During Winter quarter, UCEA met with the Provost and Dean of Students to discuss the Green Fund and the Student Government resolution, “Transparency & Communication about Resource Use and Environmental Impact on the University of Chicago Campus.” The resolution makes three main requests of University administrators:

1) Make a **public commitment** to more ambitious **long-term sustainability goals**, including a carbon neutrality deadline.
2) Hire at least three more personnel to **expand the work** of the Office of Sustainability.
3) Enable **access to transparent information** about energy, water, and resource consumption as well as food and waste management data.

Although the threat of environmental destruction may not appear as immediate as the current public health crisis, scientists agree that a rapid, global response is needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Therefore, UCEA will continue to communicate with University administrators throughout Spring quarter in order to further these three main goals, as well as our existing progress on the Green Fund.
Committee on Campus Sustainability

The Committee on Campus Sustainability (CCS) is a standing committee of Student Government focused on furthering three main goals: Advocacy, Awareness, and Action. In 2018-2019, CCS expanded the Sustainability Czar Program to 21 residential Houses, organized the Earth Month initiative and Wild & Scenic Film Festival, and ran a sustainability case competition.

Launched a pilot biodegradable tableware program, and reduced the environmental impacts of 4 RSO events with 500+ total attendees.

Passed a resolution (unanimously!) through the Student Government Assembly that calls on the University to address its resource use and environmental impacts.

Planned Earth Month Initiative intended to be held in April 2020, with educational and volunteer opportunities including a climate literature and arts exhibit, the Earth Day of Service, and the UCEA Sustainability Town Hall. The Earth Month Initiative has been postponed due to the current COVID-19 situation, but will resume next academic year.

Environmental Justice Task Force

The Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) is a campaign of Chicago Student Action. The group fights for political and legislative changes in Chicago and throughout Illinois, centering the strong leftist and anti-racist analysis which they believe is needed to address the climate crisis. EJTF partners with organizers across the city for trainings, political education, and to coordinate actions.

This quarter, EJTF fought for progressive candidates and legislation needed for a just transition away from the fossil-fuel economy.

Ran weekly canvasses and phone banks for down-ballot progressives fighting for environmental protections and economic investment.

Went to Springfield multiple times to lobby for the Clean Energy Jobs Act and escalated their campaign through direct actions and meetings with state representatives.

Ran a teach-in titled “What’s missing from environmentalism?” with 50+ attendees on racial capitalism and environmental racism.
Environmental Research Group

The Environmental Research Group is a student research group at the University of Chicago dedicated to exploring the intersections of the environment, business, economics, and public policy. ERG is composed of four sub-groups: Modeling, Data Analysis, Policy, and Organizing.

Concluded their Array of Things Chicago air pollution project after discovering unreliable and faulty sensors used to collect the data.

Surveyed 3 sensor installations in Hyde Park to try and determine potential causes of nonsensical reporting.

Began work on a local transportation proposal, with the goal of developing a plan for a new CTA L line. Preliminary work has included analyzing daily ridership counts from all 146 current L stations.

Reviewed budget and expansion plans for the public transportation systems of 2 cities.

Paul Douglas Institute

The Paul Douglas Institute is an on-campus think tank and registered non-profit conducting evidence-based research on public policy issues across all fields and scopes. Projects have focused on everything from local housing issues to national environmental policy and international trade.

This quarter, PDI continued innovative, student-led research on environmental policy at the local, federal, and international levels.

PDI researchers produced novel work on environmental topics, including an original dataset of recognized indigenous territories and findings on underpricing in carbon taxes and the lack of taxes on methane, N₂O, and other impactful gases.

PDI also planned Spring Quarter hack even intended to foster student solutions to pressing environmental issues. This event is postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 situation.
Phoenix Sustainability Initiative

Founded in April 2013, Phoenix Sustainability Initiative (PSI) seeks to develop and implement environmentally responsible practices at the University and in the wider Chicago community. With a project group structure and partnership model, PSI creates lasting impact by planning, directing, and executing initiatives.

PSI’s 59 members working in 8 project groups worked on the following efforts this quarter:

Campus Composting: Finalized implementation plans to begin composting in two campus cafes in the next academic year.

Service group: Visited two local schools every week to engage students in environmental education, raised $400 for the World Wildlife Fund to support Australia during the wildfires.

Hyde Park Business Partnership: Worked with the Sit Down Cafe on sustainable business solutions, including recycling, reusable chopsticks, and sustainably-made napkins/paper towels.

Green Data: Analyzed existing data on US emissions in several regions over various periods of time to prepare to analyze their own data.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Designed recycling signage for events and delivered a presentation at the Sustainability Ambassador meeting.

Professional Development: Connected with UChicago alumni to create internships in the sustainability field and created a spreadsheet of related Handshake opportunities.

Campus Sustainability Partners: volunteered at 5 RSO events to promote proper waste sorting practices and worked with COUP to include sustainable practices into next year’s Summerbreeze budget.

Public Engagement: Hosted free hot chocolate events and engaged more Instagram followers @sustainableuchicago
Resolution: Transparency & Communication about Resource Use and Environmental Impact on the University of Chicago Campus

Sponsors:
- Kimika Padilla, Chair of the Committee on Campus Sustainability
- Jahne Brown, Student Government President
- Sam Joyce, Class of 2020 College Council Representative
- Alex Levi, Class of 2021 College Council Representative
- Dinesh Das Gupta, Class of 2022 College Council Representative
- Aazer Siddiqui, Class of 2022 College Council Representative
- Zebeeb Nuguse, Class of 2022 College Council Representative

Signatories:
- Amy Tian, President of Phoenix Sustainability Initiative
- Terra Baer, Vice President of Phoenix Sustainability Initiative
- Perrin Davidson, President of Environmental Research Group
- Asha Varma, Lead Coordinator of Environmental Justice Task Force
- Ridgley Knapp, Undergraduate Liaison to the Board of Trustees

WHEREAS the scientific and international community recognizes that climate change and other environmental problems pose a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of humans and the environment. The University of Chicago, as a major research institution with significant assets and a large community of students, faculty, staff, and affiliates, has the opportunity to improve transparency and communication about its resource use and environmental impact.

