some of their thoughts about sustainability on campus and allow sustainability focused organizations to highlight their accomplishments from this past year. We built connections with new administrative roles and expressed student concerns about campus sustainability. We featured **seven** student sustainability projects for administrative roles to see. Over **70** individuals were in attendance.



# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

*The purpose of Environmental Education is to engage and connect with students in the Chicago Public School System through a curriculum centered around various environmental and sustainable topics, and what actions we can take to have an overall net positive impact on the environment.*

## ARTICLE CAMPAIGN

We produced educational articles centered on local environmental issues and sustainable practices to be sent to local newspapers, namely the Hyde Park Herald and Southside Weekly. We were able to produce **two articles** concerning **food justice** in Chicago and **environmental injustice in public housing**. However, given other projects arising this quarter, we were unable to revise and edit them into publication form by the end of the quarter. We will most likely revisit this project and complete it in the fall.



# PAINT THE POINT DAY

This event was in collaboration with **Science, Art, and Sustainability** and **Community Action**. In communication with organizers from Save the Point, we were able to host an event where PSI members and Hyde Park students could come enjoy the nature of Promontory Point, create art, and spend time with other PSI members. **Two students** from Gary Comer Youth Center came to the event, spending two hours painting and drawing while interacting with members of PSI. They were each accredited two hours of community service.

## GATEWAY TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS "IN-TENTS" SCIENCE FAIR

We worked with **Gateway to the Great Outdoors** to prepare a booth at their science fair about **oil spills**, demonstrating to students at **John Fiske Elementary School** their environmental impacts and the methods used to clean them up. Members of our group ran the Oil Spill booth from 9:30 a.m until 2:30 pm. We instructed 3 rotations of students from grades 3-8 and talked to about **50 students** at our booth.

## TEACHING

We continued in-person instruction at **Gary Comer Youth Center** and the Garden Club at the **University of Chicago Charter School**. We began instruction at **Ray Elementary School**. We held programming on Wednesday and Thursday for 9th-10th and 11th-12th graders, respectively. Our lessons centered on global issues such as **biodiversity loss** and **ocean acidification**, with activities centered on solving issues through **municipal action** and **urban planning**. We held the garden club at the charter school every Friday, instructing students on at-home gardening and other sustainability-focused projects. We held instruction at Ray Elementary every Friday, teaching students about topics such as **climate change** and **pollinators**.

## SPEAKER SERIES

We provided local middle and high school students with insight into green careers to nurture their interest in sustainability and show them that there are many options for working in the environmental field both during high school and as a career. In addition to the speaker events held in previous quarters, we were able to get Professor **Raymond Lodato** into Gary Comer Youth Center to talk to our students about **public land**. Roughly **20 students** spanning grades 9-12 were in attendance.

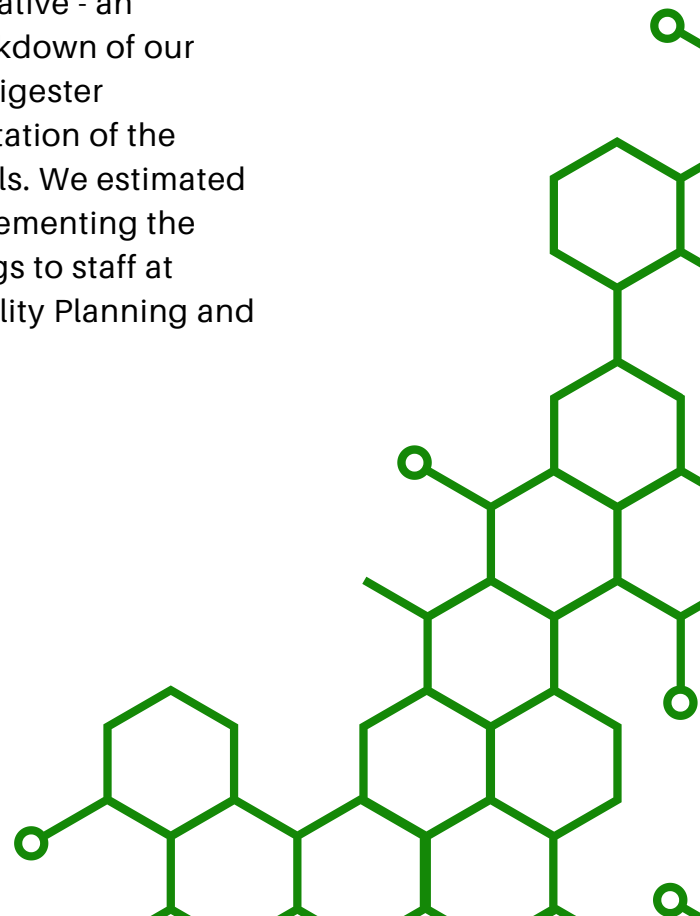
# GREEN DATA

*Our mission is to merge students' passion for environmentalism with their interest in data science in order to develop skills and use empirical data to tackle issues of sustainability. Using this analytical perspective and skillset, we aim to produce results that have a tangible impact on UChicago and the community at large.*

