

# Year End Report: 2021-2022

*The Student Sustainability Coalition*

*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*



**STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY  
COALITION**

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

## Executive Summary

The Student Sustainability Coalition (SSC) worked throughout the 2021-2022 academic year to foster relationships, facilitate communication, and empower student sustainability work across and beyond the U-M community. The events, programs, and projects SSC organized this year both formed new partnerships and strengthened existing ones.

We believe the following items are crucial for continuing to build a culture of sustainability at U-M:

1. Direct route for students to support sustainability projects across campus through an active projects database, staff support navigating U-M policies and procedures, and institutional guidance to units encouraging active student support and engagement
2. University-wide sustainability curriculum requirement
3. Design and deliver sustainability content, workshops, trainings, modules, and events through ONSP orientation, FYE, and the Welcome to Michigan experience
4. Collaboration between SSC and SCIP staff to develop questions for the SCIP survey and ensure that there are questions that center DEI&J
5. More support and collaboration from all campus units for PBSIF and SES grant-funded projects and SSC efforts in the form of open communication and willingness to take on additional responsibility

SSC has and continues to promote sustainability by facilitating information about campus sustainability initiatives and resources (e.g., weekly SSC newsletter, social media accounts, and collective impact meetings), empowering student sustainability work through programs that encourage greater collaboration across the U-M sustainability network (e.g., Student Sustainability Leaders Summit, Coffee Chats), and helping to connect students and student organizations with administrators working towards similar sustainability goals.

The following items were the main themes expressed by students and student organizations:

- Assessing and addressing the knowledge gap between students and U-M administration regarding sustainability action and projects spearheaded by U-M administration across campus (e.g., Orientation sustainability module, Central directory for projects)
- Expand upon proactive initiatives that engage students and student organizations in sustainability efforts across campus (e.g., Earthfest, PBSL program)
- Call for greater emphasis and action to center DEI&J in all sustainability initiatives and projects across the U-M community

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Student Feedback</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Events Hosted</b>	<b>6</b>
Student Sustainability Leaders Summit   March 18   60 Attendees	6
Project Incubator Workshops   October 6th, 21st, January 25th, February 3rd  20 Attendees	7
Dinners for Democracy Sessions   February 2nd, 9th, and 16th   200 attendees	7
Go Green Talk show   February 19th   500 attendees	7
Moving Michigan Forward: Live Q&A with Leaders on Carbon Neutrality	7
DEI&J and Sustainability Film Screening	8
Annual SSC/SSI Alumni Gathering	8
<b>Programs &amp; Resources</b>	<b>8</b>
Coffee Chats	8
Tabling	8
DEI&J x Sustainability Toolkit	9
Excellence in Sustainability Honor Cords Program (ESHCP) Promotion	9
Student Carbon Neutrality Network	9
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>10</b>
Giving Bluesday	10
<b>Communications</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Metrics</b>	<b>10</b>
Increase SSC visibility on campus	11
Foster relationships and connections across the U-M campus community	11
Expand SSC's impact on campus sustainability	11
<b>Media Presence</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>12</b>

## Student Feedback

SSC both expanded existing relationships with student organizations and formed new ones throughout the 2021-2022 academic year. The team initiated and sustained contact with student sustainability organizations through various meetings, listening sessions, workshops, and events such as the Student Sustainability Leaders Summit and Rooting for Change.

***Below are the key takeaways of student feedback for the University:***

- Increase University funding for student sustainability work
- Actively engage students in the planning and implementation of campus sustainability projects
- Create easier access to University marketing resources for sustainability student organizations to share their events and initiatives with the U-M community
- Give students more decision-making power within University carbon neutrality initiatives
- Increase focus on incorporating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEI&J) into campus sustainability initiatives
  - Provide more funding to uplift this type of work and encourage more of it
  - Empower campus departments and units to use their resources to promote DEI&J
  - Increase diversity in hiring and talent recruitment
  - Highlight the intersectionality of DEI&J in all work and moving away from siloing DEI&J as a separate category or distinct pursuit
  - Engage with the many DEI&J experts across campus
- University leaders should be honoring their commitments and should be held accountable for meeting University goals
  - Share clear results from the University regarding PCCN recommendations and Carbon Neutrality action
- Prioritize transparency and accessibility of campus sustainability information
  - Centralization of information
  - Consistent reports on progress to the entire student body
  - Clear definition of who the University leaders are in the sustainability space
- Carbon Neutrality work should be a primary priority in Presidential search committees
- Sustainability should be more actively incorporated into curriculum for all students

