

MILESTONES IN SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND ACTION

PROGRESS REPORT • FALL 2024



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

MILESTONES IN SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND ACTION

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FROM THE DEAN



NANCY C. TUCHMAN, PhD

Professor and Founding Dean
School of Environmental Sustainability

Dear friends, colleagues, and alumni of SES,

IT IS WITH MIXED emotions that I inform you that I will be retiring in the summer of 2025. I have had an exciting and privileged series of positions at Loyola over my 35-year career, providing a deep appreciation of Jesuit higher education and the University.

My career journey started as a junior faculty member in Biology (1989–2002). After attaining full professor rank and serving as a program officer at the National Science Foundation for a year, I was invited to serve the university as associate provost for research and centers (2003–2008), founding director of the Center for Urban Environmental Research and Policy (2005–2010) then vice provost for academics and new initiatives (2010–2013). I was then appointed to serve as founding director of the Institute of Environmental Sustainability (IES, 2013–2020) and then founding dean of the new School of Environmental Sustainability (2020 – present).

Some personal highlights along this journey include hiring and mentoring new faculty and staff, starting the Office of Sustainability and our campus sustainability initiative, guiding the design

and development of a broad portfolio of undergraduate and graduate curricular programs, and seeing our students thrive during their education with SES and go on to land excellent positions in environmental organizations. It has also been gratifying to participate with Loyola's Leadership Team to achieve national and international prominence in environmental sustainability from the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the US and the worldwide International Association of Jesuit Universities.

Building anything new at a university requires collaboration, and I am forever grateful for the vision and effort of the many University partners who have helped build our reputation as one of the most environmentally sustainable universities in the country. Every incremental step in bringing environmental sustainability to the forefront at Loyola was due to the generosity, experience, intelligence, and standards of excellence held by our leadership partners across the University.

I am thankful for University presidents—especially Fr. Michael Garanzini and our current president, Mark Reed—



who made bold commitments to the environment and kept Loyola on this path. Our past and present provosts, CFOs, and VPs of General Counsel, Public Relations, HR, Information Technology Services, Student Development, and Mission Identity have also played vital roles in advancing this important work. VP Kana Henning and her team in Facilities have been excellent partners and leaders in advancing environmental sustainability and energy efficiency on our campuses, and University Marketing and Communications, Admissions, and Enrollment Management have helped build our reputation, leveraging the University's distinguishing commitment to the environment.

In addition, the SES team recognizes and thanks university partners in Advancement and our loyal and generous donors, particularly Michael and Nydia Searle, Judi Duchossois, Taylor and Paulette O'Malley, The Alvin H. Baum Family Fund, Michael and Dorothy Carbon, Mary Ann Smith, The Eleven Eleven Foundation, Don McLaughlan, Porticus, The Gore Family Memorial Foundation, The Ferdi Foundation and

many others whose generosity has been pivotal in advancing our work.

This year, Loyola is conducting a national search for the next dean to lead SES. I am confident that we will attract excellent candidates for the position given that concerns of the environment are top of mind for youth, the field is rapidly growing, and Loyola has a demonstrated 22-year commitment to the environment. The next dean will step into a thriving school with a talented, committed, and energetic faculty and staff and will help the school grow to meet future challenges. The University's leadership will support the next dean in further expanding SES and decarbonizing our campuses.

My vision for the future of SES involves you. Moving forward, it is crucial that we continue to work together to care for our shared planet and to support the education and development of the next generation of environmental change-agents. Over the next decade, SES will continue to build excellence in its undergraduate and graduate programming, aiming to develop a PhD program to train effective environmental researchers and policy makers. SES will continue to lead

interdisciplinary environmental sustainability in higher education, developing its specialty areas of expertise in food, bio-diversity, climate and energy, environmental health, and environment and society. The school will continue to grow and thrive because we are part of a Jesuit University with a remarkable commitment to the planet and its people.

In the following pages of this annual report, you will find stories of events and testimonies of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and donors. I hope you enjoy reading about their experiences at Loyola and how these experiences have inspired them to serve the planet and its people. As SES moves into the future, I invite you to help us continue to build our community in service of our common home. Together, we can make a difference!

Yours in solidarity,

NANCY C. TUCHMAN, PhD

Professor and Founding Dean
School of Environmental Sustainability

PROGRAM GROWTH



Celebrating milestones

2004

20 YEARS

Loyola's former president, Michael J. Garanzini, SJ, pledged to make Loyola's campuses environmentally sustainable in 2004 as part of an ambitious plan to reduce our environmental footprint while improving the University's infrastructure.

2005

19 YEARS

Loyola established the Center for Urban Environmental Research and Policy in 2005 with five faculty and staff members.

2013

11 YEARS

Loyola launched the Institute of Environmental Sustainability (IES) in 2013 and opened the building that now houses the School of Environmental Sustainability.

2014

10 YEARS

IES celebrated its first graduating class in 2014. Alumni returned to campus this fall for their 10-year reunion.

2019

5 YEARS

IES welcomed its first cohort of master's degree students in 2019. This fall, enrollment reached its highest level yet as we mark five years since the program launched.

2020

4 YEARS

The Institute of Environmental Sustainability (IES) became the School of Environmental Sustainability (SES) in 2020. We look forward to celebrating the school's fifth anniversary in 2025.

EXPANDING OUR ACADEMIC OFFERINGS:

New climate and energy programs

Nationwide, career opportunities in the energy and sustainability sectors continue to expand and diversify. At the current rate, many analysts predict that the global clean energy economy will top \$2 trillion by 2025. To meet the need for well-trained employees in this sector, the School of Environmental Sustainability aims to launch a new bachelor of science (BS) program and a new graduate certificate program in climate and energy.

