

QUARTERLY REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE | WINTER '23



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 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



EVENT COMPOSTING

This winter we also rolled out our event composting program. After reaching out to various departments and RSO's, we have provided composting services to a variety of events. We brought composting to **3 EPIC events** and the **KSO Show**, the latter of which diverted **over 100 lbs of waste** alone. We are continuing conversations to explore new avenues for this project and make this a mainstay at the University, thereby furthering our goal of making composting a part of the University's infrastructure.

CAMPUS WASTE REDUCTION

We work with campus organizations, residence life, and off-campus students to increase sustainability awareness, support waste reduction and diversion, and increase reusable options.

ON-CAMPUS THRIFT STORE

Our primary project for the quarter was working to establish a **semi-permanent thrift shop on-campus** for Spring Quarter. From the beginning of January, we worked with campus stakeholders—including Michael Hayes from Campus and Student Life, Jen Kennedy with Student Centers, and Karina Pabón with the Center for Leadership and Involvement—to designate a space on campus to be used as a PSI-operated on-campus thrift store for the entirety of Spring Quarter. We were able to secure the space formerly occupied by Stuart Café to **open our store on April 2nd**.





ON-CAMPUS THRIFT STORE CONTINUED

Clothing Collection: To ensure we will have enough inventory to sustain our store for an entire quarter, we spent a significant amount of time collecting clothing donations. During Week 4, collected clothing in-person at a table in Reynolds Club for three days, and collected **16 large boxes of clothing**. We established clothing collection boxes in three dining commons (Baker, Cathey, and Woodlawn) and Cobb Café, which will all stay in place for most of Spring Quarter.

Clothing management: We hosted **two clothing sorting parties** during the quarter in our storage space in Hinds, in which members of our group and PSI at large helped to sort clothing donations into specific categories. We also separated items from the general donations that will be included in the “curated section” of the store.

Creative Team: We formed a Creative Team of students beyond PSI who were interested in helping with creative design for the store. This helped to **expand the bandwidth of our group**. The Creative Team was subdivided into three groups: the Interior Design Team worked to plan the physical store space and source aesthetic materials, the Graphic Design Team began creating all of the graphics related to the store, and the Clothing Inventory Team worked on styling and pricing curated garments to be displayed in the store.

Green Fund: We utilized some of our Green Fund funding granted last quarter to purchase necessary items for the thrift store, including secondhand clothing racks, hangers, and other furniture items. We worked with CLI and Student Centers to finalize plans for ordering a clothing donation bin to be placed in Reynolds Club (to be purchased with Green Fund allocations).

COMMUNITY ACTION

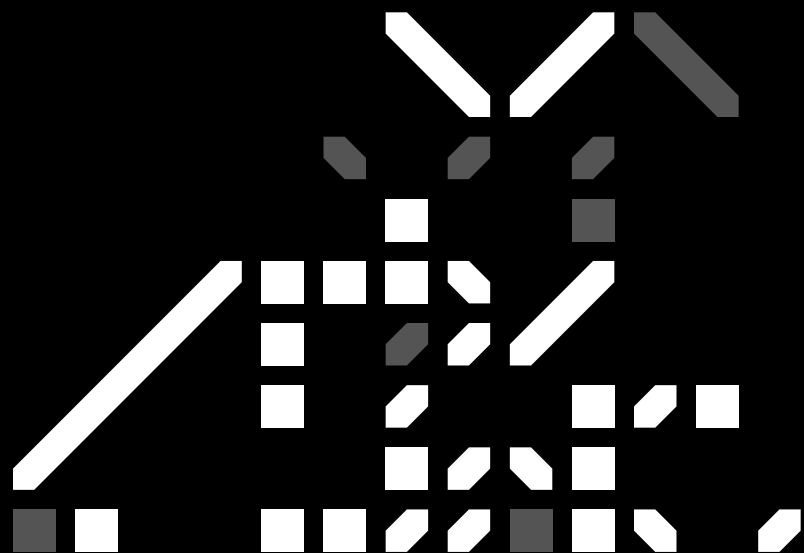
Community Action aims to engage students in environmental activism and service initiatives across campus and the Hyde Park community. Students will partake in hands-on projects in order to promote systemic environmental change and advocate for a sustainable relationship between students, community members,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

COLLABORATIONS WITH NORTHWESTERN AND LOYOLA

FossilFree Northwestern wants to set up a coalition of environmental organizations throughout Chicago universities in order to collaborate on projects citywide. We have to have a few more phone calls with FossilFree in order to finalize the implementation of this coalition. With Loyola, we collaborated on organizing the **March 3 Global Climate Strike in Chicago**. We promoted the event on campus, as well as created a playlist, and helped organize logistics.