You can review the full notes documents from a variety of mediums that we utilized to gain student feedback below:

1. [Full notes](#) detailing the content and discussions of meetings that SSC directly had with student organizations, including perspectives about the sustainability climate at U-M and their efforts to promote social and environmental sustainability
2. [Full notes](#) from the Carbon Neutrality Student Partnership Effort interviews, which were also conducted with student sustainability organizations on campus

## Grants

### Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund (PBSIF)

PBSIF funds up to \$50,000 annually for ambitious, student-initiated projects that reduce U-M's environmental footprint and promote a culture of sustainability on campus. PBSIF projects have a focus on creating a lasting impact on campus sustainability.

SSC received a total of 10 applications during the academic year, and 4 applications were funded. Below is a description of the funded projects:

- ***Campus Farm Climate Forward Cold Storage (\$25,000)***: The project consists of the creation of a climate-forward energy efficient cold storage system that uses naturally abundant cold winter air as a means of cooling. This project opens doors for further student engagement with the Campus Farm via hands-on educational opportunities. The new cold storage system will be much more efficient than the previous system because it increases the energy efficiency of the cold storage system by 50%. As we end the year, the Campus Farm is installing the system and plans on finishing its implementation over the summer.
- ***Bike Repair Station (\$1,000)***: The team was given \$1,000 to repair the existing bike repair station at the CCTC. The project was led by students in SfCE (Student for Clean Energy) and was completed during the winter of 2022.
- ***Light Switch Sticker Program (\$1,000)***: This project aims to put light switch stickers around dorms and off campus housing. The idea is to make these more accessible to students, both on and off campus, to encourage lower energy consumption. They are also looking to hand out pamphlets with extra energy-saving tips and provide workshops for students to receive more information. This team has already been in contact with the Office of Campus Sustainability (OCS) as they also provide light switch energy-saving stickers to offices across campus.
- ***Canopy Covers (\$24,000)***: This project aims to increase the canopy cover on campus by 12% and support goals to provide various environmental, economical, and health benefits for nearby residents. To involve students in campus sustainability efforts such as increasing canopy cover, BLUElab Metro will host open-volunteer tree planting events with supervision from the Grounds Services Team. The project group has met with the grounds team and are actively working together in order to implement this project.

### Social and Environmental Sustainability (SES)

The SES grant funds up to \$2,500 in support of smaller-scale projects that advance environmental and DEI&J focused sustainability efforts on campus. We received 5 SES grant applications. Below are the projects that were funded:

- ***DOGFIGHT (\$2,100)***: This was a play organized by U-M students that takes place in the Vietnam War era and follows the stories of soldiers awaiting deployment. The show explores themes of camaraderie, forgiveness, tradition, and love while dealing with the complexities of PTSD, social stigma, racism, and war. In order to make the play more sustainable, the show was done using entirely LED lights, which the group was able to get using SES funding. They used funding to recycle post-production materials and reuse the LED lighting for other plays. In addition, they held talkback discussions after the performances to discuss our sustainability efforts and promote similar sustainable practices.
- ***Canvas Module (\$75)***: This project consisted of creating a mock Canvas module much like previous mandatory courses on alcohol and sexual assault. The course teaches students how to live more sustainably at the University of Michigan, especially within the residential dorms and dining halls. It was awarded \$75 to be used in the form of a gift card as an incentive for completing the survey after the course.