## ECO-DIGESTERS

We conducted an ongoing year-long project where we coordinated meetings with **UChicago Dining** and third-party environmental partners to discuss sustainable alternatives to UChicago's current method of dining hall food waste disposal - the Ecodigesters. Our research involved compiling food disposal methods from other universities and outreach to transportation and anaerobic digestion companies in the wider Chicago area.

We developed a comprehensive slide deck detailing the cost comparisons and logistics of an Ecodigester alternative - an anaerobic digester. The slide deck includes a breakdown of our research methodology, a discussion of other eco-digester alternatives, and a potential plan for the implementation of the anaerobic digester method in UChicago dining halls. We estimated financial sheets detailing the specific costs of implementing the anaerobic digester. Then, we presented our findings to staff at UChicago Dining, including the head of Sustainability Planning and Implementation.



## MEMBER TALK

This quarter, we designed, developed, and administered a survey for all UChicago members. We analyzed data about student energy perceptions and compiled findings into a deliverable for PSI meeting week 8.

We formulated a presentation idea from scratch on how data changes the way people perceive UChicago's efforts on sustainability. We devised a survey, analyzed respondents' data using Python and R programming languages, created visualizations from data, performed a regression, and analyzed statistical significance. We also conducted a literature review of peer institutions and research papers on information and perception. We then presented our findings and analysis to a crowd of 85 UChicago students.

## DIVVY PROJECT

We are working with the Director of Transportation & Parking Services to survey, analyze, and increase bike ridership across campus and throughout the Hyde Park community.

We continued writing up a comprehensive report on various groups' biking activity across campus (RSO's and student body, administrative itself) to increase bike riding on campus to be presented to those respective groups. We reached out to the Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Transportation about their updated Cycling Strategy to expand Chicago's bike network and increase everyday cycling in hopes of including the Hyde Park community in their plan. We also met with the Director of Transportation & Parking Services in order to brainstorm strategies to increase bike ridership across campus and further our partnership with Divvy.





# GREEN PARTNERSHIPS

*Green Partnerships empowers our members to promote sustainability by partnering with local businesses and nonprofits in projects advocating for sustainable practices. Along the way, our members develop and strengthen their skills in partnership formation, research and analysis, and sustainability consulting—implementing tangible green practices in their community.*

## PLANT BASED RESTAURANT WEEK

We completed PSI's 3rd annual Plant-Based Restaurant Week, offering discounts at 4 plant-based restaurants, including 2 brand-new partners. We collaborated with **four Hyde Park restaurants** (Snail Thai, Rajun Cajun, Seoul Taco, and Conscious Plates) to offer **10-15% discounts** for vegan and vegetarian items during the week of May 8th - May 12th.

We also offered the longest-running discount so far (7 days). The event was attended by at least **five small-dinner groups** and promoted veganism and vegetarianism. Attendance comprised at least **40 visits** to the restaurants.

## **BRINGING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES TO LOCAL BUSINESSES:**

### **URBAN CANOPY**

We met with Urban Canopy's composting branch to promote composting in local Hyde Park restaurants and reduce waste.

We secured a **permanent PSI referral discount (33%)** for Urban Canopy, a Chicago-based commercial composting service, that can be used by our partner restaurants. In future years, we will leverage this discount to **incentivize our 30+ existing restaurant partners** to implement composting in their business models and to incentivize new restaurants to partner with PSI.

### **THE SPICE HOUSE**

We developed a jar return program for **The Spice House**, a Chicago-based spice company, to encourage glass reuse and reduce waste in their business practices.

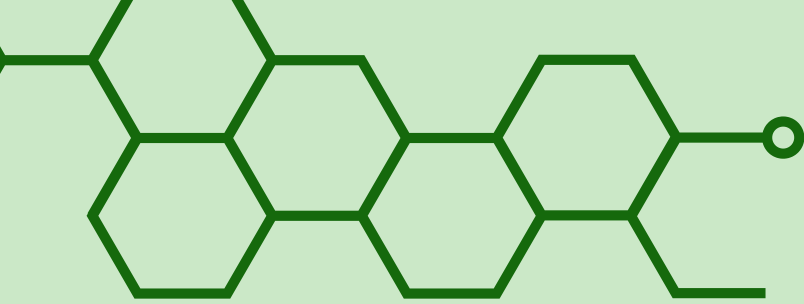
We completed **6 meetings** with The Spice House's company planner Maranda Leigh, who was referred to us by the CEO. In a final presentation, we presented cost-benefit analyses and resources for implementing a jar return program, which was **passed on to the company's operations team**. We kept regular communication with The Spice House and hope they will implement our recommendations. We also created a **one-page informative guide** to promote jar return systems to future partners.

