

# QUARTERLY REPORT

PHOENIX SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE | AUTUMN '22



# OUR MISSION

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

PSI aims to:

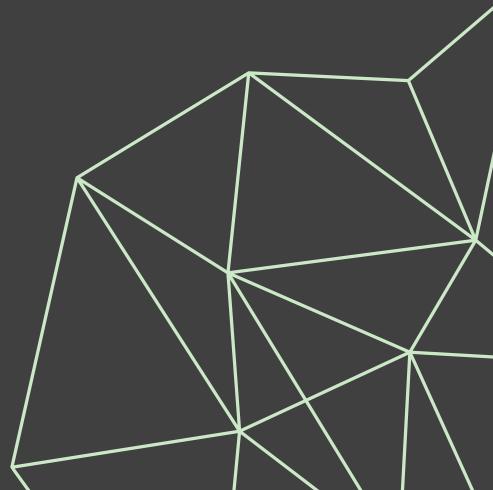
- Expand our network to enhance partnerships and collaborative opportunities
- Build an open, inclusive, and inviting community
- Promote project productivity through workshops, leadership trainings, and accountability measures
- Provide members with necessary skills to accomplish tangible outcomes in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

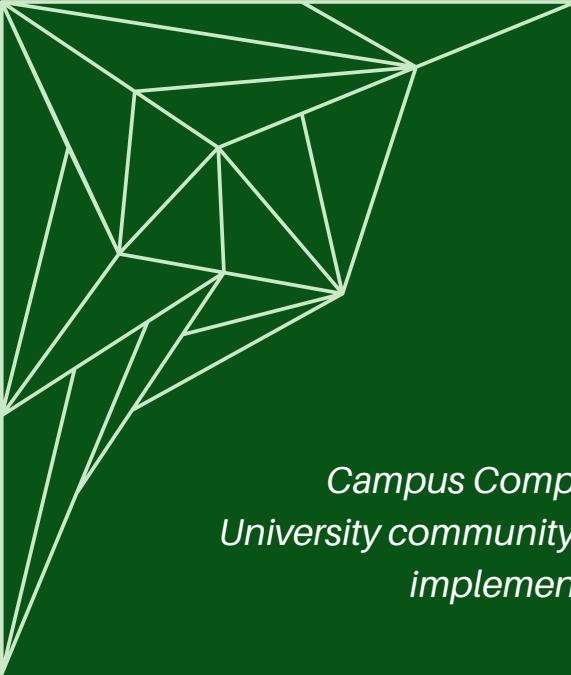
# OUR PROJECT GROUPS

*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





# 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.*

## OFF-CAMPUS COMPOSTING

We aimed to continue our successful off-campus composting program this year and get even more people involved in this program. We tabled in The Reynolds Club multiple times this quarter, giving out donuts and flyers, talking with students about composting in general as well as encouraging them to sign up for our program.

We have gotten **more signups** as a result of our promotional campaign, which continues to ensure the success of this program.

## CAFÉ COMPOSTING

Getting a **pre-consumer composting program in the student-run cafés** has been a goal for several years in Campus Composting, so this year we continued to push for this, applying for a Green Fund grant to begin a pilot program in the student-run cafés. We have spoken to several student café managers who are on board with this, as well as The Program Manager for Student Retail to discuss the logistics of this program.

Our **Green Fund grant of \$500** was approved, and remaining logistics are being sorted out so that this program can begin soon during Winter Quarter.



## EVENT COMPOSTING

During O-Week, campus composting helped at an event that UChicago held for incoming UChicago parents. With the event organizers, we worked to get our composting hauler, The Urban Canopy, to set up several bins around the event, with PSI members by bins to ensure there was no contamination. This diversion effort was successful, **diverting over 1,200 lbs. of organic waste**, and to follow up on this, we decided to apply for a Green Fund grant to help us provide composting at other events around campus.

Our **Green Fund grant of \$3,528** was approved, so we can now engage in discussions with event organizers to begin offering this as a service, leveraging our contacts as well as simply approaching organizations that throw events often.

