PRESIDENT'S SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2024–2025

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY
LANG CENTER FOR CIVIC & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SWARTHMORE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The President's Sustainability Research Fellowship (PSRF) represents the liberal arts at work. Through this program, students learn project management, collaboration, and effective communication. They also develop an openness of mind that allows them to seek out and learn the unanticipated lessons that life has to teach. This program reminds us that Swarthmore has an impact on the world not only through the work that happens here, but also by preparing our students to create new and exciting forms of social change beyond their time on campus. President's Sustainability Research Fellowship projects model ways that rigorous intellectual study can address some of the most complex and urgent challenges facing the world today. The projects you'll read about in this annual report break down silos and catalyze change across the College. These fellows have provided us with knowledge and a greater awareness that allows us to become stronger advocates for sustainability within our own communities. When our country's recognition of and response to the climate crisis is in doubt, this work is a source of hope.

I'd like to thank James Padilioni, visiting assistant professor of religion and environmental studies, and Elizabeth Drake, assistant vice president for sustainability and strategic initiatives, who led the PSRF program during the 2024-25 academic year with support from Sustainability and Engaged Scholarship Fellow Isabel Llosa '20. Special thanks to Ben Berger, executive director, and his team at the Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility. And thank you to all of the mentors and advisors who have given so generously of their time and expertise to the projects.

I look forward to the 10th year of the President's Sustainability Research Fellowship and welcoming the new cohort of fellows.

With gratitude,
Valerie Smith, President

WHAT IS PSRF?

The President's Sustainability Research Fellowship at Swarthmore College fosters learning by positioning students to steward vital sustainability challenges. The program matches students with staff and faculty mentors to research, develop, and implement sustainability projects through a yearlong course and associated internship. The innovative PSRF program — a collaboration between the President's Office, the Office of Sustainability, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility — fosters interdisciplinary participation across the institution. Throughout the year, fellows apply their knowledge to pressing needs, develop vital leadership skills, and produce replicable solutions to pressing sustainability issues on our campus and beyond.

Fellows, PSRF instructors, and Facilities staff members gather after a tour of the geoexchange plant in January 2025.

YEAR IN REVIEW

In the program's ninth year, the yearlong course was taught by Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies James Padilioni and Assistant Vice President for Sustainability and Strategic Initiatives Elizabeth Drake. Six students, taking part in six separate projects, completed the fellowship.

With the support of course instructors, a wide array of guest speakers, and other program participants, fellows spent the year learning about topics including change management, leadership, and climate solutions. In their internships, the fellows worked closely with project mentors and board members to design and implement a truly impressive array of projects. Fellows were also each matched with a sustainability sage, an alumnus, for project consultation and mentorship. Many sustainability sages themselves participated in the PSRF program while at Swarthmore, reflecting the program's enduring legacy.

Through the years, the PSRF program has allowed fellows to help the College make exciting progress on its sustainability goals in areas including food systems, zero waste, and carbon neutrality. This year, fellows took on projects that included conducting research for the Borough of Swarthmore to implement a waste reduction policy, establishing a set of new green building standards for small- and medium-sized College capital projects, collaborating with community partners to secure a $250,000 grant for environmental justice projects, and so much more.

In May 2025, over 50 people attended PSRF final presentations both in person and virtually to learn more about and celebrate the fellows and their incredible work. We invite you to read on for project summaries of the 2024-2025 PSRF cohort.

PSRF Angela Gil '25 presents her zero waste skill-sharing project during the May 2025 final presentations.

PSRF TEACHING TEAM 2024-25

Elizabeth Drake

Assistant Vice President for Sustainability & Strategic Initiatives

PSRF Co-instructor

James Padilioni

Visiting Assistant Professor, Religion & Environmental Studies

PSRF Co-instructor

Isabel Llosa '20

Sustainability & Engaged Scholarship Fellow

Teaching Assistant

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CLASS OF 1968 FELLOWS

Thank you to the Class of 1968, which endowed the Class of 1968 President's Sustainability Research Fellowship as part of its 50th reunion gift. The fund is intended to provide support for two fellows annually.

This year's Class of 1968 fellows were Mahika Shergill '26 and Juna Saito '25.