SUMMER BREEZE SUSTAINABILITY

We are working with COUP to make Summer Breeze more sustainable and got PSI's Campus Composting project group on board for the event. We are also organizing a **cleanup the day after Summer Breeze** that COUP will be advertising and are currently working on getting sustainable and **plant-based food trucks** to cater Summer Breeze as well.





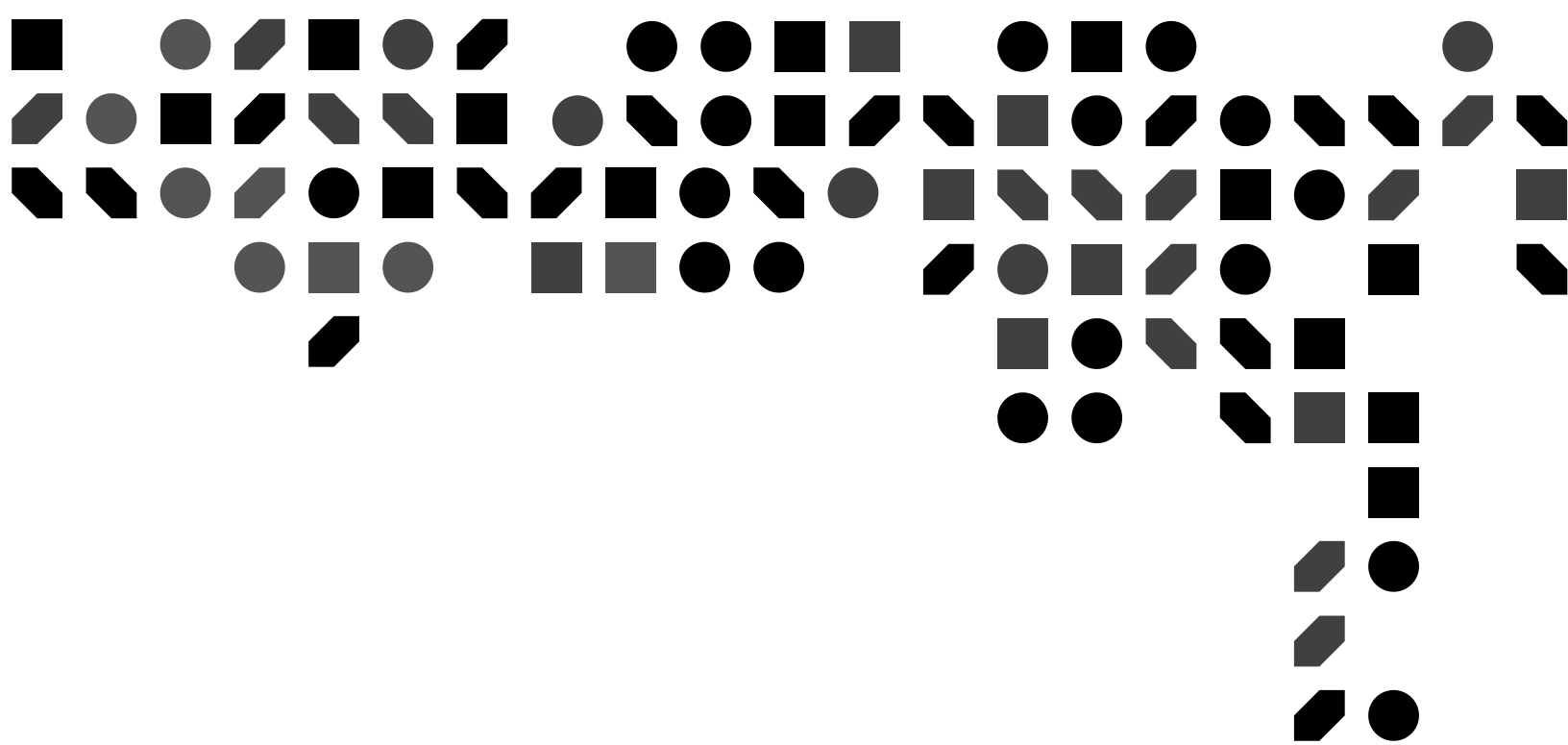
LETTER-WRITING EVENTS

Throughout this winter quarter, we hosted **three letter writing events** on January 15th and 29th as well as on February 10th. The first letter writing event consisted of only PSI members and focused on addressing the destruction of the **Midway wetland**. The letters were sent out to the 5th ward alderman and mayoral candidates and outlined how the construction of a park on the wetland was a violation of the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) Program. The second event was central on the **limestone removal taking place at the Point and Morgan Shoal**. The final event tackled all of these issues and was open to both the PSI community and public.

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.





TEACHING

We continued collaborations with **Ray School** and the **Gary Comer Youth Center** Green Teens Program, where we taught interactive lessons twice each week.

This quarter, we continued working on **new presentations** to create a robust collection of environmental topics to teach in schools that can be adapted to various grade levels. Our lessons topics included ocean acidification and future food systems.

We also organized a **speaker series** with our partner schools, with guests such as Will Lutterman of Climate and Energy Careers and Dr. Bronwyn Nichols Lodato of the Midway Plaisance Advisory Council educating students on green careers and activism in support of green space.

OTHER PROJECTS

We further developed our **local article writing campaign** focusing on environmental issues facing Chicago and the greater community. This quarter, we assigned topics to groups of 3 members, conducted research, and wrote rough drafts to soon send to local papers.

Also, we started **weekly gardening** at the UChicago Charter School Woodlawn Campus.

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

As UChicago's current dining hall food waste management system (EcoDigesters) approaches its end of life, UChicago Dining is seeking to either replace or introduce a more environmentally and financially sustainable alternative by the start of the next academic year. Green Data supports these efforts by researching promising and emerging technologies and ultimately providing a recommendation for a **future sustainable and cost-effective food waste system**.

We conducted extensive research on peer institutions' solutions and are proposing the EcoDigesters be replaced with **Anaerobic Digesters from Green Era**, a company that uses food waste to produce energy for Chicagoland communities. Through outreach and recurring meetings, we have developed a working partnership with Green Era and Block Bins to envision the implementation of this solution at UChicago. We met with Matthew Powers from Dining three times this quarter to refine our research and have met with representatives from Green Era and Block Bins. In conjunction with our own independent research, we are utilizing these insights from industry professionals to develop a **data-driven argument to replace the EcoDigesters with our proposed system**.