The new programs will prepare students to help lead the transition to a clean energy economy. Students will develop knowledge of fundamental concepts of climate science and climate change. They will learn

about the state of energy production and consumption and strategies for a just and sustainable energy transition. They will also develop business, communication, and critical analysis skills, preparing them to work with multiple stakeholders on complex climate and energy projects with government departments and agencies, nonprofit advocacy groups, and industrial users and producers, such as electric utilities.

Many SES alumni have already gone on to successful careers in clean energy. These new additions to the SES curriculum will prepare future graduates with the interdisciplinary skills needed to become the next leaders of the clean energy transition. **■**



470

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SES FOR THE FALL 2024 SEMESTER

147

DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED DURING THE 2023 TO 2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

Enrollment and graduation trends

During the 2023 to 2024 academic year, 147 students completed degree and certificate programs in the School of Environmental Sustainability. SES awarded 103 bachelor's degrees, 33 master's degrees, and 11 graduate certificates.

Compared with the fall of 2023, fall 2024 enrollment in the master's degree program increased by 32 percent, while undergraduate enrollment declined just over 12 percent. The school is working with University administration to navigate nationwide trends in higher education and ensure the continued health and success of our undergraduate and graduate programs. **■**





Blessing Aleladia (MS '24), center, conducts field research on native and invasive plants in the wetlands of northern Michigan in 2023.

Tomorrow's sustainability leaders

As an undergraduate student studying soil science at the University of Benin in Edo State, Nigeria, **Blessing Aleladia** learned about the severe pollution problems in the wetlands of the Niger Delta, which stretches across nine states in the southern part of the country. She conducted an extensive search for graduate programs where she could gain expertise to help address the region's environmental degradation. Ultimately, she chose to travel 6,000 miles to pursue a master's degree in the School of Environmental Sustainability.

While applying for graduate school, Blessing connected with **Brian Ohsowski, PhD**, who co-leads Team *Typha*, a research group developing strategies to restore biodiversity to wetlands in the Great Lakes Region. Ohsowski became Blessing's graduate adviser and invited her to join the research group. He notes


that while wetlands in the Great Lakes region differ from the tropical wetlands of the Niger Delta, many of the same principles and challenges apply, particularly problems with contamination.

Team *Typha* aims to develop methods of decontaminating soil and water while combating invasive wetland plants. Blessing's graduate research builds on these efforts, with a focus on contaminants commonly found in the Niger Delta wetlands. She is exploring methods of converting harvested invasive plants into biochar, a charcoal-like substance, and using it to absorb heavy metals in wetland water and soil.

Through her studies and hands-on experience with Team *Typha*, Blessing is gaining knowledge and skills that will transfer to nearly any part of the world. After completing her master's degree, she plans to work in restoration ecology and pursue a PhD. In the longer term,

Blessing intends to return to Nigeria to focus on advancing environmental initiatives in the Niger Delta. She said her experience at Loyola has been instrumental in advancing her goals.

"My journey at Loyola has been truly transformative, influencing my academic pursuits and personal growth," she said. "I am deeply grateful for the support I have received from my advisor and thesis committee, as well as my lab group on Team *Typha*. Their support has been invaluable, and I couldn't have asked for a better school for my graduate program."

Ohsowski noted that Blessing can take the connections she has built at Loyola with her wherever she goes. For her part, Blessing is excited to continue her journey as a member of a global network of environmental scientists collaborating across borders to make a positive difference in the world. 

Outstanding graduates

SES students are remarkably committed to sustainability, social justice, and academic excellence. Meet some 2024 graduates who received awards for their accomplishments and contributions. They shared thoughts on how their education prepared them for their future careers.



Max Henson

BS in environmental science—
conservation and restoration ecology

“My time at SES has introduced me to the depth and interdisciplinarity of environmental science and sustainability. SES faculty have played a huge role in getting me excited about things I never thought I would enjoy, like statistics and coding, eco-spirituality, and soil health.”



Ixchel Barraza Zapata

BA in environmental studies

“SES prepared me with an interdisciplinary framework that blends social justice, STEM, and sustainability. This framework ignited my enthusiasm to apply my knowledge to tangible, sustainable initiatives. Access to professional development opportunities empowered me to evolve into a leader and build meaningful connections.”



Hanan Abdillahi

BA in environmental policy,
BA in political science

“I am grateful for the diverse classes I have taken, the amazing faculty and staff I have learned from, and the skills I have developed throughout my time in SES. I have felt encouraged, supported, and empowered by many individuals and mentors. I am thankful for opportunities such as internships and leadership positions, which have furthered my passion for contributing to policy change.”



Michael W. Chopra

BS in environmental science,
BA in film and digital media

“SES prepared me for my career in filmmaking and videography because it approaches the environmental science degree from a multidisciplinary perspective. I developed a well-rounded understanding of environmental problems and solutions, which I can apply to my communications and digital media work to help the public understand the issues.”



Luke Boehm

MS in environmental science
and sustainability

“SES prepared me to excel in whatever career path I choose. I’ve gained many transferable skills and had the opportunity to make meaningful connections with professionals in the environmental and sustainability fields. Most importantly, I’m prepared to create positive, meaningful change in my career.”



Michael E. Hughey

BA in environmental studies

I have gained a lot of wonderful knowledge and skills, particularly with respect to sustainable and resilient food systems and regenerative agriculture. I have had the opportunity to learn research skills and gain hands-on experience in the field I would like to go into.

Making an impact

Meet some inspiring SES alumni who shared thoughts about how their time at Loyola prepared them for meaningful and rewarding careers.



Natalia Szklaruk earned her master's degree in environmental science and sustainability in 2023. She now works as an aquatic invasive species educator at Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.