Mahika Shergill '26

Juna Saito '25

SUSAN LAMB '82 AND RICK SEAVEY FELLOW

Thank you to Susan Lamb '82 and Rick Seavey who established the Susan Lamb '82 and Rick Seavey President's Sustainability Research Fellowship in 2017. The fund is intended to provide support for at least one fellow annually.

This year's Susan Lamb '82 and Rick Seavey Fellow was Angela Gil '25.

Angela Gil '25

To all the alumni and friends of the College who support PSRF each year, and to the students, staff, and faculty who participated in the program this year,

THANK YOU!

PROJECT SUMMARIES

2024-25 PROJECTS AND FELLOWS

SENIOR FELLOWS

From left, back row: David Diaz Garcia ’25, Ella Peyre ’26, Juna Saito ’25. Front row: Mahika Shergill ’26, Angela Gil ’25, Sophia Schmitz ’25.

GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS

David Diaz Garcia ’25, any pronouns

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentors:
Roderick Wolfson, senior planner/project manager, Capital Planning & Project Management

Project Board Members:
Elizabeth Drake, assistant vice president for Sustainability & Strategic initiatives; Jim Adams, director of sustainable energy services; Susan Smythe, ADA compliance program manager; Juan Viera, director of Sustainable Capital Planning & Project Management

Sustainability Sage:
Kyla Hallam ’20

MISSION

The mission of the green building standards project was to establish new sustainability standards for small- and medium-sized College capital projects with budgets of under $25 million by updating, streamlining, and adapting Swarthmore College’s existing Environmental Sustainability Framework (ESF). These updated standards ensure that sustainability is effectively integrated into capital projects that are not pursuing third-party green building certification.

BACKGROUND

The ESF was established in 2015 as an independent set of standards to be applied to the College’s capital projects. It includes sustainability criteria across a wide range of different impact areas of a given capital project, including waste, materials, energy, and more. However, the standards were challenging to keep up to date given the rapidly evolving green building field, so the College’s ESF soon became outdated. The College typically uses third-party green building standards, such as LEED or the Living Building Challenge (LBC), for larger capital projects like the Dining and Community Commons, but these standards can be too cumbersome and complex for smaller projects and may include criteria that are not relevant for smaller renovations. However, given the College’s ambitious sustainability goals and commitment to green building, the Capital Planning & Project Management team identified a need for streamlined College standards that could be used to guide sustainability in these smaller projects.

OUTCOMES

David compared the existing ESF to external green building standards LEED and LBC in order to assess how relevant each section of the framework is to the College and identify where there might be opportunities to streamline the requirements or tie them to an external or pre-existing standard. As a next step, he conducted meetings with staff members in Facilities to determine what sustainability criteria are most important for small- and medium-sized projects. David also initiated conversations with architects and engineers from firms that have worked on capital projects at the College and interviewed staff from peer institutions about their approach to green building standards.

David used this information to develop a draft of a streamlined sustainability framework based on LEED and LBC credits that were identified as high priority for the College. After refining the standards based on input from the project board, he created a finalized set of standards and templates that can be used by project teams. This new standard includes 20 different criteria across impact areas including energy efficiency, healthy materials, and more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, the new standards will be piloted this summer with the renovation of Worth Hall. In the future, the College should consider elements of sustainability that were not within the scope of this project, such as embodied carbon and universal design. Next year, another PSRF will investigate how Swarthmore might incorporate considerations of embodied carbon into project planning and decision-making for capital projects, which may help to further refine ESF. It would be useful for another future PSRF to research universal design, a method of designing buildings and spaces that promotes universal accessibility, usability, and flexibility. Creating a specific set of universal design standards for the College and researching its application to our new sustainable building standards would continue to advance the inclusivity of our built environment for people with different abilities, an important domain of sustainability.

ZERO WASTE SKILL-SHARING

Angela Gil ’25, she/her

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentor:
Clare Hyre, associate director of Sustainability

Project Board Members:
Elaine Allard ’01, associate professor of educational studies and director of the Teaching & Learning Commons; Brendan Carr, sustainability & engaged scholarship fellow; Joshua Jordan, woodshop/MakerSpace manager; Laila Swanson, assistant professor of theater

Sustainability Sage:
Nusaybah Estes ’21

MISSION

This project aimed to cultivate a lasting campus culture of reuse and repair by hosting community-led skill-sharing workshops, advancing Swarthmore’s efforts to become a zero waste campus by 2035. By improving access to reuse and repair skills and resources, this project enabled students, faculty, and staff members to engage in learning that supported minimizing material consumption and waste in daily life.