### **SUGAR BLISS**

We promoted the sustainable practices of our longstanding partner, the UChicago alum-owned local cookie line Sugar Bliss, to sustainability-minded customers. We created various promotional materials like a **sustainability newsletter** and **Earth Day promotionals** to emphasize their sustainable packaging practices. This broadened Sugar Bliss's reach and increased its sustainable impact.

## **PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY ON CAMPUS**

We promoted biking to students as a sustainable form of transportation through collaboration with PSI Green Data, UChicago Facility Services, and representatives at Lyft, Inc. We completed 2 more meetings with PSI Green Data, UChicago Facility Services (FS), and Dean Rasmussen. Our recommendations convinced Facility Services to explore a **hybrid Lyft/Divvy program** that would **increase the accessibility of bike sharing** on campus. We also convinced FS to **increasingly publicize** the affordable Divvy for Everyone program next year. Our strengthened ties with FS and Lyft will facilitate our promotion of biking next year to ultimately reduce our community's Scope 3 emissions.



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

*Public Engagement seeks to bring all members of the UChicago community into addressing the most pressing environmental issues, both through education and collaborative action, as well as to leverage partnerships with other environmentally-oriented groups to improve the sustainability of the school and community.*

*This quarter, we have focused our efforts on engaging a broader cross-section of the UChicago community in the growing fossil fuel divestment campaign. More information on the campaign is available at [uchicagodivest.com](http://uchicagodivest.com) and [@divestuchicago](https://www.instagram.com/divestuchicago) on Instagram.*

*Next year, the group will shift into being fully focused on divestment, given the success of working with other organizations on the campaign over the past year.*

## DIVESTIVAL

Over **200 students** attended Divestival, a protest and concert to promote fossil fuel divestment and broader financial transparency for the University of Chicago's endowment. The event had **several speakers** from undergraduate and graduate organizing groups, and **four student bands** (The Dirt Red Brass Band, Directrix, Puddlejumper, and Aag), along with a fundraiser coordinated by the Indigenous Students Association. In addition to collaborating with the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) to create and coordinate the event, the Public Engagement team in particular assisted with concert set-up and clean-up, and making and distributing posters/signs for participants to hold. Students across various RSOs were able to connect and learn more about the fossil fuel divestment campaign. In addition, students and community members that were not affiliated with environmental organizations also came and participated in the event, allowing for additional awareness and engagement with the divestment movement. The Divestival was also featured in The Chicago Maroon.





## **DIVESTMENT POSTER PARTY**

We hosted an event attended by 30+ students, including PSI members, members of other environmental organizations, and the general student body, to promote community building and craft-making in support of the fossil fuel divestment movement. We coordinated attendees to create 70+ posters as campus-wide promotional materials, collected them, and strategically located them to maximize presence. This project promoted individual engagement with the campaign, and let students explore artistic outlets as a piece of organizing work.

## **SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM**


Project leaders Meghan Hendrix and Georgia Wluka coordinated with Community Action and members from the Environmental Research Group, the Green Fund, and Undergraduate Student Government's Committee on Campus Sustainability to plan a sustainability symposium, featuring a poster session with environmental groups followed by a moderated conversation with future Dean of the College Melina Hale, with Dr. Sabina Sheikh of CEGU as an interlocutor. We made and presented a poster for the fair, and spoke to students, faculty, and administration members about our work.

## **DIVESTMENT VIDEO**

Yona Litwin, a member of Public Engagement, crafted a video to provide an overview of UChicago's environmental commitments as they relate to the fossil fuel divestment campaign. He was inspired by media projects coordinated by campaigns at peer institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania. We will screen this video at an end-of-year study break, organized by PE member Dokyong Ryoo.

## **OTHER MEDIA PROJECTS**

Project group members have also begun developing individual projects, including op-eds and social media posts, to update people about divestment. Some of these projects will continue into the summer and next fall.



# FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT RESOLUTION

Project group members assisted in the development of a **fossil fuel divestment resolution** in the Undergraduate Student Government. Project leader Meghan Hendrix was the primary author of the resolution, which suggests that the university should form an advisory committee on investment responsibility that explores divestment, along with advocating for the implementation of the demands on the divestment petition. The resolution had four other sponsors, including Chloe Brettmann, the Committee on Campus Sustainability Chair and Co-Project Leader of Campus Composting. There were also 43 signatories from College Council representatives and the major sustainability organizations on campus. The resolution passed overwhelmingly—there were 14 votes in favor of the resolution, 1 abstention, and 0 votes against the resolution. This resolution was available to administrators during the Sustainability Symposium via a QR code.

