

# QUARTERLY REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE | FALL '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. Divest UChicago
5. Environmental Education
6. Green Data
7. Green Partnerships
8. Science, Art, and Sustainability







# CAMPUS COMPOSTING

*Campus Composting aims to reduce improper disposal and creation of organic waste in the University of Chicago community by changing waste sorting practices. We assist with implementing composting infrastructure and increasing student awareness surrounding organic waste disposal.*



# CAFE COMPOSTING

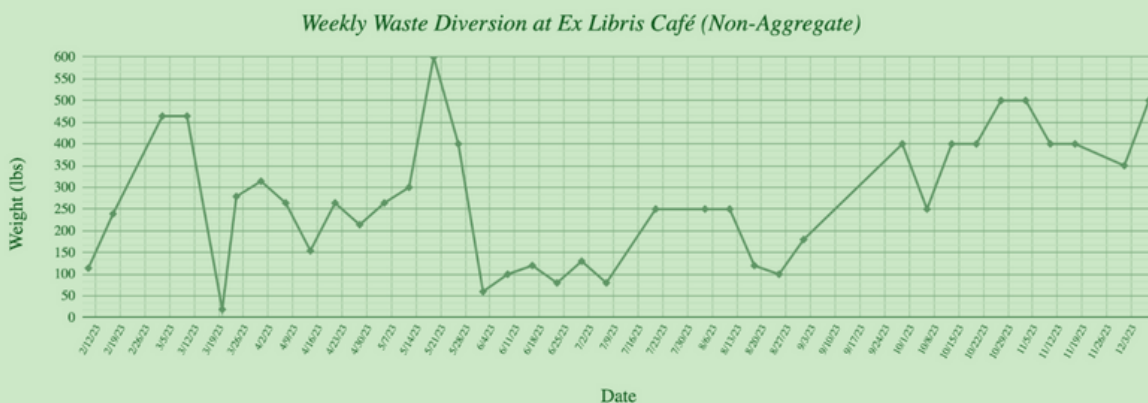
Ex Libris Cafe has continued to compost with our funding, and has collected over **10,000 pounds** of coffee grounds to date. Staff at Harper Cafe expressed interest in starting composting, and our team met with them to discuss a strategy. We plan to apply for funding for both cafes next quarter.

# 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.

# DATA VISUALIZATION AND ANALYSIS

After introducing new members to our past and ongoing projects, we organized our data, including number of pounds diverted and number of participants, into clear and concise visualizations that can be used in grant proposals and an end-of-year report. View the graphics [here](#).



# CAMPUS WASTE REDUCATION

*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.*

## CONTINUATION OF reSOURCE THRIFT STORE:

### Hours & Logistics

- We had operating hours Tues-Fri 2-5 PM.
- We employed a team of 8 student employees who collected donations, operated the store, and more.
- As of November 16, 2023, the thrift store has generated over **\$15,600 in revenue** over the course of 8 weeks, processed **1,564 transactions**, and sold **3,442 items**—almost 1,000 more items than in Spring Quarter.

### Collaborations

- **MODA:** We collaborated with a fashion RSO on campus to produce a series of promotional videos where students competed to produce the best outfit out of clothing at reSOURCE. We also organized a future collaboration effort in which we will donate textiles from reSOURCE to be used by designers in MODA's annual fashion show.
- **Migrant Shelters:** We contacted local migrant shelters and partners to donate winter clothing and other needed items.

## E-WASTE INITIATIVE

- We identified campus partners that do E-waste recycling and contacted them for future partnerships.
- Campus Waste Reduction would like to promote education on E-waste recycling and boost infrastructure moving forward.





## TEXTILE RECYCLING

We contacted textile recycling locations and animal shelters to prevent textile waste from clothing that could not be sold at reSOURCE.

## FOOD WASTE INITIATIVES

### Waste in Campus Cafes

- We conducted a milk study assessing the level of milk wasted on a daily level at the busiest student-run cafe on campus, **Ex Libris**.
- We calculated the profit loss from milk waste and obtained data from Ex Libris about the cost of their milks.
- Future directions include potentially working to reduce alt milk subsidies or to educate about the benefits of drinking non-dairy milks.

### Food recovery at catered events

- We contacted current food recovery groups and brainstormed ways to more effectively communicate free food news to students.
- Starting next quarter, we may pilot an email listhost or a social media account advertising free food events to reduce food waste from catered events.