"My experience in SES gave me the tools and confidence I needed to pursue a career that I'm passionate about. The hands-on learning, research opportunities, and supportive environment prepared me for success. Beyond the academics, the encouragement and support I received from my professors and peers really helped me grow."



Garrett Klepitsch graduated from Loyola in 2017 with a bachelor's in environmental science. Today, he is pursuing his passion for conservation as a soil scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"The faculty and the students have a lot of passion for what they do. Following graduation, that inspiration and passion carried forward, and that energy helped me get to where I am now."



Megan McCawley graduated in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in environmental science. In her current job, she helps people connect with nature as the horticulture operations manager at the Lincoln Park Zoo.

"My undergraduate education gave me a lot of baseline knowledge that has helped me succeed in this position and connected me with others in the field. My experience at Loyola gave me a passion for all things environmental and related to the natural world. If I hadn't learned about the School of Environmental Sustainability, I wouldn't be where I am today, both professionally and personally."



Monique Sosnowski, PhD, graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2016 with a double major in environmental studies and psychology. Today, she works to protect threatened and endangered species as a wildlife crime specialist and an assistant professor of criminal justice at Farmingdale State College SUNY in New York.

"I look back on my time at Loyola with fond memories and am thankful for all the opportunities that were provided to me throughout my four years. They helped shape me into the person I have become and have helped guide me into the career I have today."



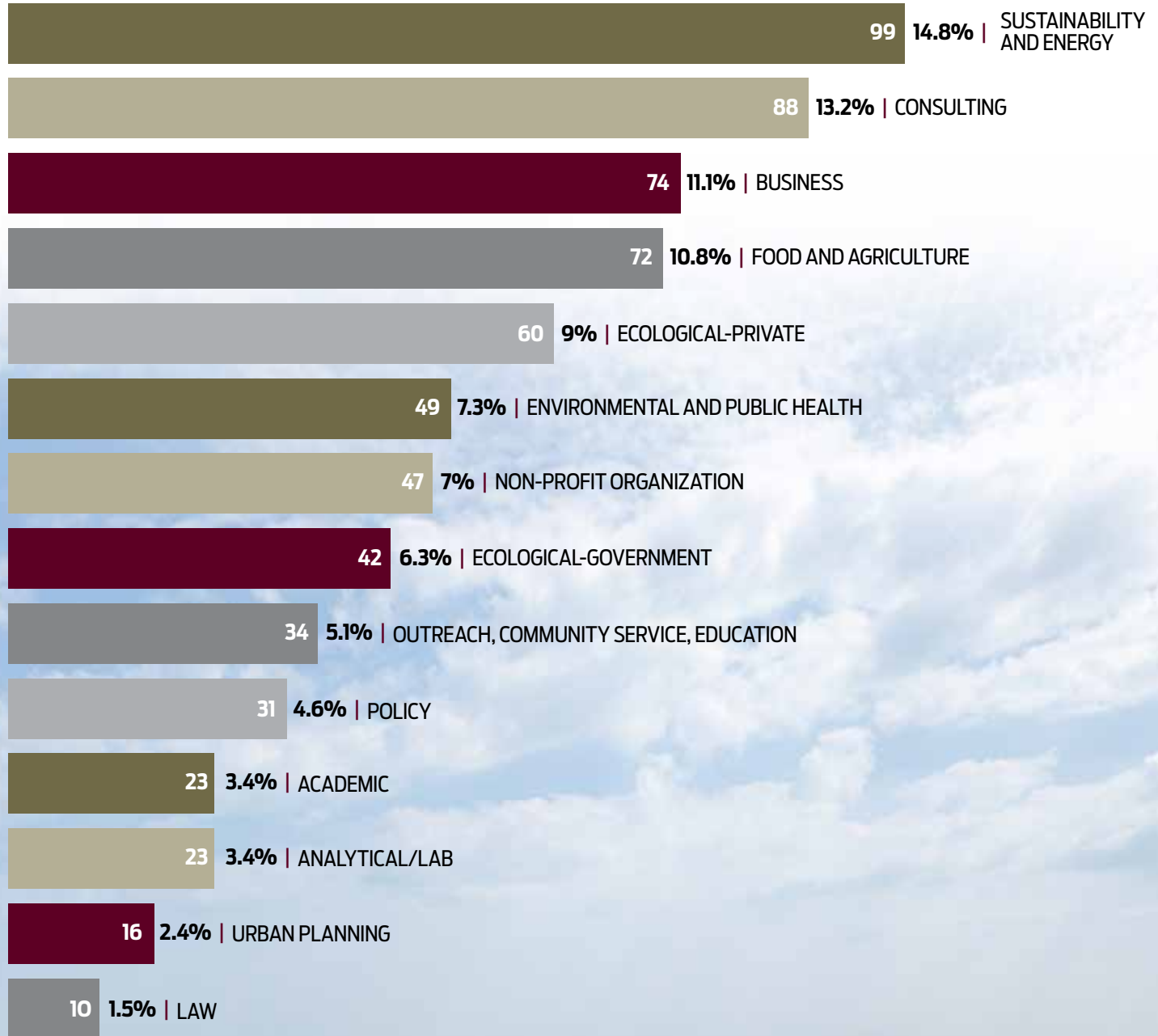
Tony Minnick completed his bachelor's degree in environmental science in 2014. He now helps create more environmentally sound and socially just sustainable food systems as the Agriculture Park director at the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture in Columbia, Missouri.

"I interned at the student-led farm at LUREC (the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Campus) and then worked on campus in the Winthrop Garden and with aquaponics systems in the school's greenhouse. Those experiences put me in a state of continuous wonder, and the supervisors demonstrated a love and enthusiasm for the work that I found very contagious. I've found success supervising farm teams by continuing to nurture the spark my mentors at Loyola fired up in me."