# 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.*

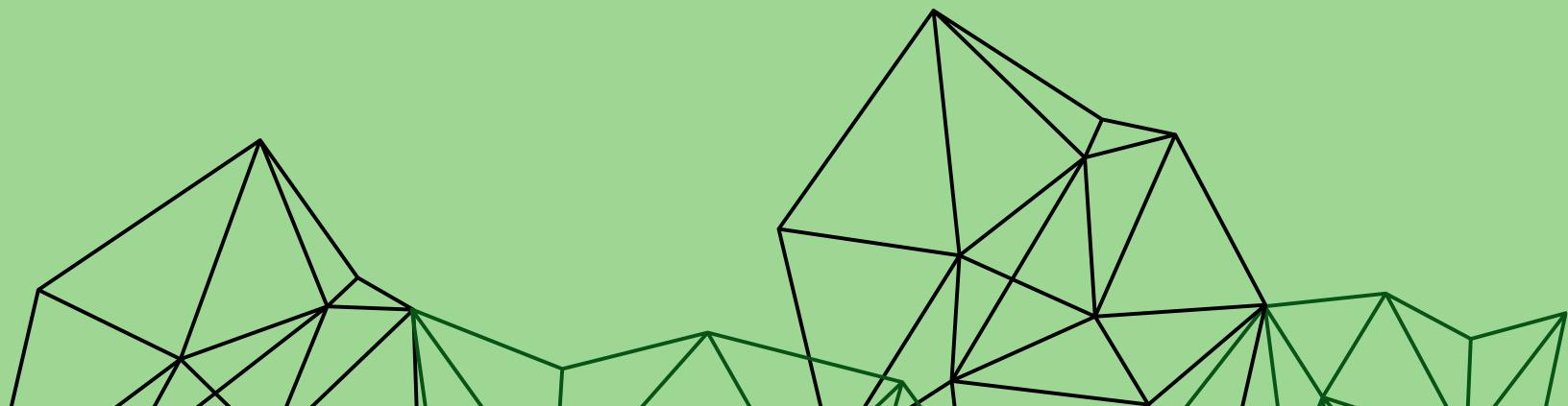
## THRIFT STORES

*After our successful Pop-Up Thrift Store last year, we are expanding our effort to provide more clothing recycling resources on campus.*

We aim to set up a **permanent clothing donation bin** in Reynolds Club, both to collect clothing for our Pop-Up Thrift Store as well as Brown Elephant, a thrift store we partnered with last year. We applied to and received a **Green Fund Grant of \$4,461** to purchase a donation bin and cover the transportation costs for Brown Elephant to pick up our donations. Reynolds Club granted approval for us to house a permanent donation bin spot in the basement, and we received storage space for donated clothes in Hinds.

We are also working to establish **monthly Pop-Up Thrift Stores in student cafés** (Cobb and Hallowed). We already set up a donation box outside of Cobb Café and are currently working on marketing materials to advertise this resource to the campus community.

Our long-term goal is to set up a **permanent, student-run thrift store** on campus. We are in communications to find a space to house our permanent thrift store.



# WASTE AUDIT

Campus Waste Reduction is continuing its efforts in tracking off-campus waste access and knowledge. The City of Chicago requires all landlords to, by law, provide sufficient recycling and recycling education to tenants, but from people across campus and the greater Hyde Park community, we know that these requirements are illegally unmet. As a result, Campus Waste Reduction has conducted an **audit of waste access and knowledge**, with the initial goal of analyzing this data to identify trends and patterns in recycling access. Long-term, our goals are to use these data to publish results on the illegal lack of access to recycling, as well as target education and reporting efforts to bring Hyde Park landlords into compliance.

This quarter, we collaborated with PSI's Green Data project group to work with a variable-rich dataset of over **300 responses across a 2-year time span** to analyze recycling patterns across landlords and geographic areas. On our end, this has meant data cleaning, summaries, and visualizations, and Green Data has done similar work to produce geographic presentations of our data.