## Events Hosted

SSC organized and carried out a number of events. These included collaborative events with campus partners and events that reached beyond the U-M community. Below is a list of events that SSC hosted this year:

### Student Sustainability Leaders Summit | March 18 | 60 Attendees

The Student Sustainability Leaders Summit served as an opportunity for student sustainability leaders to connect, form new partnerships, and learn about new ways to engage with sustainability. There were breakout sessions to discuss different pathways to engage with sustainability: Sustainability and Art, Sustainability and Campus Engagement with Carbon Neutrality, Sustainability and Personal Behavior Change, Sustainability and Business, Sustainability and the Ann Arbor City Government, and Sustainability and Environmental Justice. Speakers included representatives from the Erb Institute, SEAS, U-M Arts Initiative, the U-M Carbon Neutrality Team, Planet Blue Student Leaders, and members of the A2ZERO initiative, including the mayor of Ann Arbor.

### **Project Incubator Workshops | October 6th, 21st, January 25th, February 3rd | 20 Attendees**

SSC hosted two, one-hour long project incubator workshops in the fall of 2021 and two similar workshops in the winter of 2022 as a way to help students generate project ideas and encourage them to apply for our grants for funding. The workshops acted as a guided brainstorming session for participants to get their creative juices flowing and start thinking about sustainability projects on campus. They are also a promotional tool for the grants themselves. Between 5 and 10 participants attended each workshop. Here is the [slideshow](#) we used during the workshops and the workshop [timeline](#).

### **Dinners for Democracy Sessions | February 2nd, 9th, and 16th | 200 attendees**

Dinners for Democracy are nonpartisan presentations and small group discussions on topics students care about. Participants attend an hour-long session and gain a deeper knowledge of the issue, its historical context, how it impacts individuals and society, information about individuals' political power, how individuals' votes influence policy at the local, state, and federal level, and information about the hosting organization. SSC held three separate Dinner for Democracy sessions on the intersectionality between gender, sustainability, and policy. Over 200 undergraduate and graduate students attended the three Dinners for Democracy, which not only spread awareness about the intersectionality between social identities, sustainability, and policy, but also fostered discussion about how social norms, skewed political representation, and other structural forces interact with individuals, institutions, and the environment. Throughout this project, SSC also formed a close relationship with Turn Up Turnout, the organization that organizes the logistics for these Dinners for Democracy. [Here](#) is the slideshow used for our Dinners for Democracy sessions.

### **Go Green Talk show | February 19th | 500 attendees**

The Go-Green Talkshow was a discussion between the SSC student leaders and high school students from International Academy East, co-organized by the Detroit Education Society. We spoke to the students about different educational and career paths in sustainability, environmental justice, sustainability progress at UM, and ways to get involved in their community, in hopes that they would leave with more knowledge about the variety of disciplines sustainability has to offer.

### **Moving Michigan Forward: Live Q&A with Leaders on Carbon Neutrality | February 8th | 173 Views**

This one-time event was designed to connect students and the larger U-M community to carbon neutrality leadership. Many students in the community had a misconception that the President's Commission on Carbon Neutrality resulted in no progress or mistook the Final Report and Recommendations as the next steps. However, a piloted Instagram Live discussion between SSC President Matt Heaphy and Lydia Whitbeck addressed these misconceptions. SSC and Lydia hosted the live discussion on February 8th, 2022 through the SSC Instagram account. The

[recording](#) can be found on the SSC account as a reel. To dive deep into the goals and outcomes of the Instagram live from the SSC Team, please reference this [supplemental document](#).

### **DEI&J and Sustainability Film Screening | December 2nd | 8 attendees**

SSC invited students across campus to attend a movie screening and discussion of *Connected by Coffee*, a film which shows how equitable trading relationships are helping empower communities and take a step towards social justice. After watching the documentary, a discussion on the film and its demonstration of the intersection of sustainability with DEI&J was held.

### **Annual SSC/SSI Alumni Gathering**

Held over zoom, this event allowed the current SSC team to network and interact with U-M alumni that were also on SSC or Student Sustainability Initiative (SSI) team when they were students themselves.

