

ANNUAL REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE |
2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR





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 fulfill our goal of reducing and diverting food waste from landfills and subsequent environmental impacts. In conjunction with South-side business Urban Canopy, we collaborate and provide composting services to campus departments, RSOs, official and student-run events, and more. We facilitate a subsidy program for off-campus affiliates to compost their personal food waste and continuously work towards more innovative solutions to the University's food waste problem. Through these initiatives, we assist with the implementation of composting infrastructure and increase student awareness surrounding organic waste disposal.

COMMUNITY COMPOST BIN

In an effort to expand on-campus composting access, PSI partnered with the student-run **Phoenix Farms** RSO to launch a shared Community Composting Bin. Together, we designed the logistical framework for the program, created educational posters and advertising materials, and developed a Google Form to onboard and inform new users about proper composting practices. After consistent communication and planning, we reached an agreement with Phoenix Farms to use their **existing compost bin for broader student use**. This collaboration provides an accessible, student-led solution to organic waste diversion on campus and reflects a growing commitment to sustainable infrastructure through inter-RSO cooperation.

EVENTS

This year, PSI expanded its composting efforts through key collaborations with the **Center for Campus and Student Life (CPO)**, **UChicago Dining**, and **Phoenix Farms** to provide composting services at major campus events. At the O-Week Family Reception, we diverted ten **25-pound bins** of food waste in partnership with CPO. At the Baker Dining Grill Competition, we worked with UChicago Dining to collect **twenty bins of organic material, each weighing approximately 35 pounds**. Finally, at the Phoenix Farms Festival, we composted two additional bins of food scraps. In total, over **1,000 pounds of compostable material** were collected across these three events, helping reduce landfill waste and promoting sustainable event planning on campus.

OTHER COLLABORATIONS

This year, PSI worked closely with **Urban Canopy** and **Undergraduate Student Government (USG)** to ensure the long-term viability of our Off-Campus Compost Subsidy Program. In response to growing demand and limited funding, we collaborated with USG to secure financial support and thoughtfully redesigned program logistics to enhance accessibility while keeping the model sustainable. To better understand student needs, we also distributed a survey to all participants to gather feedback and assess the program's impact. This collaboration not only allowed us to continue providing subsidized composting services to off-campus students, but also set a precedent for institutional partnership in environmental initiatives.



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.

PLANT-BASED DINING

The Campus Waste Reduction team has continued its collaborative work with **UChicago Dining** and the **Office of Sustainability** to improve sustainability in campus dining facilities, with a particular focus on enhancing the plant-based dining experience. In partnership with national organizations like **DefaultVeg** and **Upgrade Dining**, we have explored best practices and pooled resources to advocate for more accessible, appealing, and environmentally friendly dining options. Throughout the year, we maintained monthly meetings with dining staff, discussed initiatives such as a student recipe submission contest, and conducted a campus-wide dining satisfaction survey with **107 student** respondents. The results were presented to university administrators, highlighting key areas for improvement. We plan to resume regular meetings in the upcoming academic year to build on this momentum and push for meaningful changes in dining sustainability.

SUSTAINABLE FORMAL

To celebrate the end of the year and promote sustainable living in an engaging way, the Campus Waste Reduction team hosted a Sustainable Formal attended by over **100 students**. The event featured entirely plant-based dining options to align with our environmental values and to spotlight the benefits of sustainable food systems. In addition to managing event logistics and budgeting, we used the formal as an opportunity to raise awareness around sustainable dining, promote our reSource program, and foster a broader culture of environmental responsibility on campus. The formal demonstrated that sustainability and celebration can go hand in hand—and helped generate funding for future student-led sustainability initiatives.





reSOURCE

ReSOURCE, the non-profit, student-run thrift store, located in the basement of Stuart Hall, collects and redistributes clothes from and to the UChicago community. All profits from selling secondhand clothing is donated to local environmental non-profits.