Opportunities across sectors

SES graduates work in a wide range of fields, advancing sustainability through jobs in industry, nonprofits, education, and government agencies. The figure below shows some sectors where our undergraduate program alumni work today.

RELATIVE NUMBER OF ALUMS WORKING IN EACH FIELD





Our growing team

The faculty in the School of Environmental Sustainability continues to grow. Meet the faculty members who joined the team in 2024.

Wesley Zebrowski, PhD



Wesley Zebrowski is a first-year assistant professor in the School of Environmental Sustainability. Zebrowski hails from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and they received their PhD in public affairs from Indiana University, Bloomington. Zebrowski's research is on the economic, social, and environmental consequences of agricultural policy. Their research specifically focuses on agricultural land conservation through the Conservation Reserve Program and equity in the structure and administration of agricultural programs. Zebrowski also has a great interest in farmer networks and food transportation supply chains.

Stephany Virrueta Herrera, PhD



Stephany Virrueta Herrera's passion for science education and accessibility motivated her to join the SES faculty as a lecturer. A first-generation Chicana born and raised in Southside Chicago, Virrueta earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Loyola University Chicago. She went on to receive a PhD in ecology, evolution, and conservation from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on the evolutionary histories and origins of avian louse diversity in the neotropics and beyond. She has also studied the evolutionary relationships of lice and their fresh and saltwater seal and sea lion hosts, some of which are endangered. Virrueta greatly enjoys collaborating with other researchers, including colleagues outside the U.S.

Faculty awards

SES faculty members regularly receive recognition for their outstanding teaching, research, and leadership. This year, honors included the Loyola Faculty Member of the Year Award, which went to Professor Reuben Keller, PhD.

Reuben P. Keller, PhD

Loyola University Chicago
Faculty Member of the Year

Loyola's Faculty Council honored Professor Reuben Keller with the 2024 Faculty Member of the Year award. The award recognizes a faculty member who demonstrates excellence in teaching, research, and service. Colleagues describe Keller as an outstanding role model for students and other faculty members, noting his dedication to mentorship and active involvement in the Loyola community.



Ping Jing, PhD

St. Ignatius Award for
Excellence in Teaching

Associate Professor Ping Jing received the 2024 St. Ignatius Award for Excellence in Teaching from Loyola's Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy. This prestigious teaching award recognizes faculty members who demonstrate commitment to excellence, raise global awareness, promote social justice, and educate the whole student.



Rev. Stephen Mitten, SJ, MS

Runner-up, Kolvenbach Award
for Engaged Teaching

Senior Lecturer Fr. Stephen Mitten was the runner-up for the Loyola Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy's Kolvenbach Award for Engaged Teaching. This award recognizes faculty who promote active and collaborative learning through hands-on, service-learning, and outreach experiences.



Roberta Lammers-Campbell, PhD

SES Emeritus Faculty
Leadership Award

The School of Environmental Sustainability presented its first Emeritus Faculty Leadership Award to Professor Emerita Roberta "Bobbi" Lammers-Campbell. The Award recognizes her tremendous contributions in leading ecological restoration efforts at the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Campus (LUREC). The University also officially named the fen at LUREC, to which she has devoted years of restoration work, in her honor.



Facilitating an equitable transition to clean, renewable energy

“

We'll work with communities to better understand what works for them in terms of building projects, and we'll leverage those findings to help other communities considering large-scale solar.”

— GILBERT MICHAUD, PhD,
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY

Shifting to solar energy is a critical component of global efforts to fight pollution and climate change, and building community support for solar projects is essential in making this shift. School of Environmental Sustainability faculty member Gilbert Michaud, PhD, is part of a team that received a \$2.5 million grant to study the best ways to work with stakeholders to facilitate the transition to clean, renewable energy.

Michaud and his partners at the University of Pennsylvania and Indiana University received funding through the US Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office, specifically through their Solar Energy Evolution and Diffusion Studies (SEEDS) program.

The team will follow 24 large-scale solar project sites across the US over the next three years, using interviews, surveys, site visits, and other strategies to understand the factors that shape community attitudes about the projects. For example, Michaud noted that mistrust of outside energy

companies or negative attitudes toward renewable energy can drive community opposition, which can delay or block new solar installations.

“These social factors are slowing down the build-out of renewable energy infrastructure, which is important for the energy transition and reducing harmful emissions from fossil fuel generation assets,” he said. “We'll work with communities to better understand what works for them in terms of building projects, and we'll leverage those findings to help other communities considering large-scale solar.”

The researchers will compare siting practices and area residents' reactions in three community types: disadvantaged communities, communities with historic fossil fuel industries, and communities without these characteristics. The researchers aim to shed light on practices that increase or decrease support for large-scale solar in each community type. They will also investigate strategies for ensuring the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of large-scale solar projects.




“If we can come up with tangible ways to help citizens learn about and engage with projects, particularly with procedural and distributive energy justice in mind, then we will have been successful and impactful in our research,” said Michaud.

Michaud has studied large-scale solar projects for nearly eight years and has given talks on the topic across the United States and internationally. He was also part of a team that received a 2021 SEEDS grant to examine how rural communities can make informed decisions about large-scale installations. Michaud will leverage his extensive relationships with solar developers, local government officials, and other renewable energy experts to lead community and industry outreach in the study sites. He will also help lead stakeholder interviews and analyze messages about solar projects in news outlets and social media.

Loyola students will also have opportunities to get involved in the project. Michaud’s DOE funding allows him to offer paid internships for undergraduates and graduate students. Students in his research group assist with activities such as transcribing and coding data and writing reports.