CWR SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

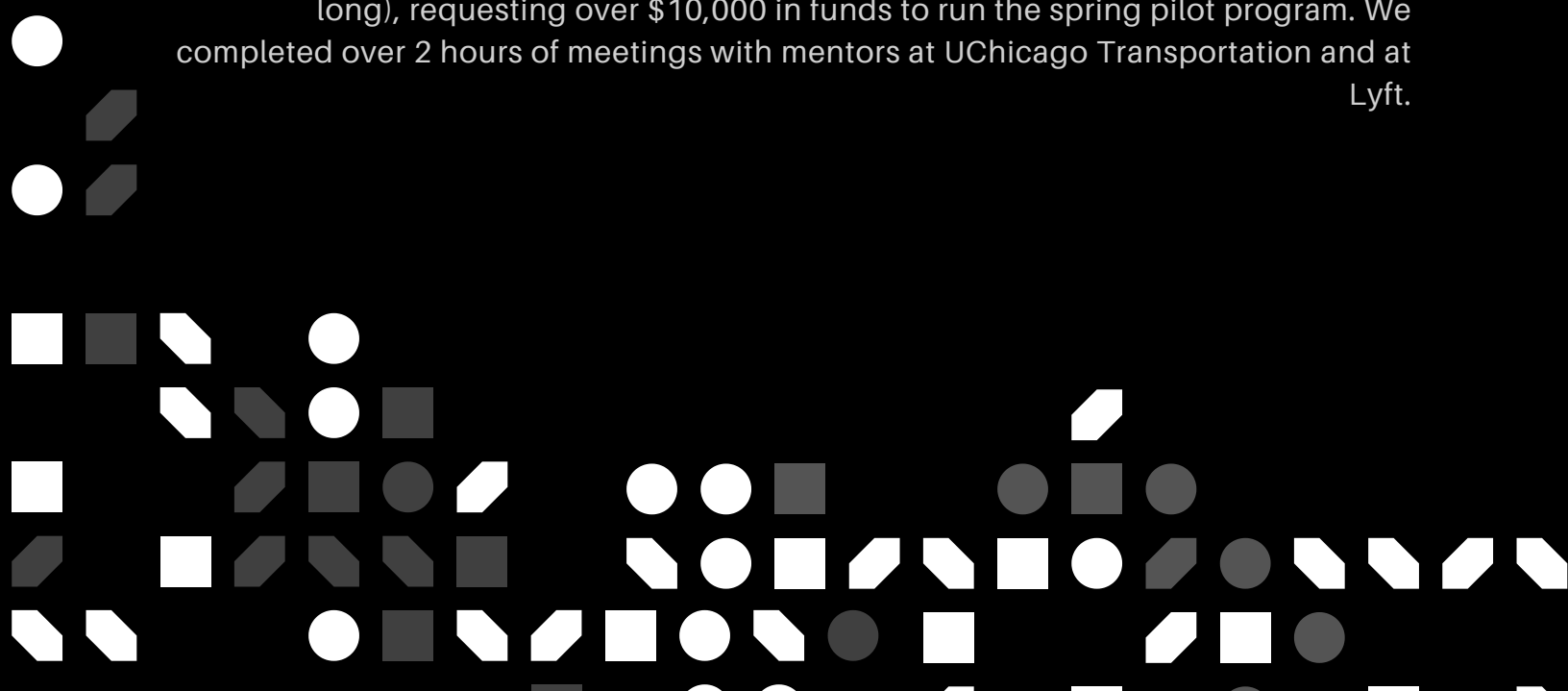
CWR conducted **two waste audits through surveys** (in 2021 and 2022) about access to recycling, and they want to use this data to publish an article in a local newspaper about access to recycling in Hyde Park and how this access varies across property management companies. We are conducting data analysis from both of these surveys and evaluating potential connections between **recycling availability and property management**.

This quarter, we analyzed off-campus recycling data surveyed from 229 UChicago students in 2021. We created **data visualizations** representing different recycling metrics useful for understanding trends and patterns in off-campus recycling access by area and property management. Preliminary summary statistics and observations can be found [here](#)

DIVVY PROJECT

We are collaborating with PSI's Green Partnerships project group to understand whether a **reduced or free Divvy membership** would be possible to implement at UChicago. This project is a continuation of last year's Divvy Project.

We aim to run a pilot program for the months of April and May, offering 50-100 students 10 free Divvy rides every month. We are working closely with the support of Beth Tindel (UChicago Director of Transportation) and committed representatives at Lyft. We submitted a **comprehensive Green Fund grant application** (15+ pages long), requesting over \$10,000 in funds to run the spring pilot program. We completed over 2 hours of meetings with mentors at UChicago Transportation and at Lyft.



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.

SUGAR BLISS

We are excited to work again with former partner SugarBliss Bakery, an alumnus-owned, Chicago-based bakery in the Loop. Sugar Bliss currently has **sustainable packaging for their cookies**, which we are working to promote by researching recycling drop-offs, linking the bakery to local news outlets to promote sustainable practices, and producing marketing materials.

We created two flier designs that will be incorporated into Sugar Bliss's monthly newsletter in order to supplement previous recycling marketing materials. We also reached out to three local news outlets in order to **increase press for Sugar Bliss's sustainable practices**. For Sugar Bliss's Earth week cookie promotion, we brainstormed marketing ideas.



BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

We partnered with Blackstone Library (a branch of Chicago Public Library) to conduct research on their behalf to advance sustainability. They expressed interest in **donating used books, planting a garden on the property, and providing sustainability focused education** to their visitors. We completed research on ways to greenify the library's surrounding area.

PLANT-BASED RESTAURANT WEEK AND URBAN CANOPY

We worked to secure partners for the annual UChicago Plant-Based Restaurant Week in which UChicago students are given **10-15% discounts at various plant-based restaurants in Hyde Park**. We also met with a representative at Urban Canopy, a Chicago-based sustainability nonprofit, and hope to set up a deal offering **composting to participating restaurants for the week**.

We secured **two new partners** (Conscious Plates, LiteHouse Grill) and **one repeat partner** (Snail Thai Cafe) for Plant-Based Restaurant Week in April. We also completed a meeting with our representative at Urban Canopy and are in the process of coordinating composting for Plant-Based Restaurant Week.