**THE FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT PETITION GAINED OVER 700 SIGNATURES OVER THE COURSE OF THE QUARTER THROUGH OUR WORK WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE TO TABLE AROUND CAMPUS.**



# SCIENCE, ART, AND SUSTAINABILITY

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

## SIS BY SAS

Initially starting out under the “Major Talks” umbrella, project group member Claire Fu sought to conduct interviews with people on or affiliated with UChicago that have found interesting ways to connect their passion for sustainability with their careers. These were recorded in a podcast format.

We recorded four interviews with **Paul Copp, Shree Mehrotra, Will Lutterman, and Ryan Kellogg**, in that order. The interviews were done between the end of Winter Quarter and mid-Spring Quarter. They spanned topics on Chinese literature, environmental economics, and gender violence in India. The podcasts have been uploaded through Spotify and were named “Specialties in Sustainability” because of the clever alliteration with SAS’s project group name. Project group member Annie Yang designed a graphic as our podcast cover art.



**SPECIALTIES IN  
SUSTAINABILITY**

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

# SUSTAINABLE DESIGN WORKSHOP

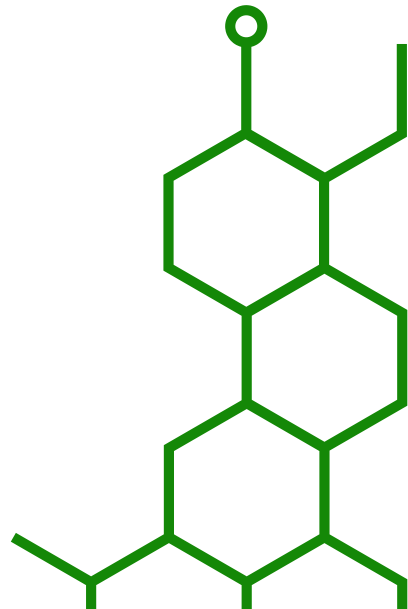
Continuing our mission of promoting interest in sustainability in specialties and industries other than those with direct relation to the environment (like environmental science and environmental studies) we collaborated with **Open Studio** to host a sustainable design workshop to give students practical advice on making their own projects more sustainable and pursuing design-related careers (like architecture and engineering) with sustainability in mind. The workshop was facilitated by project group member Annie Yang.

We had a **panel of three** guests including **Jasmina Scekic**, a UChicago alumni and energy consultant, **Sam Park**, an instructor and renowned architect, and **Alex Enarson**, a local expert in material use and nature play. The workshop detailed a conversation with students and our three guests as well as a design challenge. The workshop saw roughly twenty-five student participants and many fruitful topics of conversation. We plan to use the advice for sustainable design shared in the workshop to create an infographic to be featured on PSI's social media.

# PAINT THE POINT

This event was in collaboration with **Environmental Education** and **Community Action**. In communication with organizers from **Save the Point**, we were able to host an event where PSI members and Hyde Park students could come enjoy the nature of Promontory Point, create art, and spend time with other PSI members.

We engaged the UChicago and Hyde Park communities and created an environment where they were able to enjoy local landmarks. We also invited individuals to engage with and think about the importance of the limestone revetments to encourage the conservation of the point. Finally, we fostered inter-project group collaboration within PSI.



# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

During the Spring Quarter, we held our annual board elections where our members democratically elected PSI's board for the coming academic year.

We are excited to announce PSI's board for the 2023-2024 school year and thank our old board for all of their hard work.

**PRESIDENTS:**

**Ellen Ma**

**Elena Tiedens**

**VICE PRESIDENT:**

**Grace Hu**

**TREASURER:**

**Raghav Pardasani**

**SECRETARY:**

**Nathalie Lai**

**SOCIAL MEDIA & EVENTS CHAIR:**

**Annie Yang**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
& OUTREACH COORDINATOR:**

**Cal LeDoux**



# MEMBER BONDING

*From RSO-wide socials to organizing one-on-one member connections, we value maintaining an inviting community to encourage collaboration.*

This quarter, we hosted our annual **PSI Formal**. Over 95 individuals attended PSI formal, of which half were PSI members, and the other half were PSI guests.

We organized five groups of PSI members across project groups to share discounted, plant-based meals during Plant-Based Restaurant Week.

We held **two additional socials**, a PSI end-of-year picnic which saw an attendance of roughly 20 members and a sunset hangout for new and old project group leaders.