The students gain valuable experience conducting social science research on complex energy policy issues, and they build connections in the renewable energy field. Michaud said that alumni from his research group have all gone on to successful careers in the energy sector, working for solar developers, industry groups, and government agencies.

The new SEEDS grant will enable Michaud, his student interns, and his collaborators to expand their research and help facilitate an equitable transition to clean energy. 

In April 2023, Loyola announced that the University had signed an agreement to purchase power from the Double Black Diamond project (pictured), a large-scale solar development in central Illinois owned and operated by Swift Current Energy. Starting in January 2025, the project will provide enough electricity to power the University’s Lake Shore, Water Tower, and Health Sciences Campuses.

Photo courtesy of Swift Current Energy

“*I joined as a volunteer, and I really fell in love with the club. Not just its environmental mission but also its push to increase food equity, especially in the community around Loyola.*” —MEREYA RIOPEBRE

Fighting food waste and expanding access to healthy food

Globally, food production and distribution account for roughly a third of greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile, one-third of all food produced goes to waste, while nearly 800 million people go hungry. The School of Environmental Sustainability is tackling these complex challenges through academic programs and growing real-world initiatives focused on fighting hunger, reducing waste, and building more equitable and sustainable food systems.

On the academic side, SES offers a bachelor's degree in environmental science with a concentration in food systems and sustainable agriculture. Students can also get hands-on experience with local, sustainable food production through the school's Urban Agriculture Program.

To increase Loyola's impact, well-established sustainable food programs in SES are expanding partnerships with community groups fighting food waste and hunger. **SES Senior Sustainable Agriculture Manager Kevin Erickson** is leading the drive.

“As advocates of sustainable and local food systems, we realized that a

more holistic approach should include addressing food access, recovery, and food waste,” says Erickson. “And because of our location in Chicago, we wanted to address unique challenges and opportunities in the urban environment.”

In 2023, Erickson established a partnership with the nearby church Saint Thomas of Canterbury, part of the Mary Mother of God Parish. The parish manages a food pantry and soup kitchen, and parishioners were interested in establishing vegetable gardens on parish properties.

Erickson provided expert guidance on urban gardening methods and arranged for two student interns to support the initiative over the summer. The students brought fresh produce from Loyola's greenhouse and garden, assisted in the food pantry, and worked on the parish's newly established garden beds. Canterbury House director James Murphey said that the collaboration made it possible to offer more healthy, fresh produce to community members in need.

Later, gifts from the Ferdi Foundation and the Gore Family Memorial Foundation allowed Erickson and his

collaborators to officially establish the Loyola Food Security and Food Distribution Program and offer two paid student internships to support the initiative year-round.

SES seniors **Mereya Riopedre** and **Ellie DeMilt** started as Loyola's first food equity coordinators in November 2023. They came to the roles with leadership skills and experience gained through their work with the Food Recovery Network (FRN), a national, volunteer-based student movement dedicated to fighting food waste and hunger. Since Loyola's FRN chapter started in 2016, members have collaborated with Aramark, Loyola's food service vendor, to recover extra food from campus dining halls and deliver it to A Just Harvest, a Rogers Park food pantry.

Riopedre and DeMilt say that the new paid coordinator positions allow them to accomplish far more than they could as FRN volunteers.

“Stepping into this role of food equity coordinator means that we have set aside time for this work and deeper connections to Loyola administrators so we can make more significant change,” says Riopedre.



“

Mereya and I are excited to watch the Food Recovery Network and the food justice effort on campus expand and grow long after we both graduate.”

— ELLIE DeMILT

IN THE 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR, **THE FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM TEAM** AIMS TO INCREASE TOTAL CAMPUS FOOD RECOVERY TO 5,800 POUNDS, A 20 PERCENT INCREASE FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

The food equity coordinators organize more than 100 student volunteers, coordinate food recovery runs, organize campus food drives, and build partnerships with community organizations and businesses.

During the fall 2023 semester, the coordinators and FRN members worked with Aramark to expand food recovery from one campus dining hall to three. At the end of the semester, they facilitated a campus food drive that collected 475 pounds of food for donation—more than double the quantity collected in the previous semester. Riopedre and DeMilt also trained new student volunteers and led a food recovery training session for over 100 Aramark employees.

Before graduating in May, Riopedre and DeMilt helped hire and train Scotty Monteith and Maddie Mizon to fill their coordinator roles. Over the summer, Monteith and Mizon expanded the recovery network to include more restaurants and farmers markets, including the Edgewater Farmers Market, Horner Park

Farmers Market, and Vee Vee's Ethiopian Restaurant. The student workers also planned and designed a food storage facility in the SES building. The new storage room includes industrial refrigerators (purchased with support from the Ferdi Foundation) and dry shelving. The facility allows the team to collect and store more food items for donation, increasing overall recovery efforts.

Monteith and Mizon recovered 2,507 pounds of food during the summer, reaching nearly half the group's annual goal. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Food Security and Food Distribution Program team aims to increase total campus food recovery to 5,800 pounds, a 20 percent increase from the previous year.

“This is a really exciting time to be involved in food justice efforts on campus,” says DeMilt. “Mereya and I are excited to watch the Food Recovery Network and the food justice effort on campus expand and grow long after we both graduate.” 🍌



Climate Change Conference: Feeding a Changing World

CLIMATE CHANGE POSES a growing threat to global food security. Loyola's 2024 Climate Change Conference convened experts from multiple disciplines to explore how climate change impacts global food security. Speakers discussed strategies for developing equitable, resilient, and sustainable food systems. The event drew more than 350 in-person participants, while nearly 400 viewed a live stream of the keynote presentation.