BACKGROUND

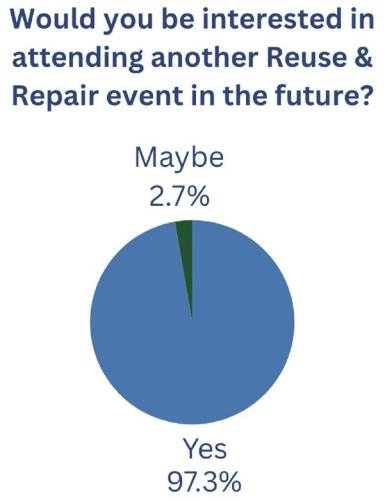
Workshops on various repair and reuse topics, such as sewing and mending, have been organized in the past by student clubs and departments on campus. However, there has not been a coordinated effort to advance these opportunities to further our zero waste efforts on campus and expand the reach. This project focused on supporting existing efforts, coordinating collaboration between campus groups working in these areas, and increasing publicity and attendance for zero waste skill-sharing events.

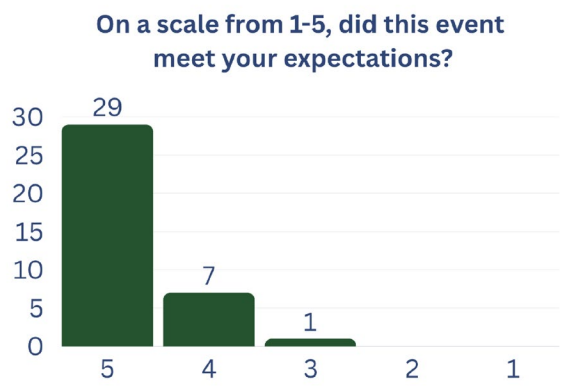
Students, faculty, and staff members participate in a machine sewing workshop in the College’s MakerSpace.

OUTCOMES

The year began with background research and consultations with community members and peer institutions that had hosted similar initiatives. A pilot workshop, in the form of a clothing swap, was hosted in the fall. Angela set up collection sites around campus and collected five full bins of clothing that were made available to members of the campus community during the event. Next, an interest survey was created to collect information on campus preferences for workshops, which demonstrated high demand for project- and skill-based workshops that covered topics including machine sewing, woodworking, hand sewing, clothing upcycling, furniture repair, and electronics repair.

There were a total of 275 sign-ups for the woodworking, machine sewing, hand sewing, and electronic repair workshops that were offered during the spring semester, demonstrating a high level of interest in the events from students, faculty, and staff members alike. During the woodworking workshop, participants made a homemade clock and learned basic woodworking skills useful for DIY projects, such as how to use a drill, handsaw, wood glue, and clamps. During the machine sewing workshop, participants learned the basics of using a sewing machine and each made a pillow. The woodworking and sewing workshops both had over three times as many signups as there were spots, and attendees reviewed their experience positively. Based on feedback surveys, the workshops received an average rating of 4.76 stars, with 97% of respondents saying they would be interested in attending another workshop.





FUTURE WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Angela strongly recommends continuing these skill-sharing events, as they proved to be successful in centering conversations about thoughtful reuse and encouraging community-building and a zero waste culture on campus.

The project-based workshops had the most consistent turnout and best engagement. Participants left these events feeling a sense of accomplishment. It was very important to involve the entire campus community in this process, and workshops were open to all students, faculty, and staff members. Staff and faculty members were often some of the most active and attentive participants in these events, and their participation was valuable in encouraging the students to engage with the material.

In the future, it would be useful to collaborate more with student clubs to embed principles and practices of reuse and waste reduction into the campus community in a more grassroots way. Future project leaders should focus on building relationships across campus groups engaging in reuse and repair, as well as encouraging these groups to invest in zero waste resources and infrastructure such as sewing supplies and collaborative training. Overall, these workshops are a powerful tool, but are only one element of creating long-lasting cultural changes on this campus to advance zero waste goals.