# COMMUNITY ACTION

*Community Action aims to connect students with environmental activism and service organizations across campus, Hyde Park, and the South Side communities. Through immersive and hands-on projects, we strive to build strong and long-lasting relationships with members of our community.*

## RECRUITMENT CLEANUP

On October 9th, Community Action hosted a recruitment cleanup on the Midway. Current PSI members picked up trash and shared our PSI experiences with prospective members. This cleanup resulted in removing around **100 lbs of trash** and we got around **30 people** to participate. Prospective members were able to get to know current club members and have their questions answered. Many of those in attendance applied for PSI as a result, boosting recruitment numbers.

## CA x EE MIDWAY CLEANUP

On November 11th, we hosted an hour-long group cleanup with **Environmental Education** to bring students from South Side schools to pick up trash on the Midway. We collected **120+ lbs** of trash, and there were around **20 attendees**. Members from both project groups were able to work together to collect as much trash as possible which was a great avenue for cross-project-group interaction. As a result of these efforts, we successfully **beautified the midway**, and we hope to collaborate with EE on other events in the future.





# ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES PANEL

On November 4th, we hosted four environmentally focused organizations for a panel and roundtable event. Representatives from **Midway Plaisance Advisory Council**, **The Point Advisory Council**, **Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange**, and **UChicago Career Advancement** attended. We had approximately **20 attendees**. At the event, attendees heard about representatives' organizations and how they can participate in them. We had some people from outside of PSI as well as members of Community Action attend the event. Attendees were able to learn about ways to be involved in sustainable efforts at the Midway, the Point, and Creative Chicago Reuse Exchange, as well as sustainable employment opportunities and internships through career advancement. **Multiple people in attendance signed up to get involved with the various organizations that were present for the panel.**





# DIVEST UCHICAGO

*Divest UChicago aims to build infrastructure to support the fossil fuel divestment movement at the University of Chicago from an institutional perspective. We seek to build a broad coalition of student organizations, alumni, faculty, and other stakeholders; engage members of the administration in open communication around divestment; and expand the reach of the campaign through work with media outlets and community organizations.*

## ALUMNI OUTREACH

We learned how to use Facebook and LinkedIn to prepare for outreach to a wide range of UChicago alumni to create a broad supportive network for divestment at UChicago. We used Hubspot, a client relations management software, to organize over **500 alumni contacts**. We added over 500 alumni contacts to our contact relations manager, and trained team members in a **variety of base-building techniques**.





## PRESS RELEASES

We developed and conducted an internal training on best practices for writing and disseminating press releases. This training also covered how to compile contacts for, and conduct outreach to, pertinent media outlets and reporters. We collaboratively edited the [press release](#) regarding the legal complaint filed by the Divest UChicago coalition, before sending it out to an extensive media list. Across the campaign, we garnered media mentions in [the Guardian](#), [WBEZ](#), [the Financial Times](#), [the Hyde Park Herald](#), and [the Chicago Maroon](#).

## FORMAL COMPLAINT

Following the release of [EJTF's](#) legal complaint regarding UChicago's investment in fossil fuels, we crafted an email to administration members requesting a public response. We then wrote a template email for an auto-emailer tool used for a community-wide email-writing campaign targeted at several members of the UChicago administration. Through our auto-emailer tool, **over 300 emails** were sent by students, alums, faculty members, and parents to members of the UChicago administration. This tool and these emails increased both public and administrative awareness of the campaign.

## OP-ED WRITING

Using a training guide provided by [the Citizens Climate Lobby](#), we learned how to craft impactful and targeted op-eds. We partnered with [Campus Composting](#) to learn together and build off of one another's experience.

# 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. We also aim to extend beyond the classroom and reach a wider audience in the form of written publications.*

## TEACHING IN GARY COMER YOUTH CENTER

- Environmental education has begun teaching at **Gary Comer Youth Center**. We prepare different presentations and hands-on activities for the students.
- Before instruction began, we had members prepare new presentations weekly and brainstorm different interactive activities for the students.
- We visited Comer over the course of **6 weeks**. We went **twice a week** teaching a beginner group of students and a seasoned group. While waiting on other schools, every member was able to go and teach in the classroom at least once.

## PREPARING FOR UCHICAGO CHARTER SCHOOL & RAY ELEMENTARY

We spent the quarter coordinating with CPS and school administrators to get our members background checked and approved to volunteer at schools. We have all members approved to volunteer at **Ray Elementary**. The only step left is to have a handful of members get fingerprinted in order to be approved at the **UChicago Charter School**. We are on track to begin teaching and participating in Garden Club at the beginning of the winter quarter.