This year, we organized multiple pop-up thrift events across campus, including a featured table at the **Green Partnerships Farmers Market**. Our team helped with sorting donations, setting up displays, and managing outreach to engage the student body. In addition to diverting clothing from landfills, these events raised funds to support future sustainability programming. reSource continues to serve as a creative and community-centered approach to reducing waste and promoting mindful consumption on campus.

In Fall Quarter alone we have had:

- **1,018** transactions
- **\$8,795** in revenue
- **8** student employees

This store continues to serve as a creative and community-centered approach to reducing waste and promoting mindful consumption on campus

COMMUNITY ACTION

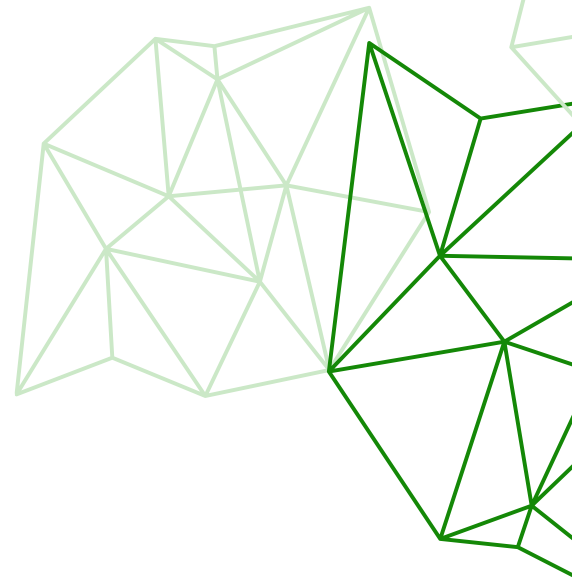
Community Action aims to connect students with environmental activism and service organizations across campus, Hyde Park, and the South Side communities. Through immersive and hands-on projects, we strive to build strong and long lasting relationships with members of our community.

CLEAN UPS

In the 2024-25 school year, the Community Action group organized six park cleanups to engage both PSI members and local residents in environmental stewardship. Some locations included a 57th Street Beach Cleanup, a Midway Plaisance Earth Day Cleanup, and a 63rd Street Beach Cleanup.

ADVOCACY FOR CLEAN WATER

In response to the ongoing public health threat posed by lead service lines, the Community Action group launched a lead pipe awareness campaign focused on the Hyde Park and Woodlawn neighborhoods. During Winter Quarter, they researched the issue in depth and developed accessible educational materials to help residents identify and address lead contamination in their homes. In Spring, they distributed over **200 informational flyers** across seven local community centers. Each flyer included a QR code linking to a curated resource hub with information on how to test for lead, determine if your home is affected, and apply for free water filters or pipe replacement through the City of Chicago.



Do you like lead in your water?

Top Advice:	Good to know:
 Let water run for 30-45 sec	30% of the 2,797 homes had elevated lead concentrations.
 Scratch pipe - silver, shiny & not-magnetic – it's lead	1,250 drinking fountains
 Apply for filter set!	400,000 homes get their tap water through lead service