SUSTAINABLE ATHLETIC FACILITES

Ella Peyre ’26, she/her

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentor:
Peter Carroll, head men’s & women’s cross country/track & field coach

Project Board Members:
Brad Koch, Marian Ware director of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation; Max Miller, assistant athletic director for Recreation, Wellness & Physical Education; Roderick Wolfson, senior planner/project manager; Carr Everbach, professor of engineering; Elizabeth Drake, assistant vice president, Sustainability & Strategic initiatives; Jeremy Loomis, head women’s tennis coach; Jason Box, head men’s tennis coach

Sustainability Sage:
Chantal Reyes ’22

MISSION

This project aimed to define how sustainability — alongside other values such as inclusivity, belonging, and well-being — can be effectively incorporated into the renovation of the Lamb-Miller Field House and Cunningham Fields in order to create reimagined facilities that benefit the entire College community.

BACKGROUND

The College is planning a comprehensive renovation of its aging Athletics facilities to better meet the needs of student-athletes and the student body at large, particularly as the College embraces well-being as a priority of its strategic plan, *Swarthmore Forward*. The College has hired a Boston-based architecture firm, Sasaki, and begun the design process for both the Lamb-Miller Field House and Cunningham Fields. In all building and renovation projects at Swarthmore, project managers and design teams are tasked with incorporating sustainability into the design and construction process to ensure that projects align with our values. While the College has successfully integrated sustainability into other building projects on campus, such as the Dining & Community Commons and Martin Hall, Athletics facilities have different needs and considerations that should be factored into the planning; for example, athletic facilities use unique materials, such as synthetic turf, and include resource-intensive design elements like irrigation systems. Additionally, the College aims to ensure that these renovated facilities serve as inclusive and accessible resources for the well-being of our entire campus community.

OUTCOMES

During the fall semester, Ella learned about best practices for designing sustainable athletic facilities through researching recent building projects at Swarthmore and at peer institutions. As a next step, based on conversations with her project board and Sasaki, she determined that gathering student perspectives and input about challenges with our existing Athletics facilities and goals for the new facilities would be most helpful to the design team.

During the spring semester, Ella conducted a student survey, gathering hundreds of student perspectives on Swarthmore's Athletics facilities and sustainability, inclusivity, and other topics. She also held focus groups, which consisted of open conversations about students' experiences and their hopes for the new facilities, with the general aim to uplift the voices of students across varsity athletics, club sports, and recreation.

A document containing data, findings, and recommendations from her research was presented to Sasaki; project managers from Aegis Property Group, who are also collaborating on the renovations; and Swarthmore faculty and staff to support the remainder of the design and development process for both Cunningham Fields and the Field House. This research helped identify priorities for the student body and reinforced the importance of accessibility and inclusion in the design of the facilities, alongside environmental sustainability.

FUTURE WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

As we advance through the design and construction process, the needs surrounding sustainability will evolve. For example, the project team will need to consider the sustainability implications of the construction of the new field house, which will require athletic teams to practice and compete off-campus. As the facilities are constructed, the College will also need to work to ensure that they are operated and used in a way that aligns with our goals for sustainability, accessibility, and inclusion, considering topics like the use of lighting and irrigation, waste management, and space use efficiency. Next year, Ella will continue to work on her project as a returning senior fellow.

ZERO WASTE IN THE BOROUGH

Juna Saito ’25, she/her

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentor:
Jennifer Pfluger, professor of environmental studies and biology, associate member of Swarthmore Borough Environmental Advisory Council

Community Liaisons:
Bill Webb, Swarthmore Borough manager, Swarthmore Borough Public Works, Parks and Recreation Committee, Swarthmore Borough Environmental Advisory Council, Swarthmore Borough Environment Committee

Sustainability Sage:
Liz Lanphear ’19

MISSION

Building on Swarthmore Borough’s commitment to adopt zero waste principles, this project was developed to help Swarthmore Borough progress towards their goals by researching and proposing recommendations for the implementation of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program. PAYT is a waste reduction system that incentivizes residents to divert trash from incineration by charging them for waste disposal based on the amount they throw away. Through research, community engagement, and policy recommendations, this project sought to strengthen ties between Swarthmore College and the Borough in the common goal of achieving a more just, sustainable, and socially conscious community.

The goals for this project were to evaluate the feasibility of implementing a PAYT program in Swarthmore Borough; provide evidence of the effectiveness of PAYT as a trash reduction tool to Public Works, Borough Council, staff, and local residents; increase public awareness of PAYT via a public opinion survey and a subsequent article in the local newspaper; and provide Public Works with clear next steps for implementing PAYT, including recommended models of PAYT that could work with existing regional and Borough waste management constraints.