## PUMPKIN COLLECTION

We aided Gary Comer in their pumpkin smashing event by collecting pumpkins for them around UChicago's campus. We made a poster inviting people to drop off their old Halloween pumpkins with us and drove them to Comer. The pumpkin collection was a success. A lot of people from inside and outside of PSI dropped off their pumpkins with us, and we were also able to collect some old pumpkins from past dorm events. Gary Comer Youth Center had a successful pumpkin smash. The pumpkins were composted and used for their student gardens.

## CA X EE CLEANUP

We partnered with **Community Action** on a Midway cleanup that would engage the students we teach. We circulated a poster to the Charter school and Gary Comer. Our student attendance at this event was low due to students' varying levels of availability on the weekends; however, we will try to remedy this in the future by advertising the events earlier and more frequently. However, the event saw high UChicago student attendance, and almost all EE members showed up to the cleanup.



# GREEN DATA

*Green Data merges students' passion for environmentalism and data science through substantive member education and member-led research and consulting-oriented projects. With numerous learning and collaboration opportunities throughout the year, members leverage data to tackle issues of sustainability while developing technical and leadership skills. Using this analytical perspective, we aim to produce and share results that have a tangible impact on UChicago and the community at large.*

## GENERAL EDUCATION

During the fall quarter, Green Data members received a focused education in Python, covering core programming concepts and emphasizing clean coding practices. The curriculum included in-depth exploration of data structures, algorithms, and sustainable computing principles. Members became proficient in eco-centric data analysis using Python libraries, with a strong emphasis on minimizing environmental impact. Overall, the fall quarter equipped Green Data members with the skills needed for **sustainable data stewardship** in Python.

Members completed a total of **four Jupyter notebooks** that featured an array of Python data analysis techniques and tested their understanding with a Kahoot game at the end of the quarter, as well as applying their skills to data sets they found by themselves.





# INDIVIDUAL MEMBER PROJECTS

Green Data members engaged in individual projects to complement their education, showcasing their Python proficiency, and applying their knowledge to real-world scenarios. These individual endeavors showcased the versatility of Python in addressing environmental challenges, with projects spanning areas such as carbon footprint analysis, air quality data modeling, and sustainable resource management. Each member contributed to the collective goal of advancing green data practices, applying innovative solutions to enhance data analysis while minimizing ecological impact.

**Each member successfully completed their own project proposal and practiced project development and how to apply data science skills to different areas.**

# MEMBER OUTREACH

Green Data members collaborated on a collective initiative to lay the groundwork for impactful projects. As part of this endeavor, members dedicated time to compile an outreach document for fostering community engagement and collaboration. Overall, the collaborative effort in creating the outreach document demonstrated **the commitment of Green Data members to extend the impact of their Python-based skills beyond their immediate community.**

We have created an extensive spreadsheet featuring several contacts for potential collaborations. We will reach out to these contacts during Winter Break to formally set up projects for next quarter.

# 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.*

## GENERAL EDUCATION

To start off the year and quarter, Green Partnership members brainstormed sustainable issues and types of businesses we hoped to work with. Through training, our members developed skills in sustainable consulting, research, data analysis, presentation, and communication with businesses. **This training culminated in a case study, in which each member demonstrated their growth in these areas.**

## PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

We conducted meetings with three potential partners (**WasteNotCompost**, **Urban Rivers**, and **UChicago Student Centers**) to present partnership ideas. We are currently working on creating project proposals and formulating a timeline and more detailed plan to work with each partner.

## BUSINESS OUTREACH

We reached out to **40 businesses** in the Chicago area with the objective of establishing collaborative partnerships aimed toward integrating sustainable practices into their operations.

## CASE STUDY

Members were given a hypothetical restaurant to work with and design sustainable practices for. Using information about the restaurant's current practices and a breakdown of how much waste they produce and where it comes from, we conducted carbon footprint analyses and designed plans to target these sources of waste. We each made a presentation (5-10 slides) with our waste analysis, solutions, and reasons why or why not the restaurant would cooperate, and shared our slideshows during general meeting.





# SCIENCE. ART, AND SUSTAINABILITY

*SAS seeks to bridge PSI to the general student body and grow the sustainability movement on campus by using media and the arts to render scientific research accessible and draw attention to environmental issues.*



# CAMPUS-WIDE INSTALLATIONS

We want to create an art installation using photos of campus collected from the campus community and create a collage to essentially showcase our campus.