This annual conference, organized by the School of Environmental Sustainability, draws inspiration from Loyola's enduring Jesuit values of social justice, service to humanity, and care for our world. The event aims to advance our understanding of the climate crisis, foster discussion around practical solutions, and inspire action for a more just and sustainable world. The two-day 2024 event included a keynote presentation, panel discussions, a poster session, and an exhibitor hall.

Amanda Little delivered the keynote presentation on March 14, offering a broad view of potential strategies for improving food security in the face of climate change. Little is a columnist for Bloomberg, a professor of journalism and science writing at Vanderbilt University,

and author of the bestseller *The Fate of Food: What We'll Eat in a Bigger, Hotter, Smarter World*.

On March 15, participants heard from diverse experts in three panels. The first panel explored critical questions about how climate change will impact global food production, including how extreme weather events related to climate change could impact traditional agricultural practices. The second panel focused on how climate change could affect food production in the Great Lakes states and the Midwest. Panelists discuss strategies for developing a more resilient and sustainable food system, exploring approaches such as climate-smart agriculture and regenerative land management. The day's final panel addressed the need to build local and equitable food systems that ensure everyone can access and grow healthy, sustainably produced food. Panelists discuss what communities, organizations, and individuals are doing to address these issues in the Chicagoland region.

Throughout the day on Thursday, an exhibit hall offered opportunities to interact with representatives of local organizations and student groups focused on climate change, environmen-



Author and journalism professor Amanda Little delivered the keynote address at the 2024 Climate Change Conference.

tal sustainability, sustainable food, and food security.

The conference concluded with a reception and poster session. Researchers from Loyola and institutions nationwide and abroad shared posters presenting work on environmental sustainability, climate change, and sustainable food systems. 📄



Panel discussions explored global, regional, and local strategies for improving food security in the face of climate change.

Honoring Indigenous Peoples' Day

ON OCTOBER 11, 2023, Loyola University Chicago and the School of Environmental Sustainability hosted an event to honor Indigenous Peoples' Day and unveil new signage displaying the university's Land Acknowledgment Statement. Nearly 100 people gathered to hear from a panel of local Indigenous leaders and view the signs, which feature illustrations by Native American artist Buffalo Gouge.

The unveiling was the culmination of a process that started five years earlier when a group of faculty, students, and staff convened to discuss what Loyola can do to welcome and support Indigenous people—a population that remains underrepresented in higher education.

Michael Schuck, PhD, a professor in the Theology Department and SES, played a central role in organizing stakeholders who created Loyola's Land Acknowledgment Statement. He introduced the panelists, starting with **Brandon Folson**, a Loyola student and an enrolled member of the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Counsel Fire) from the Ihanktonwan Nakota Oyate (Yankton Sioux Tribe) and the Tetonwan, Oglala Lakota Tiospaye (Oglala Sioux Tribe), of South Dakota. Folson was instrumental in organizing the American Indian

Student Circle at Loyola.

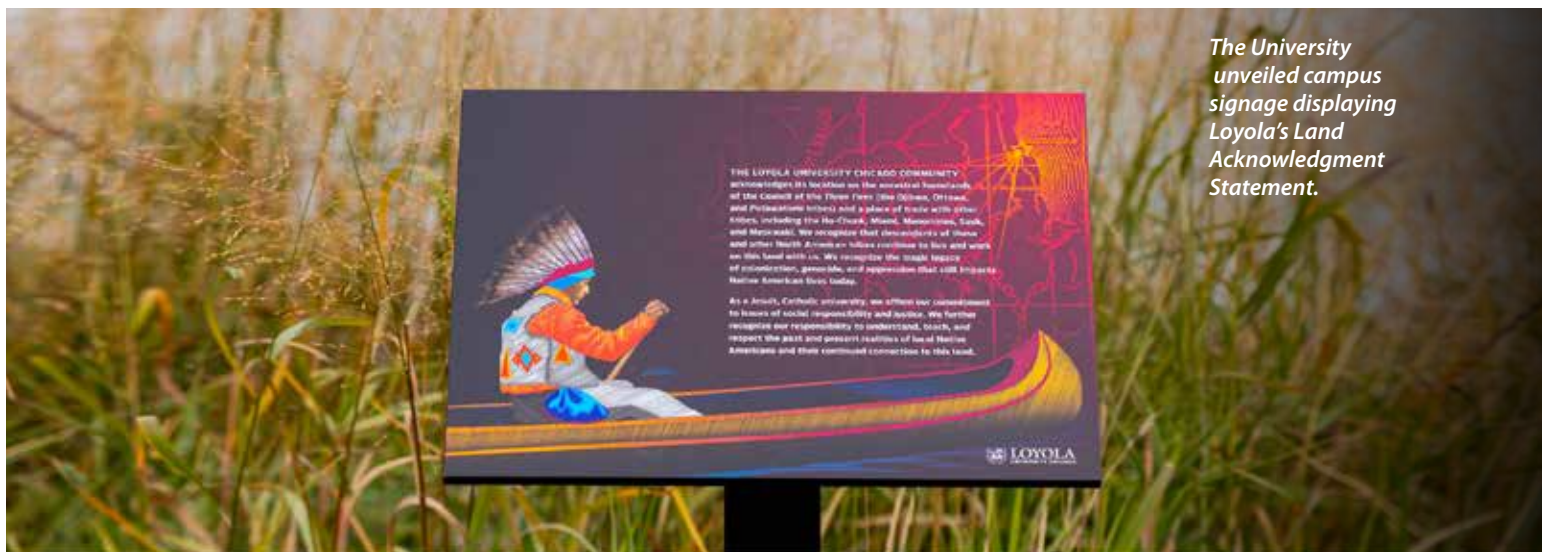
The audience also heard from **Ella Doyle**, a 2023 Loyola alum who is a dual citizen of the Cherokee Nation. During her undergraduate career, she served on the Loyola Land Acknowledgment Statement Committee and wrote the Resolution to Recognize Indigenous People's Day, which the student government passed. Panelist **Jasmine Gurneau**, director of Native American and Indigenous Affairs at Northwestern University, spoke about her experience as a person of Onida and Menominee ancestry growing up in Chicago.