BACKGROUND

Like the College, Swarthmore Borough sends its trash to the Reworld incinerator in the nearby city of Chester, Pa. Due to the hazardous health risks, including increased chances of cancer and asthma, that come with living near incineration, this facility has been an ongoing site of protest by Chester residents. Thus, surrounding communities like Swarthmore have been working to limit their impact on Chester residents by reducing the amount of trash they produce. Two green advisors (residential peer advisors who sort compost and work on small-scale campus sustainability projects) have worked with the Borough on establishing waste management strategies, such as a plastic bag ban, and research that eventually guided this PSRF project towards interventions, such as a curbside organics collection program or, ultimately, a PAYT program.

Image of the 2025 Environmental Justice march in Chester protesting the presence of the Reworld incinerator

OUTCOMES

Juna first compiled a list of municipalities around Pennsylvania who have PAYT programs and interviewed them about their methods. She presented her findings to Public Works, and together they narrowed down the PAYT methods that would best fit Swarthmore Borough to either a standardized/prepaid bag or variably sized bin system.

From December 2024 through February 2025, Juna administered an opinion survey to the residents of Swarthmore Borough. The survey asked about curbside organics collection, frequency of trash pickup, enforcement of waste management guidelines, and the introduction of a PAYT program. It was advertised both in person (through flyers and solicitation) and virtually (via emails and social media posts) for greatest reach. The survey received a total of 494 complete responses. In general, the survey revealed that Borough residents are majority in support (65%) or unsure (17%) of enforcing existing waste management guidelines; they are also majority in support (58%) or unsure (21%) of a curbside organics collection program; and they are majority in support (36%) or unsure (21%) of a PAYT structure for waste management. These findings underscored the need for more education about PAYT and highlighted other waste reduction strategies that could be successful.

Based on her findings, Juna recommends that the Borough implement a variably sized bin model of PAYT by contracting a hauler that can provide the appropriate bins when this year's RFP is sent out in July. If no fitting hauler bids and a variably sized bin system is unlikely, then Juna recommends continuing efforts to research and implement a standardized/prepaid bag model of PAYT.

FUTURE WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results, which will be made public to Borough residents on the Borough website, social media, and published in *The Swarthmorean*, revealed that residents were enthusiastic about the development of a curbside organics collection program and had many questions about the current recycling program. As the strength of recycling and composting programs are vital to the diversion of waste from incineration and the success of PAYT, these would be great future focus areas for the Borough.

SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING

Sophia Schmitz ’25, she/her

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentor:
Chris Kane, director of procurement

Project Board Members:
Elizabeth Drake, assistant vice president for Sustainability & Strategic Initiatives; Alice Turbiville, associate vice president, Finance & assistant treasurer; Patti Braun, procurement operations manager; Kelly Fitzpatrick, administrative coordinator for Information Technology Services; Elizabeth Stern, inventory control coordinator, Facilities; Alexandra Sastre ’05, associate director of campus communications

Sustainability Sage:
Melissa Tier ’14

MISSION

The goal of this project was to establish a sustainable purchasing program at Swarthmore College, empowering the campus community to make environmentally and socially responsible procurement choices. It supports the College’s broader sustainability goals by integrating sustainability considerations into purchasing processes, reflecting a commitment to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and fiscal accountability.

BACKGROUND

Sustainable purchasing is an integrated approach to acquiring goods and services that prioritizes environmental, social, and economic responsibility throughout the entire life cycle of a product or service. Building on the Sustainable Purchasing Policy developed by the previous year’s PSRF, Anastasia Erley ’25, this project aimed to strengthen institutional capacity for sustainable purchasing and align with the College’s goals of achieving zero waste and carbon neutrality by 2035. The primary objectives were to finalize a comprehensive sustainable purchasing guide, develop web content to make sustainable purchasing more accessible, collaborate with vendors to promote sustainable items in their catalogs, and create a supplier sustainability questionnaire to evaluate vendor practices. Together, these efforts aim to embed sustainability into everyday purchasing habits and institutional procurement practices.