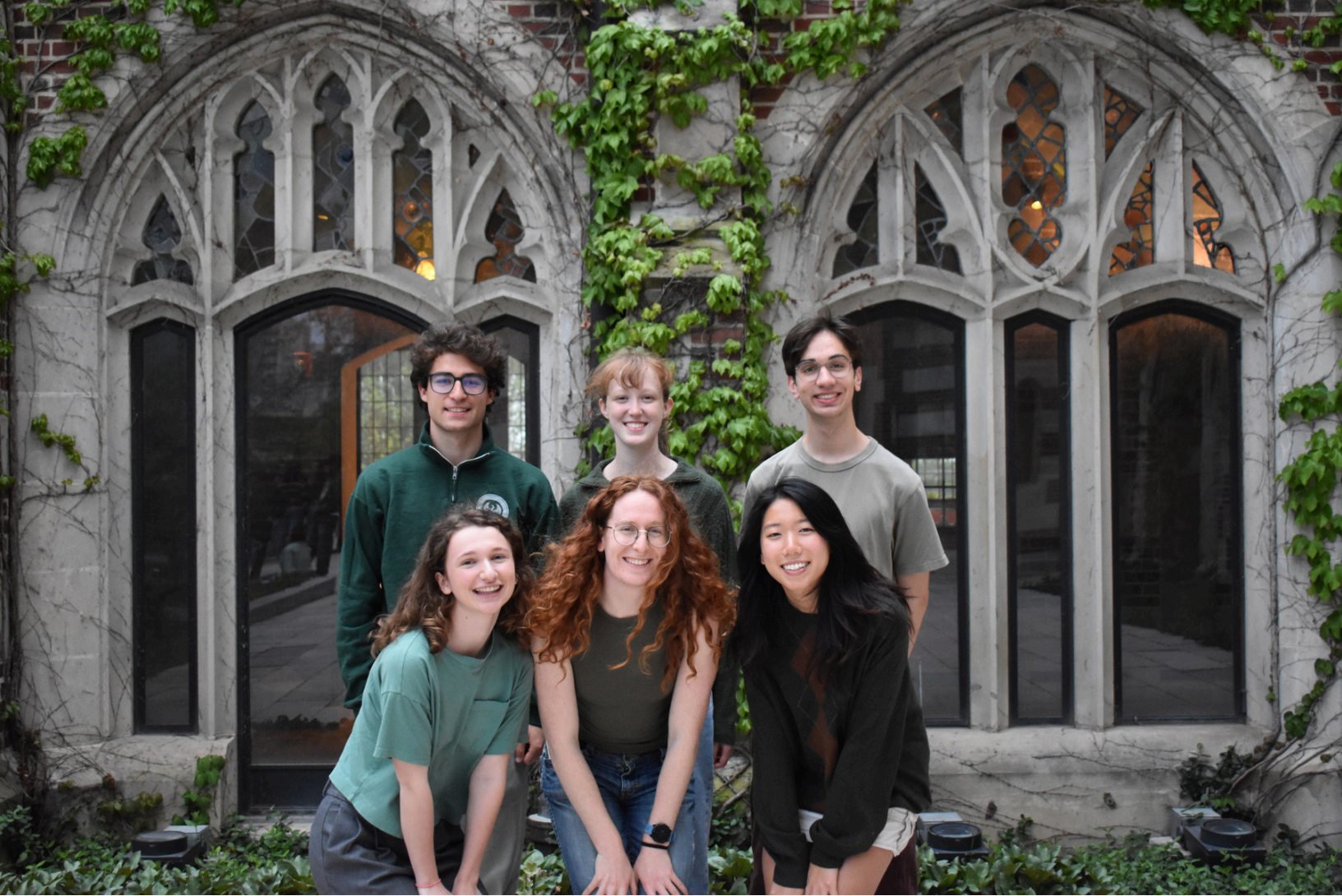
Call 311 to get your water tested

SETF PARTNERSHIP - CABO

During Winter Quarter Community Action began discussions with the **South-East Environmental Justice Task Force** to plan a teach-in about the **Clean and Affordable Buildings Ordinance (CABO)**, which requires new buildings in Chicago to use more clean energy.

In Winter Quarter they hosted a teach-in during PSI meeting time to educate our members about CABO. They educated students about this bill and collected signed postcards advocating for the bill and asking Hyde Park/Woodlawn alderman, Desmond Yancy, to support the movement. We also tabled in Reynolds Club to spread awareness about CABO and gain further support from the University community. In the spring, members of Community Action delivered over 75 letters to Alderman Yancy's Office and conversed with him about the bill.





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 RELATIONS

A working group within the Divest committee, fosters collaborative relationships with alumni by liaising with UChicago for Climate Action and assisting them as we are able. We are collaborating on the formation of a sustainability alumni interest group and have begun to brainstorm alumni outreach at other universities.