The final panelist was **Al Eastman** from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe (Sicangu Lakota). Eastman is an environmental activist and works as a treatment plant operator at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD). He was instrumental in ratifying the Land Acknowledgment Statement at the MWRD and advised the committee that developed Loyola's statement.

Following the panel discussion and questions from the audience, event participants enjoyed Indigenous foods from Native American-owned catering company Foxway Catering. **L**

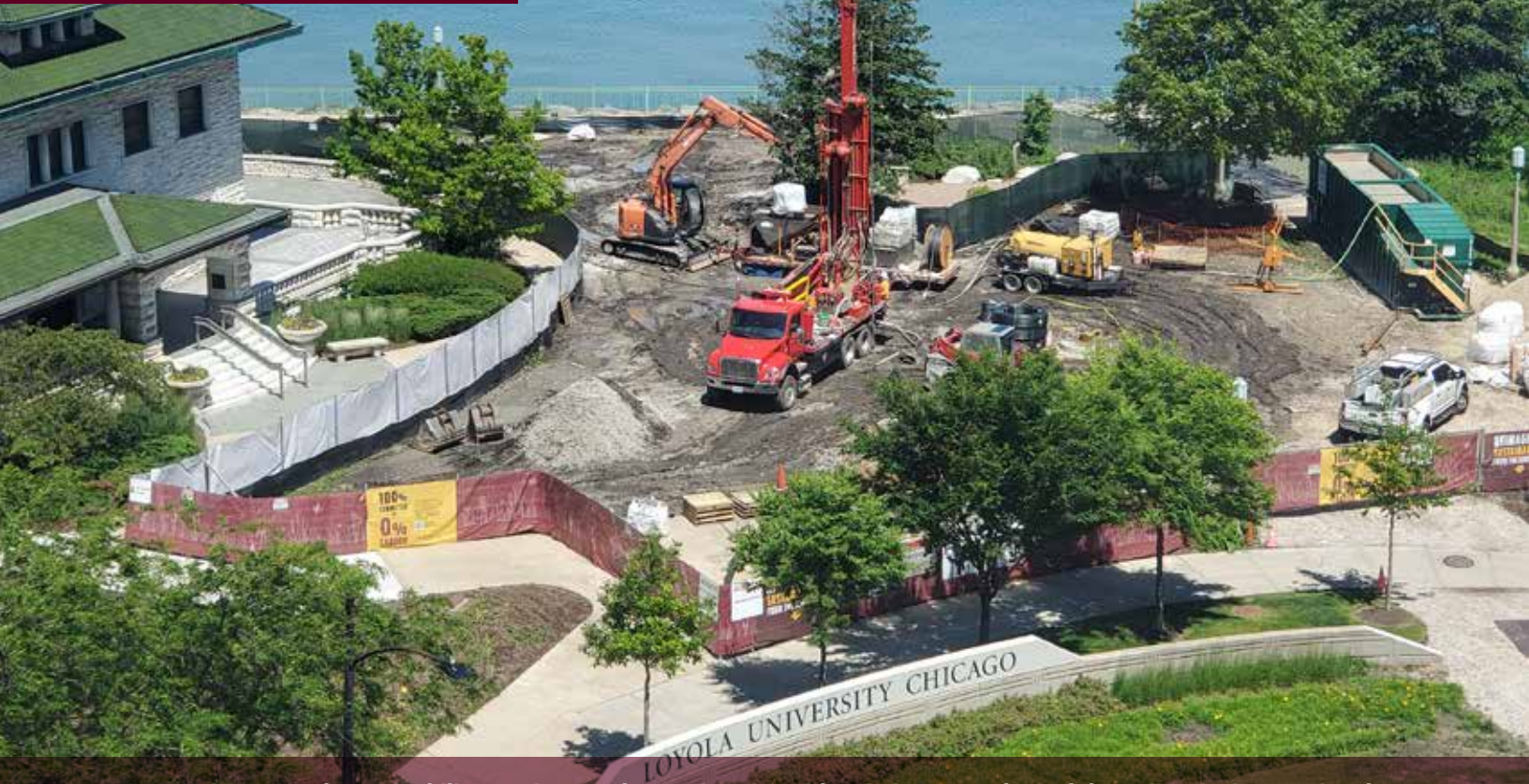


Loyola graduate Ella Doyle (left) and current student Brandon Folson spoke at the 2023 Indigenous Peoples' Day event.



The University unveiled campus signage displaying Loyola's Land Acknowledgment Statement.

GREEN CAMPUS



Environmental sustainability continues to be a University-wide priority at Loyola, and the University is committed to answering Pope Francis's call to Care for Our Common Home, as outlined in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. The Office of Sustainability coordinates campus-wide initiatives and tracks Loyola's progress as we strive to reduce our environmental footprint. Here are some recent activities and accomplishments.

New geothermal system on the Lake Shore Campus

OVER THE SUMMER of 2024, Loyola installed 22 geo-exchange wells to serve Piper Hall and a future building at the lakefront. (The photo above shows the geothermal installation in progress.) The project is a vital part of the University's Climate Action Plan and ongoing decarbonization work. The geothermal system is similar to existing systems serving the School of Environmental Sustainability and the Loyola University Retreat and Ecology Campus (LUREC). The university expects to file for a tax credit under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act to receive a 40 percent return on the project's cost. Compared to traditional boiler systems, geothermal systems reduce the energy costs for heating and cooling our facilities by 30 percent, while greatly reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

Partnering with a local company to destroy greenhouse gases

LOYOLA IS PARTNERING with Chicago-based company Tradewater to destroy industrial refrigerants used in heating and cooling equipment. These halocarbons are potent greenhouse gases that are thousands of times more harmful to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Tradewater collects and incinerates them before they leak or are released, helping avoid the most harmful impacts of climate change. Loyola has removed the equivalent of 13,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually through Tradewater's carbon offset projects starting in 2024, helping meet the goal of the 2015 Climate Action Plan.