WHEREAS in 2016, the University of Chicago set a goal to reduce its greenhouse gas (CO$_2$) emissions 20% by 2025. The current goal is unsatisfactory for two main reasons:

- **The goal is not ambitious compared to peer institutions.** Peer institutions including Brown (2040), Harvard, Northwestern, Princeton (2046), Stanford (2045), University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Pennsylvania (2042), and Yale have committed to become carbon neutral by 2050 or earlier.

- **The goal is not based on net emissions.** The promised reductions are based on carbon intensity (CO$_2$ emissions per square foot) rather than net emissions (metric tons of CO$_2$). Recent building constructions such as the new Woodlawn Residential Commons will significantly increase the total square footage of campus buildings, and it is possible that the University will increase its net emissions even as it reports a reduction in carbon intensity. The standard method of reporting greenhouse gas (CO$_2$) emissions is in metric tons of CO$_2$. Other metrics, such as carbon intensity, are useful but can also obscure the true environmental impact if not published alongside net emissions data.
WHEREAS the University of Chicago currently employs only one (1) full-time employee in the Office of Sustainability. Chronic understaffing at the Office of Sustainability has led to delays in communication such as responding to student questions and requests. Some students have sent more than five (5) emails to the Office of Sustainability with the same request, only to receive an automated email: “Thank you for contacting the Office of Sustainability within Facilities Services at the University of Chicago. This reply serves as confirmation that your inquiry has been received. Our email account is usually checked once per day, Monday through Friday, excluding University-observed holidays. Most emails are responded to within seven business days; however, you may occasionally experience a longer response time as we research your inquiry. Please refrain from sending additional emails or calling to inquire on the status of your inquiry.” In many cases, this is the only response we receive from the Office of Sustainability.

WHEREAS the Office of Sustainability is located off-campus in Harper Court, which is over 20-minutes walking distance away from Reynolds Club, and housed under Facilities Services, which is not a student-facing division of the University, making it difficult to communicate with them in-person when email inquiries are not responded to.

WHEREAS there is a serious lack of student and public access to transparent information about campus electricity, natural gas, and water consumption as well as food and waste management data. The University has not published a comprehensive sustainability report since November 2016, when the Office of Sustainability released its first and (to date) only report on the topic, entitled the “Sustainability Plan Baseline Report.” Meanwhile, our peer institutions including Brown, Harvard, Stanford, and Yale publish an annual sustainability report. In May 2018, the Office of Sustainability published a report, “Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Overview 2012-2017” which claimed that the University was tracking CO$_2$ emissions in metric tons, but this information is not available to students or the general public.

WHEREAS individual students and RSOs have asked for campus emissions and water consumption data for research purposes such as thesis research, classwork, and environmental impact analyses, and their requests are systematically denied.

BE IT RESOLVED the University administration should make a public commitment to more ambitious long-term sustainability goals including a carbon neutrality deadline. The University of Chicago should meet or exceed standards set by its peer institutions, including carbon neutrality by 2050 or earlier.
BE IT RESOLVED the University should communicate its environmental impacts and progress toward its sustainability goals to students and the general public through an annual sustainability report as is common practice at Brown, Harvard, UIC, Yale, and Stanford, for example.

BE IT RESOLVED the University administration should hire at least three (3) more personnel to expand the work of the Office of Sustainability. At Brown, Harvard, Northwestern, Princeton, UIC, Yale, and Stanford, their Offices of Sustainability have at least four (4) full-time employees and an average of seven (7) full time employees.

BE IT RESOLVED the Office of Sustainability should:

- Respond to student questions and requests pertaining to campus sustainability in a timely manner.
- Be available to meet and collaborate with student representatives on at least a quarterly basis. For example, an environmental RSO should be able to schedule a quarterly meeting with the Office of Sustainability if it wants to.
- Meet at least quarterly with senior University administrators to communicate the Office of Sustainability’s progress on its sustainability goals, and to discuss persistent requests and concerns students may have voiced during meetings or via email.

BE IT RESOLVED the Office of Sustainability should maintain a list on their website of Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) that are primarily focused on environmental issues. This list would include basic information about each environmental RSO such as (a) the name of the RSO, (b) the website or email address of the RSO, and (c) a two to three sentence summary of the RSO’s purpose. The list would be updated on an annual basis.

BE IT RESOLVED that the University administration should enable access to transparent information about energy, water, and resource consumption as well as food and waste management data for student research and the general public including:

- Real-time and historical data at the highest resolution available including energy (kilowatt hours, kWh), natural gas (British thermal units, BTUs), and water consumption (gallons, gal) data for individual campus buildings. Historical data should be made available in a spreadsheet .csv format, so that students and faculty can conduct quantitative research about the University’s environmental impacts.
- Annual and monthly data about net greenhouse gas emissions (metric tons of CO₂).
- Annual and monthly data about food consumption at dining halls and University-run campus cafes.
- Annual and monthly data about waste management including the disposed amounts (metric tons of waste) sent to the landfill, recycling center, and compost, respectively.