*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.*

## QUARTERLY THEME

*This quarter, we focused our projects around the **Midway Plaisance Park**, in close collaboration with the **Midway Park Advisory Council (MPAC)**. The City of Chicago has plans to drain the wetland on the Midway's east end in order to build a playground over the wetland, a grave environmental injustice. Building upon PSI's efforts to protect the Midway beginning during the 2021-2022 school year, this quarter, Community Action has sought to preserve the Midway both in its service events that clean and beautify the Midway's natural environment and in its efforts to advocate for the continued political maintenance of the park.*

## MIDWAY CLEANUP (OCT. 1ST)

We hosted a trash pickup, with students cleaning that area spanning from the Midway Fieldhouse to just beyond the intersection of 59th St and Ellis Ave. This cleanup also served as a recruitment event for PSI, so interested students could learn more about PSI while helping the park. **30+ students** attended this cleanup, including both members and prospective members of PSI. Using cleanup materials from both PSI and MPAC, cleanup participants filled **two large dumpsters** with litter that had been on the Midway.

## MIDWAY CLEANUP (NOV. 6TH)

We hosted a trash pickup in partnership with AOPi for the purpose of beautifying our Midway and eliminating as much trash as possible. **30 + members of both PSI and AOPi** showed up to the ice rink and worked their way west along the Midway, picking up any trash they could find. Each participant picked up about one full bag full of trash, resulting in **30+ bags of waste** removed from the Midway.

## MIDWAY BULB PLANTING

We hosted a bulb planting event on the Midway's east end on October 23rd in partnership with MPAC. **15+ PSI members** planted various types of bulbs to enhance the natural beauty of the park and add to the plant diversity of the area. This event served as a way for people to connect with the Midway Park and gain service hours. The bulbs are expected to bloom in the spring of 2023.

## MIDWAY PLAISANCE EAST END IMPROVEMENTS COMMUNITY MEETING #4

We attended the Chicago Park District's Midway Plaisance East End Improvements Community Meeting #4 on October 6th at the South Shore Cultural Center. At this meeting, we supported MPAC's position that the draining of the east end wetlands is a serious environmental injustice both in its destruction of the natural habitat and in its **reduction of net green space for southside residents**. Along with MPAC, we also urged the Park District to reconsider the designation of the east end as UPARR replacement space in order to **enhance park access across the Hyde Park area**. We demonstrated to the City that their plan for the Midway's east end is broadly unpopular among Hyde Parkers, including among UChicago students.