Our overall message: *let's preserve the natural beauty of our campus together*

We have collected **over 150 photos**, and have a **venue confirmed** after several weeks of planning. We will install the collage at the beginning of the Winter Quarter in **the Logan Center**, and we have already ordered the photos for the project.

## SOCIAL MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES

We sent out forms and emails to different people doing work in sustainability in order to interview them and feature them on the PSI Instagram page. Unfortunately, people were not very responsive to either the form or the email, so the project has evolved to become transcribing the existing podcast series **SIS by SAS** from last year, in order to make it more accessible to the general public.



## ALT PROTEIN TABLING

We worked with the RSO **Alt Protein** to raise awareness about alternative proteins on campus. We made a **comprehensive infographic** and also tabled with Alt Protein to share how soy nuggets taste just as good as real nuggets. We engaged with **nearly a hundred students** through our table and we hope to work with Alt Protein more in the future. We plan to continue disseminating our infographic through online platforms and social media.



# EXECUTIVE BOARD

*This quarter, PSI's Executive Board has focused on cultivating strong interdisciplinary networks both within and outside of PSI through new partnerships, working groups, and interest groups.*

## FALL 2023 BOARD MEMBERS

### PRESIDENTS:

**Ellen Ma**  
**Elena Tiedens**

### SECRETARY:

**Dalia Pustilnik**

### VICE PRESIDENT:

**Grace Hu**

### SOCIAL MEDIA & EVENTS CHAIR:

**Annie Yang**

### TREASURER:

**Raghav Pardasani**

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & OUTREACH COORDINATOR:

**Cal LeDoux**

## SECRETARY TRANSITION

This quarter, Nathalie Lai passed the baton to our new secretary, Dalia Pustilnik. We thank Nathalie for all her hard work as secretary and are excited to welcome Dalia to our executive team.

## FALL RECRUITMENT

This recruitment cycle, PSI received **over 70 applications**, and **over 200 students** signed up for our general interest newsletter. We are excited to welcome **28 new members** to PSI and can't wait to see what they accomplish in their time with us. Furthermore, we opened up a second round of applications for Divest UChicago later in the quarter, and we will welcome **5 new members** to the project group starting next quarter. With these new additions, **PSI is 88 members strong**.



## NEW WORKING GROUPS

PSI Board aims to build infrastructure for more **interdisciplinary collaboration** within PSI to take on projects that require a range of skills and backgrounds. As such, we have launched **four working groups**: Case Competition, Alternative Products, Dorm Sustainability, and Sustainability in Athletics. Our Case Competition planning group has already started making preparations for **PSI Case Comp 2024**, and our other working groups will begin meetings and operations next quarter.

## NEW COLLABORATIONS

This quarter, our Board has worked hard to cultivate **new partnerships** for PSI. We have been in contact with other student groups like **Undergraduate Student Government**, campus offices like **the Office of Sustainability**, outside organizations like **Chicago Creative Reuse Exchange**, and groups at other schools such as **Loyola's** environmental group. We aim to forge long-lasting and fruitful relationships to bolster our institutional capacity and to **maintain a holistic approach to sustainability on campus and beyond**.

# INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

In addition to advising project groups and leading working groups, each Board Member has also been working on individual projects to support PSI through our respective positions:

- Presidents Ellen Ma and Elena Tiedens are exploring institutional partnerships, working with USG's CCS to host another **Sustainability Symposium** after last year's success, and discussing **the 2030 plan** with the University's administration.
- Vice President Grace Hu has also been working on connecting with organizations and institutions and is formalizing PSI's network by compiling a list of our partners and resources.
- Treasurer Raghav has been planning a fundraising event which will take place early next quarter.
- Media & Events Chair Annie Yang is working with the Office of Sustainability to raise awareness of campus sustainability initiatives, planning a field trip to CCRX, and working on dorm posters with Residential Life.
- Professional Development Coordinator Cal LeDoux has been workshopping resumes for PSI members and is planning a speaker series for next quarter.

## 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 a start-of-year kickoff at a board member's apartment and celebrated the end of the Fall Quarter with a PSI x reSOURCE Cards & Couture social. Both socials saw an attendance of **20+ and 30+ members** respectively. Each project group also hosted a social for their group members.

Furthermore, to promote connection and interaction between project groups, we launched **5 interest groups**: Geoengineering, Clean Energy, Sustainable Urbanism, Environmental History, and Sustainability in Research. We had three interest group socials this quarter where members got to connect and converse on these issues.