## **Programs & Resources**

SSC designed and implemented a number of programs and initiatives this year that engaged individuals across the U-M community. These included coffee chats, tabling, and highlighting student recipients of the Excellence in Sustainability Honor Cords Program. SSC also created and delivered resources to student organizations in the form of DEI&J Toolkits.

### **Coffee Chats**

Every month, our coffee chats program connects two students (who might not otherwise interact with each other) interested and involved in sustainability action on campus. The program brings together community members who are passionate about social and environmental sustainability, and we hope that these conversations foster a space to share knowledge, experiences, and passion about sustainability—and make a new friend in the process. They broaden participants’ perspectives and catalyze potential for innovative and cross-collaborative ideas. Over 80 students participated in this program throughout this year.

### **Tabling**

We hosted 12 tabling sessions on campus over the course of the school year in which we promoted SSC and the work that we do, including timely information such as hiring, our summit event, and our grants.. These include four sessions that we organized ourselves as well as attending student organization promotional events such as FestiFall, Earthfest, and Rooting for Change. We also sometimes gave away cookies or coffee as an incentive to come up to our table. We try to have at least two SSC members at the table during these events.



### DEI&J x Sustainability Toolkit

This [DEI&J x Sustainability toolkit](#) was developed by our team and is designed for U-M sustainability student organizations to use for learning how to incorporate DEI&J into their work both internally and externally. This resource is shared widely with students in order to:

- To educate yourself in terms of understanding DEI&J concepts
- To educate yourself in terms of how to actively apply those concepts
- To learn how to work with people and have dialogue around DEI&J
- To learn how to incorporate DEI&J into your organization's work

### Excellence in Sustainability Honor Cords Program (ESHCP) Promotion

SSC connected with Katie Portz, a Student Life Sustainability graduate student intern, to support the media sharing of the ESHCP recipients. This winter semester project had a significant impact on our social media presence by maintaining expectations for consistent Instagram and Twitter posting of student spotlights. The team discussed additional methods to promote student applications for the ESHCP opportunities. SSC volunteered and supported the ESHCP initiatives, including the cord making evenings. SSC supported the creation of over 250 cords for graduates and highlighted 13 students on our social media platforms, honoring their accomplishments and promotion of campus sustainability.

For more information on the partnership, program, and outcomes of sharing ESHCP on the SSC social media pages, read the discussion in this [supplemental document](#). The document includes student metrics for both Instagram and Twitter.

### Student Carbon Neutrality Network

In the winter of 2022, SSC began facilitating communication and organizing meetings among an open group of student sustainability leaders to coordinate campus carbon neutrality action. SSC and student leaders organized three monthly meetings (February-April). Each meeting included defined action items, for which task forces were created to complete the various projects. SSC used GroupMe and email to facilitate communication and coordinate efforts. Focus areas included supporting efforts to implement a sustainability education requirement, advocating for the presidential hiring committee to prioritize sustainability during its candidacy search, and expanding communication and coordination across U-M's main campuses: Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint. The 2021-2022 SSC team took care to ensure that the 2022-2023 team is well equipped to continue organizing, empowering, and collaborating with student leaders in ways that progress SSC's mission and goals..

## Fundraising

### Giving Blueday

During Giving Blue Day, SSC raised **\$1,185.00** from **16 individual donors**. These funds will be used for fulfilling an SES grant and/or provide program support through events like our Student Sustainability Leaders Summit.

## Communications

As a form of outreach and communication to the student body, SSC focused on advancing engagement with weekly SSC [newsletters](#) and social media activity on [Instagram](#), Twitter, and TikTok. In total, we have 2,397 followers on our social media platforms and 1,768 subscribers to our newsletter. Engagement on various platforms is measured by many metrics, but all culminate in our metrics on interpersonal relationships building with the student body and administration.

The weekly newsletters share SSC announcements, sustainability events on campus, an engaging to-do list, a solidarity section with resources, and employment opportunities. Meanwhile, SSC social media pages help the team form an informal relationship with U-M students and the greater sustainability community online.