OUTCOMES

Sophia developed a comprehensive sustainable purchasing guide, building on a draft from the previous sustainable purchasing PSRF project. The guide provides clear, practical guidance for sustainable procurement across product categories, aligning with the College's zero waste and carbon neutrality goals. She also collaborated with the Communications Office to create website content that simplifies sustainable purchasing and highlights the improvements made through this project's initiatives, laying a strong foundation for future outreach to our community members. In addition, Sophia worked with the College's top vendors, Office Basics and Amazon, to improve the visibility of sustainable products in the College's purchasing system (ESM Purchase). Both the Office Basics and Amazon catalogs now prioritize sustainable items, making it easier for those making purchases for the College to make sustainable choices. Finally, she developed a vendor questionnaire to evaluate vendors' internal sustainability practices and definitions. The questionnaire establishes a framework for vendor accountability and supports more informed purchasing decisions.

FUTURE WORK & RECOMMENDATIONS

With these foundational structures in place, future work should focus on deepening the impact of Swarthmore's sustainable purchasing program. Next steps should focus on data collection and analysis to refine the guide and measure progress, continue vendor engagement to optimize catalogs and explore new sustainability initiatives, integrate sustainable purchasing into eMarket Portal training sessions, and roll out the supplier sustainability questionnaire to assess vendor practices and guide future decisions.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROGRAM

Mahika Shergill ’26, she/her

PROJECT TEAM

Project Mentor:
Giovanna Di Chiro, professor of environmental studies and coordinator of the Environmental Justice and Community Resilience Program

Project Board Members:
Jennifer Peck ’06, professor of economics and environmental studies; James Padilioni, visiting assistant professor of religion and environmental studies; Ariza Nanji ’24 and Isabel Llosa ’20, sustainability and engaged scholarship fellows

Sustainability Sage:
Patrick Houston ’17

MISSION

Mahika’s project aimed to bridge national climate policy with local environmental justice work through the Environmental Justice and Community Resilience (EJCR) Program, an interdisciplinary and community-engaged initiative supported by the Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Office of Sustainability — which serves as a collaborative platform fostering action-oriented research and partnerships rooted in environmental justice principles. Her work sought to strengthen relationships between Swarthmore College and frontline communities in Chester, Pa., and Philadelphia by co-developing educational programming, building out the program website, and leading a federal grant application to secure funding for long-term partnership and impact.

BACKGROUND

At the core of Mahika’s work is the belief that the path to climate resilience is community — and that true sustainability requires collaboration, transparency, and a commitment to leaving no one behind. Situated between Chester, Pa., and Philadelphia, Swarthmore exists in proximity to communities that have long endured the consequences of environmental racism, from the largest trash incinerator in the U.S. to major oil refinery disasters. Despite these systemic harms, both cities remain powerful sites of resistance, creativity, and leadership. Grounded in the College’s sustainability values — resource stewardship, social justice, and community responsibility — Mahika’s project translated academic learning into meaningful, collaborative action.

At the Re-Entry Community Farm in West Philly for a Summer Enrichment Lab with youth.

OUTCOMES

In partnership with Swarthmore's Institutional Relations staff and community-based organizations, Mahika secured $250,000 in funding from the EPA for the Good Energy Collaborative, a bi-city initiative spanning Chester, Pa., and Philadelphia. This grant aligned with Justice40 goals to support youth-led solar energy training, environmental justice education, and regenerative agriculture labs.

Mahika designed and developed educational programming, including Climate Resilience at Work, a high-impact, interdisciplinary panel she hosted with six alumni from diverse career paths. She secured $2,500 in Amplify Grant funding and managed event logistics, outreach, moderation, and post-panel networking for 40+ attendees. She also guest-facilitated a session in Professor Di Chiro's Environmental Justice: Theory and Action seminar, presenting research on cap-and-trade and environmental justice implications based on the book *Climate Change from the Streets*; led policy briefings for Pennsylvania State Representatives Carol Kazeem and Joe Hohenstein; and developed a prototype teach-in on executive climate authority and legislative resilience. Mahika also attended the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's COP29 conference, gaining global insight and translating that experience into her campus programming strategy.

In collaboration with Sustainability & Engaged Scholarship Fellow Isabel Llosa '20, Mahika reimagined the EJCR website as a living archive and resource hub for Swarthmore students and community members, developing web content and navigation strategies to reflect accessibility, equity, and ongoing collaboration.

Climate Resilience at Work panelists with Dr. Di Chiro and Mahika; Q&A with panelists and audience.