## AFTERNOON IN COMMEMORATION: WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE & CHICAGO PARKS

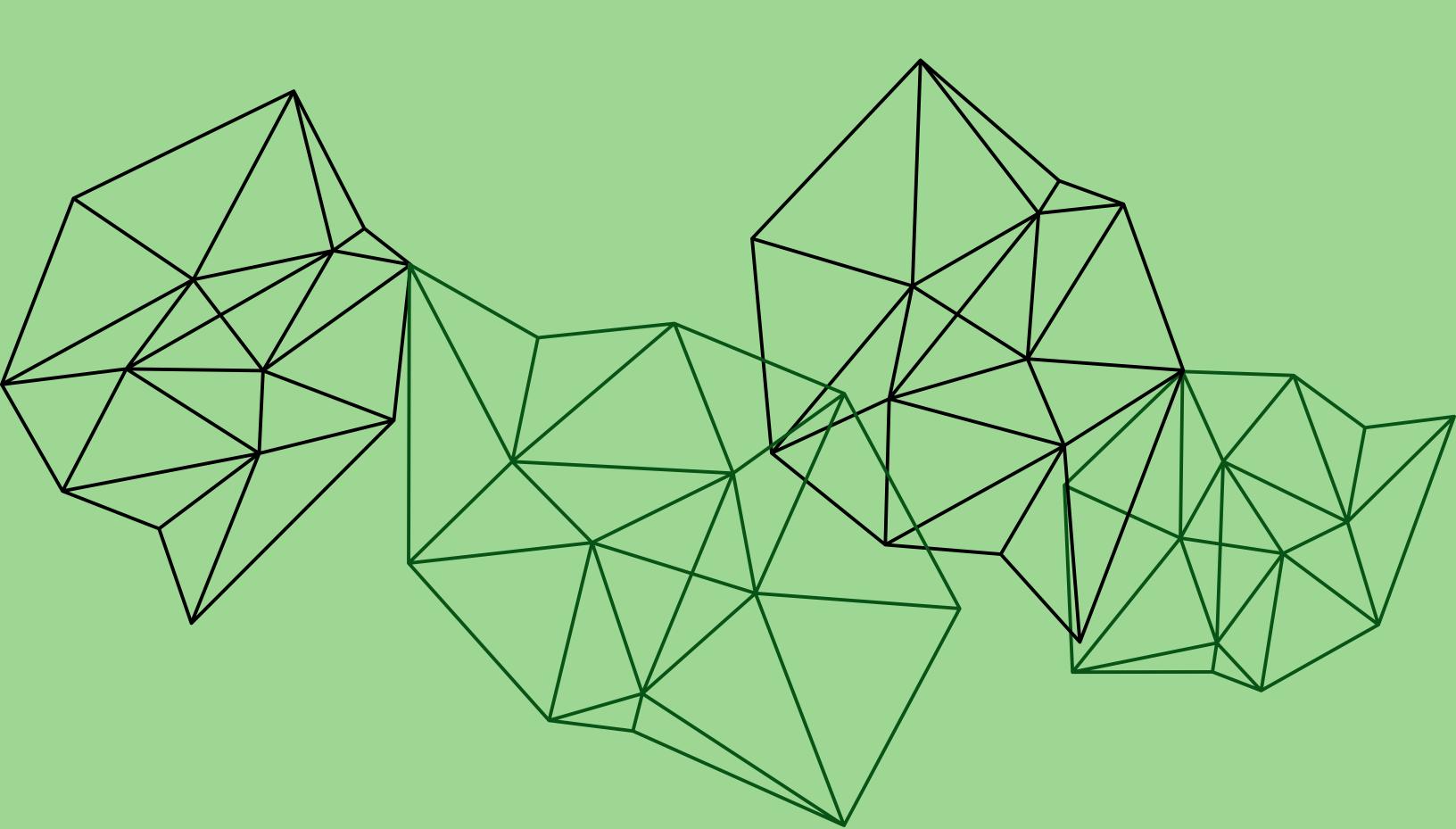
Partnering with MPAC, we hosted an afternoon in commemoration of women's suffrage and Chicago parks, screening ***Shirley Chisholm '72: Unbought and Unbossed*** and hosting a panel featuring IL State Representative **Theresa Mah** and Mayor Harold Washington's Vice President for Governmental Affairs and longtime Chicago activist, **Jacky Grimshaw**. The event focused on the intersection between women's suffrage and environmentalism and was attended by both Hyde Park community members and UChicago students.

**20+ attendees** learned about the ways in which women have advocated for park preservation, particularly on the southside. Ultimately, this knowledge will give attendees a better sense of the history behind current advocacy around the Midway. Participants from both UChicago and MPAC were also able to engage with each other at the event, bridging the divide between UChicago students and Hyde Parkers.

# 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**, where we taught interactive lessons twice each week. We also established a new connection with the **UChicago Lab School**, where we plan to start teaching in coming quarters.

This quarter, we created several new presentations for an **expanded curriculum** on a diverse range of environmental topics, like a special presentation for students on the climate aspects of the Inflation Reduction Act.

## OTHER PROJECTS

We are developing a **local article writing campaign** focusing on environmental issues facing Chicago and the greater community. After planning the topics this autumn quarter, we aim to start the writing campaign in the winter.

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

# 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.*

## 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 on survey responses** in order to gather relevant findings for the article.

We looked into **spatial analysis on qgis and access to recycling by color** (recycling presence/absence, usage, etc.). We are continuing to work on sizing and coloring the spatial data analysis and will further look into the implications of the data for off-campus residential recycling programs.

## ECO-DIGESTERS

UChicago Dining wants to replace their eco-digesters by either buying new eco-digesters or completely switching the food waste disposal method. We are **researching alternatives and case studies for eco-digesters** to see if these would be feasible to implement in UChicago dining halls, as well as researching ways to decrease food waste at UChicago.