THE SPICE HOUSE

We met with the Planning Manager multiple times over the quarter to design a partnership. We are aiming to help the Spice House implement a **reusable jar scheme**, complete a **waste audit**, reassess and possibly replace packaging materials used, apply for **sustainable business certifications**, and **compost** food waste in their production processes.

We completed multiple meetings with the Planning Manager. From this we began research into implementing a store-wide reusable jar pilot program. We are in discussion with our partner's warehouse to begin this operation.

DIVVY PROJECT

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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 and @divestuchicago on Instagram.

2030 PLAN SUMMARY

We summarized the University's 2030 sustainability plan, highlighting interesting components that could turn into **article ideas**. We are strategizing ways to increase interest in the plan across the general student body.

ALUMNI OUTREACH

We reached out to list of environmentally-involved alumni, and prompted them to **share and distribute divestment petition**.

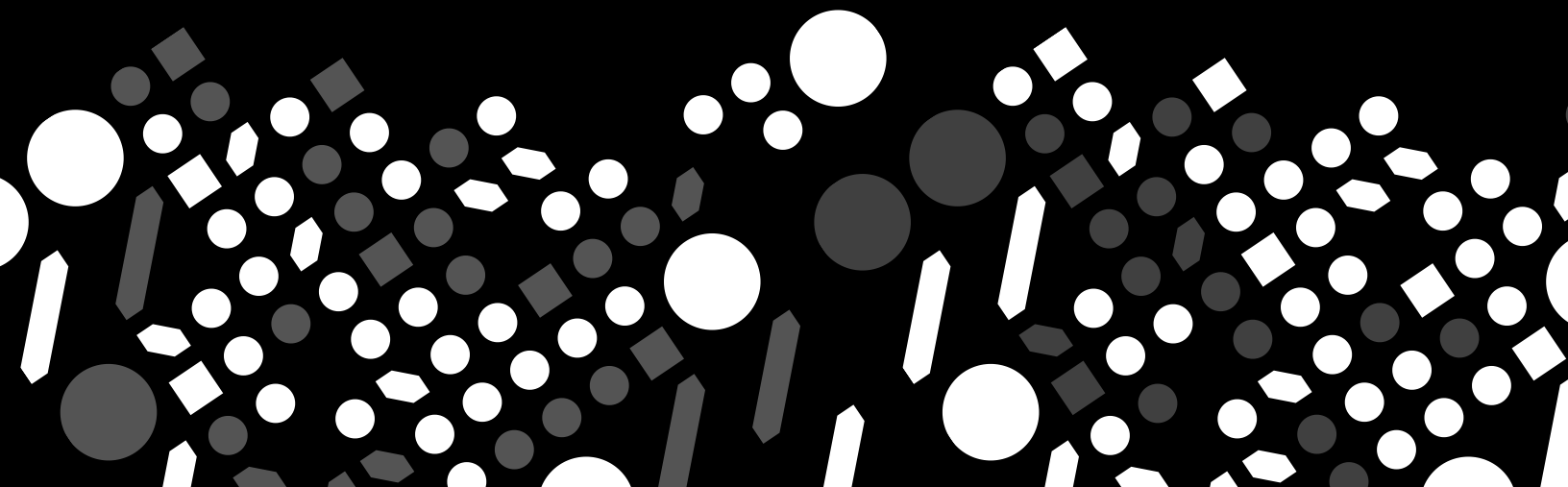
DIVESTMENT TABLING

We tabled in Hutch and Cobb multiple times a week in cooperation with EJTF. Through this effort, we **gained over 700 signatures** over the course of the quarter



DIVESTMENT POSTER PARTY

We hosted a divestment poster making 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. **Attendees created 70+ posters** as campus-wide promotional materials, and we collected them and strategized their locations to maximize presence of the divestment campaign .



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.

TRASHION PHOTOSHOOT

We worked with MODA Magazine on a trashion shoot for their "Normalized Apocalypse" magazine theme. We created contemporary **clothing items and accessories out of typically discarded materials**. Final products included a vest made of red and white plastic, USPS packaging, and blue gum wrappers. We also created headphones out of cardboard and a skirt of Trader Joe's bags. These items were then styled and worn in a **photoshoot to be included in MODA Magazine's Spring Issue**. This photoshoot was a first for SAS and was an exciting way to pair sustainability with fashion to call attention to fast fashion and the mass amounts of waste our society produces.