EVENT PLANNING

We planned and held the third annual **Divestival**, a part protest, part music concert aiming to increase the on-campus presence of the campaign. For students already involved in student organizing, Divestival aims to be an optimistic and solidarity-building event. For students not yet involved, Divestival serves as an introduction to the sustainability and activism on campus. We invited 17 RSOs and community groups to table beforehand and had **over a dozen in attendance**. Five student bands/music groups performed. Six people spoke, representing Divest UChicago, EJTF, Southeast Environmental Task Force, Fight Back UChicago, MECHA, and a faculty perspective. We estimate that a significant turnout of at least **150 people** despite last-minute wet weather re-arrangements. We built ties to these organizations for continued partnerships including for next year's Divestiv4l.



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.

GARY COMER YOUTH CENTER

We continued our year-long teaching program at **Gary Comer Youth Center**, coming in twice a week and continuing to build upon concepts introduced earlier in the year.

RAY ELEMENTARY

We continued teaching sixth graders once a week at **Ray Elementary**, focusing on hands-on and interactive activities this quarter. In addition to trivia quizzes on the lessons, we incorporated taste tests and seed germination experiments.

Students have been incredibly receptive to our educational programs this year and it has been great to see them grow as learners and stewards of the Earth. They have been engaged during lessons and activities and seem to absorb all that we are teaching. We are continuing to write lessons that can be used in a wide-range of classes that include fun and active lessons to keep students engaged.





GARDEN CLUB @ THE UCHICAGO CHARTER SCHOOL

On May 2nd, 2025, with the help of some passionate middle school students, our group installed three garden beds at the UChicago Charter School's Woodlawn Campus to kickstart their garden club. The club meets weekly to plant and harvest fresh fruits and vegetables, and to learn how to prepare and cook the food students pick. We hope that after spending time every week learning these invaluable skills, students will bring them home to their families and spread them to their friends. The garden itself is meant for the community; over the summer, we encourage students and their families to visit the garden, keeping an eye on it while bringing home fresh, locally grown produce.

This initiative will begin again in the 2025-26 academic year. Over the summer, Environmental Education and community members plan to manage and sustain the garden, monitoring the growth of what was planted at the end of the year. This project is funded thanks to the **University of Chicago's Green Fund.**

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.

TRANSPORTATION

This project focused on analyzing attitudes and behaviors related to transportation options on campus, with the hope of providing valuable information for administration and creating tangible change in the transportation options available to the community.

Data was collected by **University Student Government (USG)** regarding cycling and UGo shuttles.

- We presented our findings along with a group from USG at the **Transit Summit**, which was the end of our multi-year long transit project.