We met with UChicago Dining in October and were introduced to the project. We then produced a comprehensive spreadsheet with potential alternatives to UChicago's current food waste disposal methods by providing **examples of how other institutions are dealing with their food waste**. We will meet with Dining again to update them on the project's progress and to decide upon the next direction of this project. To further deepen our knowledge, we also scheduled a meeting with **Back of the Yards Algae Sciences** to learn about new methods of dealing with food waste that are being researched.

# 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, and this quarter, we made significant progress in administrative connections. We met with the **UChicago Transportation Department** alongside Green Partnerships and presented our data analysis from last quarter, where we used our findings to show that UChicago students would be interested in a reduced or free Divvy membership provided by the University.

As a result of this data analysis, the Transportation Department was interested in implementing a Divvy program, possibly in the form of a **hybrid Lyft/Divvy Pass Program**, as a solution to the lack of financial and environmental sustainability of the current Lyft 10-Ride Pass program. We are awaiting more information from the Transportation Department in order to **conduct a second survey** about whether students would be interested in being able to use Divvy as part of their 10 free Lyft rides.

## PSI DATA ANALYSIS

In order to better quantify results and long-term impact, Green Data is now aiming to **collect data on all PSI events**. This data can be used for quarterly reports and displayed on the PSI website. We **collected and visualized attendee data for two events** organized by Community Action and Public Engagement, and we **developed 3 concrete data collection ideas** for long-term events and projects to be implemented 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.*

## SKILL-BUILDING

In preparation for quarter-long projects in the winter and spring, we focused on **building skills in research, analysis, consulting, and general sustainability knowledge**. We listened to and interacted with 25-minute presentations about partnership formation; thinking and presenting like a consultant; and using Excel for sustainability analysis.

Each of our members delivered up to **15-minute presentations** about sustainability topics relevant to partnership-building, consulting, and general sustainability. We learned extensively about carbon analysis for supply chains, green buildings, carbon taxes, clean energy tax credits, the sustainability apparatus at UChicago, social impact assessment, and clean energy storage. These can be permanent resources for future years and other project groups.



# OUTREACH

*Each member spent the Autumn Quarter researching potential partners and doing outreach to multiple local businesses and nonprofits each week. The goal is to secure quarter-long partnerships for winter and spring. Collectively, we reached out to over 30 Chicago-area organizations, while refining our outreach materials. We secured 6 partners with corresponding partnership meetings:*

## **UChicago Department of Transportation / Divvy**

Along with Green Data, we presented 15+ cost and ridership analyses to the Director of Transportation Beth Tindel. We successfully convinced Ms. Tindel to meet with Lyft, and she is enthusiastic about **implementing a Lyft-Divvy hybrid program.** We will continue to meet with Ms. Tindel and will aid in a student survey in winter quarter.

## **SugarBliss Bakery**

We are excited to work again with former partner SugarBliss Bakery, an alumnus-owned, Chicago-based bakery in the Loop. Last year, we helped develop educational materials for **proper recycling practices** for SugarBliss's upcoming cookie product line to be sold at Walgreens.

## **Blackstone Library (Chicago Public Library branch)**

We met with librarian April Lundberg, who expressed interest in working with PSI to **run a book sale and plant a garden** on the property. We plan to research options for book selling (including connecting them with other organizations) for 2023.

## **Urban Canopy**

We met with Compost Club Co-Lead Andrew, who educated us on the projects that Urban Canopy is currently undertaking in the Hyde Park area, including composting and selling produce at the farmer's market. Several potential collaborations were discussed in accordance with Andrew's goals, and the main focus going forward will be a promotion of their composting services on the UChicago campus and our partners to establish a **high-density compost collection area** to reduce Urban Canopy's carbon emissions in compost hauling.

## **Wesley Shoe Store**

We met with the owner, Bruce Wesley, to discuss potential **avenues for collaboration** that will be expanded upon in Winter Quarter.

## **The Spice House**

The CEO expressed **enthusiasm to collaborate** and placed us in contact with a representative. We are meeting with them shortly after Autumn Quarter.