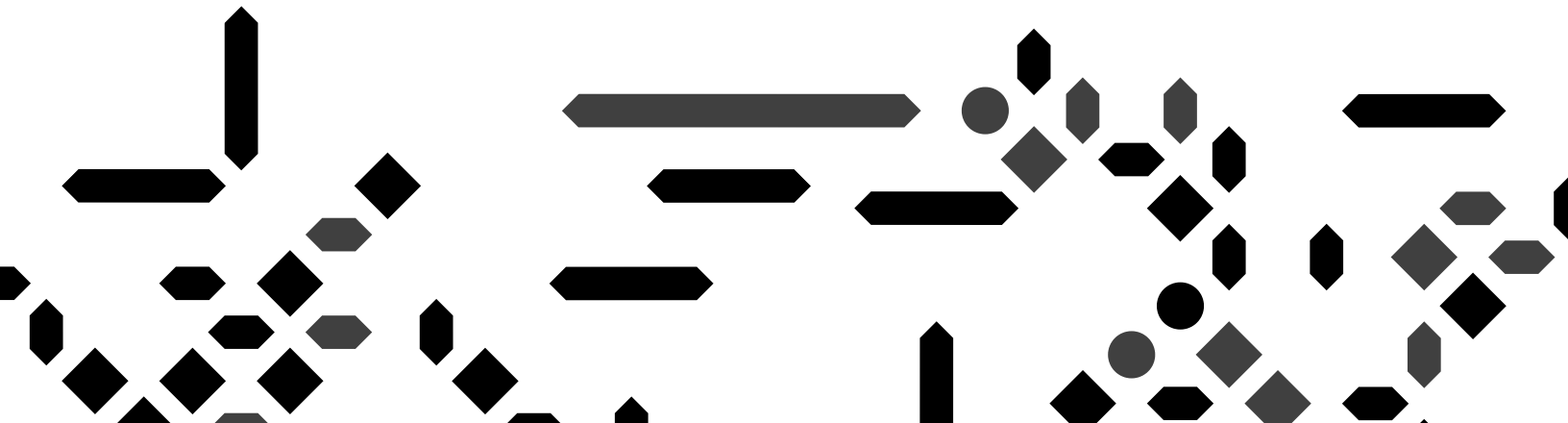


MAJOR TALKS

SAS is developing a series in **collaboration with faculty from across different majors** to spotlight how different areas of study can be incorporated into careers that focus on sustainability from a variety of perspectives. We aim to highlight a variety of disciplines through synchronous discussions in front of an audience and as mini-podcasts. This quarter, we worked towards including two UChicago faculty members in our series.

We recorded the **first episode of our podcast with Dr. Paul Copp**, a professor in Chinese literature with an interest in combining his volunteer work at the Sand Ridge Nature Center with his academic research. In the podcast, we discussed his thoughts on environmental humanities and his research. We hope to continue this series with other professors and PSI alumni.

We also organized a **talk with Dr. Sarah Fredericks** to take place in the second week of Spring Quarter. Professor Fredericks researches environmental ethics in the Divinity School.



EXECUTIVE BOARD

EXPANDING PSI'S NETWORK AND MEMBER RESOURCES

We continued communications with the Office of Sustainability and built connections with the Center for Student Leadership and Student Centers. We hope to continue to see how **working with administration** can synergistically support sustainability efforts.

To foster connections between PSI members and **professional development opportunities**, we provided opportunities for members to give a small presentation on their topic of choice and organized a guest speaker from **Argonne National Laboratories**. To support members applying for internships, our Professional Development and Outreach Coordinator created a **running document of summer positions** in various sustainability-adjacent fields.

We also created an **Earth Week working group** of members to support divestment efforts and parks surrounding UChicago's Campus.



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 **2 PSI-wide events**: our annual "PSI Trivia" and a Valentine's Day study break. Each project group also hosted a social, with events ranging from dinners to thrifting in Wicker Park.

To create connections between project groups, we continued our quarterly Coffee Chat groups, where we had **20 program participants**.

We also hosted our **quarterly leadership training**, where project group leaders and executive board share leadership styles, discuss solutions to common issues of leading a group, and provide updates and goals for the quarter. Leadership training ends with a social, which was an apartment potluck this quarter.