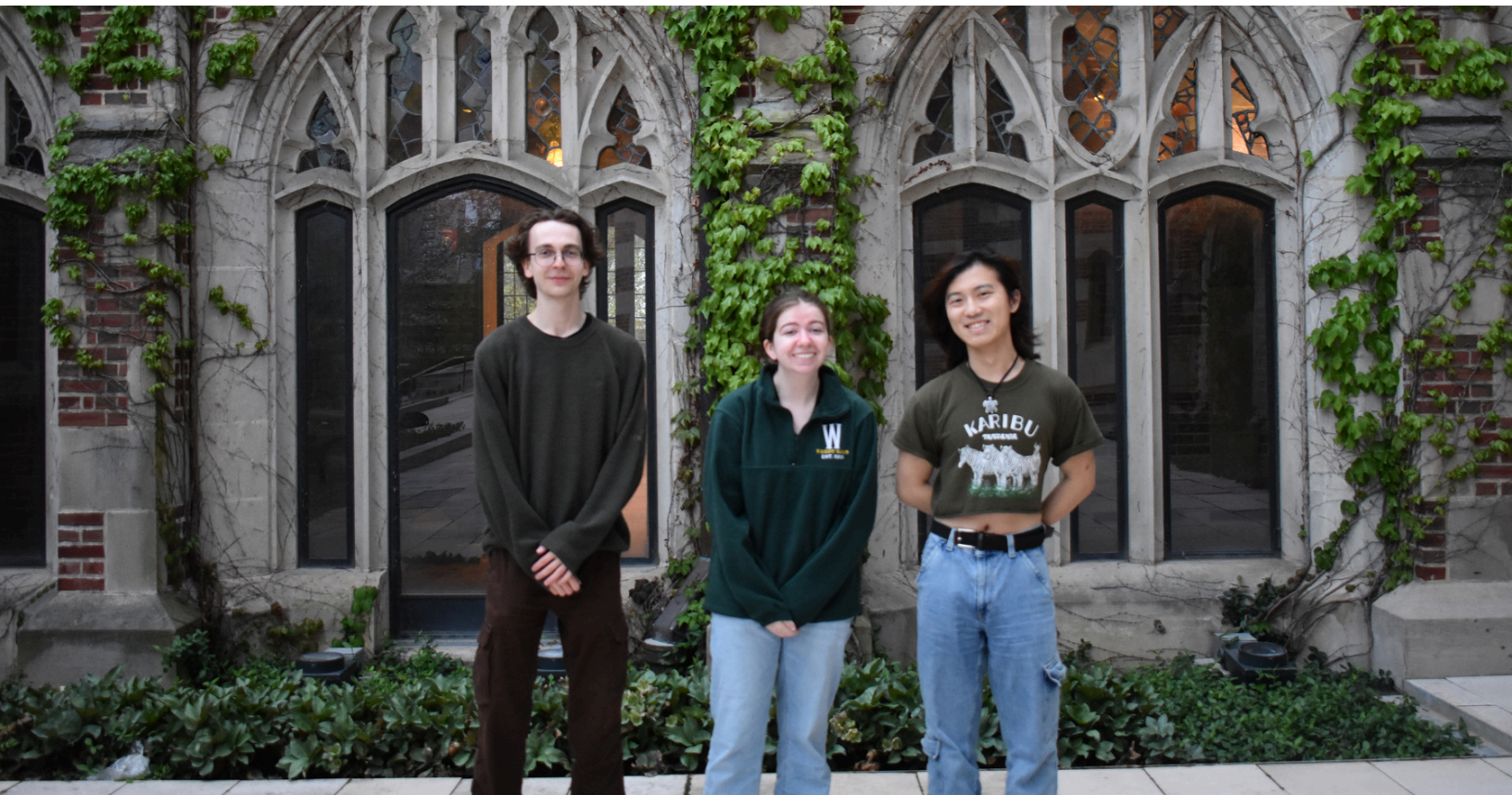
'GREEN SPEECH' DATA ANALYSIS

This project focuses on the environmental discourse that the University of Chicago engages in, particularly regarding the opening of the new Institute of Climate and Sustainable Growth.

Our driving research questions include:

- What **categories of climate and environmental action** is UChicago most interested in?
- What **solutions** does UChicago prioritize?
- Who are the **biggest voices** in the environmental discourse at UChicago?

This is a research-based project which will apply data scraping techniques to uncover foundational elements of climate action on our campus, and provide clarity on its environmental work and analysis that could be used to provide recommendations moving forward. Three group members are currently working on this project and we are planning on continuing this effort into the 2025-26 academic year.





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.

FARMERS MARKET

We hosted UChicago's second **annual Farmers Market** which aims to bring sustainable businesses to campus in order to help form connections between sustainable businesses and UChicago students.

This year, **23+ businesses along with our partner, Midwave Radio**, worked at this market which was hosted on the Main Quad. Midwave organized live music and partnered with cultural RSO's to create a fun and educational sustainable shopping environment. **500+ students** and community members attended this event.

STAINED GLASS WORKSHOP WITH THE WASTESHED

In collaboration with the **Wasteshed**, a Chicago non-for-profit that focuses on arts education by utilizing repurposed materials, we ran a **stained glass workshop** on April 8 from 6-8pm in order to teach creative reuse and promote sustainable recycling.

HYDE PARK PLANT-BASED RESTAURANT WEEK

We worked with multiple restaurants around Hyde Park to offer discounts for vegan and vegetarian food to UChicago students. In doing this we hope to bring awareness to the environmental harms of meat production and factory farming while promoting healthy and taste-filled plant-based alternatives.



SCIENCE, ART, 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.