# 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.*

## CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT FAIR

We hosted an educational event for students interested in environmentalism to hear from environmental organizations on campus. This event happened early in the school year, allowing for students (particularly first-year students) to learn how to get involved in sustainability on campus.

There were **40+ attendees and 7 organizations present** at the event. All of the involved organizations presented to students, including organizations such as CEGU and EPIC. Tabling throughout the event also allowed students to ask questions and sign up for listhosts. This event was shortly before PSI's information session, assisting in the recruitment of interested students.





## SUSTAINABILITY MIXER

We also hosted a social event for all students interested in environmentalism. We provided an opportunity for students involved in environmentalism across RSOs and academic programs to connect with one another in a social environment, with the aim of promoting community and future collaboration among organizations and students.

**Over 60 people attended our mixer.** Attendees mingled and played games with members from other environmental student organizations and students who were interested in sustainability projects on campus. We circulated stickers promoting the fossil fuel divestment campaign to attendees of the event. The event took place in McCormick Lounge in Reynolds Club and lasted for two and a half hours.

## FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN

Throughout the quarter, we worked on strategy for UChicago's fossil fuel divestment campaign. To do so, we engaged in collaborative action with the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) and worked with the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and the Committee on Campus Sustainability (CCS). We learned about the historical context of divestment campaigns at other universities and UChicago, which we used to inform our process of **updating the petition and outreach efforts of the campaign.**

# FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN CONTINUED

We worked in tandem with EJTF to discuss campaign strategy and petition demands, re-strategizing the divestment petition campaign with a focus on concrete and contextualized demands, accessibility, and broader outreach. **Through this, we were able to update the campaign's petition and launch a new website and social media outreach plan for broader community engagement.**

We helped with preparing for the December 1st relaunch of an updated version of the petition for UChicago's fossil fuel divestment campaign. Asaf Lebovic, a Public Engagement member, developed a fossil fuel divestment website, a huge step for UChicago's campaign. Overall, the website will serve as a hub for information about efforts on campus around moving away from fossil fuels, which will allow for more widespread campus engagement and impactful organizing.

We also developed a strategy for the campaign's new Instagram and Facebook, creating **15 posts** in advance of the updated petition's launch. We also made posters with QR codes that are in the process of being around campus, and we designed and distributed **200+ stickers** to promote student involvement in fossil fuel divestment.

In addition, we worked on leveraging other partnerships and engagement opportunities. Meghan Hendrix, Public Engagement co-Project Leader and 2023 College Council Representative, met with **President Paul Alivisatos and Dean Michele Rasmussen** to discuss fossil fuel divestment, focusing on campus efforts including EJTF's action last spring and a 2021 sustainability resolution passed by USG and the Graduate Council in support of fossil fuel divestment.

Project group members also met with **Professor Denis R. Hirschfeld** to learn about a previous faculty letter in support of fossil fuel divestment, which will inform our work in future quarters on engaging faculty and alumni. We also talked with organizer **Molly Weiner from Yale University** to learn about campaign strategies at other universities.



# 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.*

## PUMPKIN SMASH

We adapted SAS's Pumpkin-Off from previous years to make it more focused on sustainably discarding existing pumpkins. The event was based off of other pumpkin smashes that take place across Chicago and the country. Students brought their own pumpkins and then were able to smash them into smaller pieces to be composted.