FUTURE WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Mahika will return as a senior fellow in Spring 2026 and will continue to develop the EJCR website, including a climate policy page, arts and environmental justice archive, and faculty directory. Based on her experience with the EPA grant, she hopes to continue supporting its implementation and to help develop a grant-writing guide for students. Lastly, she plans to host events such as a climate justice teach-in or a grant-writing workshop for students and community organizations.

SENIOR PRESIDENT'S SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

This year, the PSRF program supported four previous PSRF fellows to return as senior fellows and continue advancing campus sustainability.

Jacob Herbold '26, he/him

ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN THE BOROUGH:

Last year Jacob worked with his mentors, Philip Coleman, member of the Swarthmore Borough Environmental Advisory Council (EAC); Elizabeth Drake, assistant vice president for sustainability & strategic initiatives; and the EAC to research and evaluate grant opportunities to fund electric vehicle charging stations in the borough. They identified the PECO Public Benefit Charging Program, a program which would cover 50% of the total project cost to buy and install charging stations in the Borough, as a suitable grant opportunity. This year, Jacob continued to research additional funding sources to cover the remaining 50% gap in funding, and collaborated with the EAC to identify appropriate charging locations in the Borough in order to submit a formal application under the PECO Public Benefits Charging Program.

Isabela Ibrahim '25, she/her

CAMPUS FARM:

This year, Isabela continued her work in collaboration with her mentor, Carr Everbach, professor of engineering, and the Food Systems Working Group (FSWG) to develop a concept for a campus farm. Last year, she researched peer institutions that have created campus farms, identified a prospective site for a farm, and developed a prototype at 302 Avondale Rd., Wallingford, Pa., that has been used for student research and food growing. She continued maintenance of this site and hosted an event in the fall, TuberFest, to harvest root vegetables grown at the site. Isabela also conducted a faculty survey to assess and identify curricular opportunities within a campus farm and gauge faculty members' levels of interest and commitment. Based on the recommendation from her benchmarking research that a campus farm should have a full-time farm manager, Isabela also worked with her mentor and the FSWG to identify potential external organizations that the College could partner with to manage the farm. Isabela is excited to pass the baton on to a new PSRF next year, who will continue her research into the feasibility of developing a full campus farm.

Clara Lee ’26, she/her

LAB SUSTAINABILITY:

Building on her past research on how to best divert Swarthmore’s nitrile glove waste from the Reworld Incinerator in Chester, Pa., Clara worked with Kathryn Riley ’10, associate professor of chemistry & biochemistry, to assess the feasibility of implementing a lab glove recycling program called Polycarbin for Swarthmore chemistry labs. Polycarbin is a small and transparent lab recycling and sustainability service that collects gloves, processes them, and turns them into consumer goods, while also tracking their clients’ recycling impact all the while. After working with her mentor to identify appropriate and safe chemistry classes in which to implement the recycling program, it was decided that Polycarbin recycling will be piloted in CHEM 010 classes next semester, targeting over 120 students and about 3,240 pairs of gloves. Clara also designed and prototyped a “Shut the Sash” initiative, an energy-saving signage initiative that encourages students to fully close fume hood sashes after finishing their chemistry work. Creative “Shut the Sash” stickers featuring Phineas the Phoenix in lab gear will be placed at every fume hood in the department.

Saumya Raj ’25, she/her

FOOD RECOVERY:

During the 2024-25 year, Saumya worked closely with Associate Director of Sustainability Clare Hyre, Swarthmore Dining Retail Manager Tim Smith, and Green Advisors Yuki Yamada ’27 and Addie Franklin ’27 to install the Food Recovery Fridge in the Science Center and plan and host a launch event attended by 50 students, faculty, and staff members. In a continuation of her research from last year assessing the best method for reducing food waste on campus, Saumya and her mentor refined the Food Recovery Fridge system and introduced the Food Recovery Liaison program, in which students are hired to arrive at the end of an event, package leftover food, and bring it to the Food Recovery Fridge. This streamlined the food recovery process and addressed barriers of time and capacity by reducing the workload of administrative assistants and other event hosts. Saumya also developed a system for measuring and analyzing how much food is recovered through the Food Recovery Fridge program, which will be piloted in the fall.

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QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Reach us at sustainability@swarthmore.edu