UPCYCLING WORKSHOP 3.0

This year, we hosted a quarterly upcycling workshop in collaboration with reSOURCE. Students were able to bring their own clothes to mend or up-cycle, using our own bedazzling gun and various fabric markers and paints. In the fall of 2025, we introduced a sewing machine which was available for students to use in order to mend their clothes. During the winter, we had a station for making Valentine's-themed crafts including pillow hearts and fabric flowers.



ARCHITECTURE AND REUSE PANEL WORKSHOP

We held a panel and workshop on **Architecture and Reuse** in collaboration with the **Architectural Studies Open Studio**. We had three speakers: Stella Moy, Keller Center Associate Director of Operations; Chana Haouzi, Architect & Founder of Architecture for Public Benefit; Heather Ring, Landscape Architect & Founder of Wayward. Following the panel, students were able to make models from discarded materials. Students contemplated how anxieties about climate change and a necessity for more circular systems has given rise to new styles of architecture like Solar Punk contemplating life after the end-of-the-world or reconstructing from the rubble up.

SAS X GATEWAY TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

We hosted a craft station at the **Gateway to the Great Outdoors** fundraising event on March 29th 2025.

DOC FILMS PROGRAMMING

We organized a screening of *How to Blow up a Pipeline* in coordination with **Doc Films** on April 27th.

SUSTAINABLE SOIRÉE DECORATIONS

We made decorations for the **Sustainable Soirée**, a PSI-hosted event, from plastic and paper waste, including fish and star streamers from cardboard and paper, respectively; various flowers from plastic bottles and paper.

PSI X ORIGAMI CLUB

We hosted a second paper- and origami-making workshop with **Origami Club** on May 14th.

EHL ECOPOETRY WORKSHOP

We were asked to present our work by the **Environmental Humanities Lab** for their Eco-poetry Workshop on May 9th.

WARREN WOODS FIELD STATION

Finally, SAS hosted 20 students on a trip to the Warren Woods Field Station for an introduction to fieldwork, some nature-based art-making, and a wellness break. This was possible because of communications with Dr. Bretl from the Field Station and Ms. Webb from Student Wellness

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 50 individuals attended PSI formal, of which half were PSI members, and the other half were PSI guests. We held **two additional socials**, a PSI end-of-year picnic and a mid-quarter study break.

HARPER LIBRARY WORKING GROUP

In collaboration with dean of **The College, Melina Hale**, a group of PSI members formed a working group to fulfill Harper Reading Room's purpose as a library. By receiving donations from a **multitude of professors, a student donation bin, as well as 30,000 retired books from the Regenstein Library**, these students were able to catalog and order over 40,000 books in the shelves surrounding the reading room, with over 20,000 more in storage.

These books are available to be **borrowed** or **taken for free**. This huge project required students to coordinate regularly with administration, meet twice weekly to sort and put up books, and communicate with building faculty throughout the year.



2025 CLIMATE CASE COMPETITION

PSI is partnered with the Institute for **Climate and Sustainable Growth** (ICSG) to sponsor annual climate case competitions, which provides UChicago students with the opportunity to critically investigate a modern-day problem posed by a competition partner. UChicago College students can participate in an annual Climate Case Competition, presented by the **Energy & Climate Club** and **Phoenix Sustainability Initiative** and sponsored by the **Institute for Climate and Sustainable Growth**. Students are granted the opportunity to critically investigate a modern-day climate problem for a chance to win up to **\$2,500 in cash prizes**.

38 contestants registered and participated in the first round, and 23 contestants participated in the second round. **10k awarded**. Thank you to ICSG for sponsoring this successful event!



EXECUTIVE BOARD

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

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

We are excited to announce PSI's board for the 2024-2025 school year and thank our old board members for all of their hard work.

PRESIDENTS:

Seri Welsh

Annie Yang

VICE PRESIDENT:

Dalia Pustilnik

TREASURER:

Bryan Miranda

SECRETARY:

Chenwei Hu

SOCIAL MEDIA & EVENTS CHAIR:

Izzi Solomon

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
& OUTREACH COORDINATOR:**

Claire Lenden