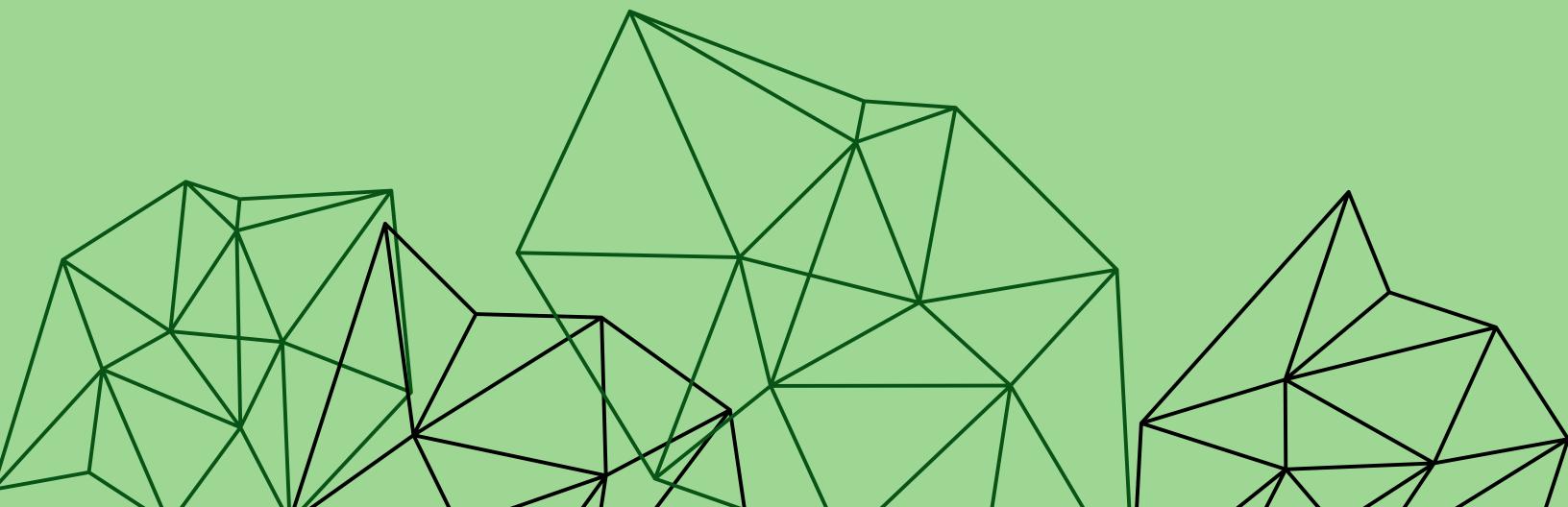
**Over 20 people** attended the Pumpkin Smash, most of which brought their own pumpkins. SAS members also collected discarded pumpkins from around campus for the event, resulting in **over 30 pumpkins** smashed. We diverted **over 200 lbs. of pumpkin waste** from landfills.





## 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 met with PSI's Professional Development and Outreach Coordinator to discuss potential avenues that the project could take including a speaker series, video series, articles, infographic, visual art, and more. We also began identifying majors and faculty members that we would like to collaborate with for this upcoming project.



# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## FALL RECRUITMENT

PSI opens up applications for new members every fall quarter, and this year, we broke records for interest in joining our organization with **250 interest form responses**. In the **most competitive application round** of our 9 years, we are excited to welcome **34 new members** to PSI's largest ever member base of **83 total members**. We shared PSI's mission in 3 tabling events, an information session, a recruitment Midway cleanup, and a study break.

## 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**: a Point social and a reading period study break. Each project group also hosted a social, with events ranging from brunches to apartment parties.

To create connections between project groups, we continued our quarterly Coffee Chat groups, where we had **20 program participants**. We also created a mentor/mentee program, where we paired **13 new members** with returning members.

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.



# EXPANDING PSI'S NETWORK AND MEMBER RESOURCES

We have strengthened our partnership with the **Energy Policy Institute of Chicago** (EPIC) in our work on our **annual case competition** that began last year with more than a hundred students presenting business solutions to Ørsted, a multinational energy company. To create a multi-pronged effort to push for fossil fuel divestment, We also began collaborative work with **Fossil Free Northwestern** along with other Chicago-based colleges and universities.

We hope to continue and deepen these partnerships to further long-term sustainability projects.

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.

We kickstarted the **Admin Data Analysis Group**, a group focused on provided the quantitative materials and understanding needed for discussions with outside partners about important issues such as divestment.

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, granted members with a general overview of Energy and Climate Careers from Career Advancement, and moderated a panel of PSI alumni.

To support members applying for sustainability internships, our Social Media and Events Coordinator and Professional Development and Outreach Coordinator teamed up to provide **LinkedIn headshots**. Members had the opportunity to sign up for 5 minute slots to have their professional photos taken on the UChicago Quad.