This year, communication efforts took on various forms from emailing efforts to connect with student organizations to experimenting with social media as a tool to discuss U-M's carbon neutrality efforts to simply letting the U-M community and outside entities know what the Student Sustainability Coalition is advancing on campus.

To dive deep into the goals and outcomes of SSC's communications efforts reference this [supplemental document](#). The document discusses our various platforms, what metrics we focus on with each platform, and evaluates pros and cons of platforms.

## Metrics

The SSC team developed metrics for consistent reporting over the course of the year and in future terms. Additional metrics were added to reflect automatic measurements on social media and to track new initiatives. Metrics are grouped into the following three categories:

1. Increase SSC visibility on campus

2. Foster relationships and connections across the U-M campus community
3. Expand SSC's impact on campus sustainability

Below is a brief discussion of the groupings and significant metrics related to the team's work this academic year.

### Increase SSC visibility on campus

This group addresses networking and the reach of SSC with the student population, including through social media and broad reaching events like tabling. Over the course of the year we got 624 new subscribers on our social media, bringing our total number of students we reach to 2,397 students across social media platforms and 1,768 on our newsletter.

### Foster relationships and connections across the U-M campus community

This group summarizes active engagement between students and SSC at both the student organization level and with individual students. We engaged with student organizations through outreach meetings, social media takeovers and other engagement activities 74 times during the year, and an additional 156 students through coffee chats, hiring, and the annual Student Sustainability Leaders Summit.

### Expand SSC's impact on campus sustainability

This group evaluates SSC's impact such as through our grants programs and meetings with administration. This year, we received a total of 17 PBSIF letters of intent and 15 full applications for both PBSIF and SES grants. We also had the opportunity to meet with administration twice, once regarding the campus master planning process and once about engagement with carbon neutrality on campus.

## **Media Presence**

The following is a list of articles that SSC was mentioned in over the past year:

- University of Michigan News: [U-M commits to universitywide carbon neutrality](#)
- Planet Blue Ambassador: [Go blue while going green: Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund aids sustainability projects](#)
- The Michigan Daily: [Student groups hold meeting on carbon neutrality priorities amid administration changes](#)
- The Michigan Daily: [Student organizations read open letter to administration on climate change](#)
- The Michigan Daily: [Sixth annual U-M climate change survey tracks attitudes surrounding sustainability on campus](#)
- The Michigan Daily: [9th annual Harvest Festival celebrates fall at the Campus Farm](#)

- The Michigan Daily: [UMich participates in large scale analysis of human adaptations to climate change](#)
- The Michigan Daily: [When sustainability feels impossible](#)
- The University Record: [Sustainability goals advance alongside carbon neutrality efforts](#)
- The University Record: [U-M seeks community support during eighth Giving Bluesday](#)

## Next Steps

The SSC team is extremely proud of the work we have accomplished over the last year. As the incoming 2022-2023 SSC team fills in for the outgoing 2021-2022 members, SSC has identified a variety of methods and actions for continuing to promote social and environmental sustainability:

- Continue to gather students' feedback, understand students' interests, and funnel information to U-M administration
- Expand the breadth and depth of relationships with University administrators
- Expand channels for disseminating University sustainability-related updates
- Continue work with student leaders to organize and manage the Student Carbon Neutrality Network
- Pilot and expand Student Sustainability Socials
- Prioritize efforts that ensure an SSC representative works with others on the hiring committee for advisor on carbon neutrality to the University president
- Make the SSC website a central hub for student sustainability efforts across campus
- Expand SSC's social media and newsletter presence to reach a greater number of students
- Expand and further integrate DEI&J efforts across SSC's sustainability work by:
  - Facilitating a [DEI&J workshop](#) consistently throughout the year that provides a resource to sustainability student organizations on how to incorporate DEI&J values into their student organization
  - Continue to widely share our [DEI&J x Sustainability Toolkit](#) widely with students