In addition to providing carbon offsets, Tradewater works with Loyola to create opportunities for students to conduct research, learn from guest lecturers, and intern with the company. During the summer of 2023, four Loyola students partnered with Elara Engineering to inventory all heating and cooling equipment at all three campuses. From this information, they were able to estimate the potential risk of on-campus refrigerants and help model a transition to safer chemical refrigerant use in the future.

Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy's first Sustainability Scholars

DURING THE 2023 TO 2024 academic year, Loyola's Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy welcomed its first two sustainability scholars who helped explore sustainability and environmental justice and created resources for the classroom and student success.

Amy Wilkinson, PhD is a senior lecturer in dance in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts. Wilkinson's research interests include political identity, arts education, academic capitalism, and creative voices in environmental sustainability. During the last school year, Wilkinson created resources for faculty across Loyola to use in their teaching, including a detailed set of materials related to the performing arts.

Urooj Raja, PhD, is an assistant professor of advocacy and social change in the School of Communications. Raja teaches and studies public engagement on climate change and seeks to contribute to mitigating environmental and societal harm. Her scholarship focused on understanding and defining an environmental justice pedagogy for Loyola to support improved teaching outcomes.

Understanding and managing waste

IN THE PAST YEAR, Loyola partnered with the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center (ISTC) to conduct a waste audit to understand the makeup of landfill and recycling streams on Loyola's campuses and discover opportunities for improvement. The ISTC team conducted initial walkthroughs of the Lake Shore, Water Tower, and Health Sciences Campuses to observe current materials management infrastructure and discuss programs, operations, and challenges with staff from Loyola's Office of Sustainability and Facilities teams.

ISTC staff, Loyola employees, and student volunteers hand-sorted waste from the Lake Shore and Water Tower

Campuses, sorting 1,923 pounds of material from landfill bins and 1,532 pounds from recycling bins into 33 identified categories. The team also reviewed contamination in 132 pounds of material from dining hall organic waste bins. ISTC consultants then developed a detailed characterization of the landfill and recycling streams and extrapolated the findings to other buildings in each activity zone and the University campuses.

Campus walkthroughs also revealed how existing systems for managing waste are being reinforced or negated by stakeholders, from students and employees discarding items to waste collection and hauling.

The audit provided vital insight into Loyola's waste stream and revealed opportunities to divert more recyclable and compostable items from landfills and reduce contamination of recycling and compost bins. The observations and data from the audit directly informed the recommendations in Loyola's forthcoming Zero Waste and Sustainable Materials Management plan.

Compost Bucket Program at Water Tower Campus

LOYOLA'S COMPOST BUCKET Program provides an excellent way for students and employees to help divert organic waste from offices, classrooms, shared kitchen spaces, and on- or off-campus housing (students only). The program has been available at the Lake Shore Campus for over a decade and expanded to the Water Tower Campus in the 2023-2024 school year.

Student interns in the Office of Sustainability manage weekly drop-offs on each campus, collecting compost from participants and answering questions about composting. Visit [LUC.edu/compost](https://luc.edu/compost) to learn more and sign up.

Students and staff helped hand-sort nearly 2,000 pounds of campus trash to gain insights into how to reduce the amount of waste Loyola sends to landfills.





DONOR SPOTLIGHT: **Michael and Nydia Searle**

Michael Searle is among the earliest and most generous champions of the School of Environmental Sustainability and its leader, Dean Nancy Tuchman. Mr. Searle has aligned his passion for wildlife conservation with Loyola's commitment to the environment.

Mr. Searle's interest in the environment grew from early family experiences. "I got into conservation through outdoor exploration, including duck hunting as a thirteen-year-old. I loved learning how to call the ducks and watch them glide in. It gave me great respect for nature and a connection to my food and how mankind and nature have coexisted for thousands of years," he said.

Over his lifetime, Mr. Searle has

seen how urban sprawl affects nature especially where he used to hunt along the Illinois River. He observed how expanding urban centers and industry in the area began to overwhelm and change the river. With increased runoff from emerging towns, distribution centers, warehouses, industrial sites, concrete 18-wheeler refueling slabs and their accompanying sewage, runoff, and light pollution, the river's health and bird migration in this central flyway has declined. He decided to look into how important economic development could occur while still protecting the natural resources he values.

A more recent philanthropic interest of Mr. Searle's is protecting the health of the water and diversity of wildlife in the Florida Everglades. The Everglades

Foundation restoration project is the largest restoration project in the world. It focuses on cleaning polluted water and restoring the vast watershed's southerly flow, as nature intended, through scientific research and the construction and operation of more than 60 infra-structure projects that are funded equally by the state and federal governments.

Mr. Searle's long-term partnership in building and launching the School of Environmental Sustainability at Loyola is consistent with his passion for science, education, economic development, and saving and protecting natural resources.

Mr. Searle got involved with Loyola at the invitation of a family friend, Father John Costello, S.J., to join Loyola's Council of Regents. He later joined the Board of Trustees and quickly gained

Students and staff convert used cooking oil into biodiesel fuel in Loyola's Searle Biodiesel Lab. The fuel they produce powers campus shuttle buses.



enormous respect for Fr. Michael Garanzini, S.J., Loyola's president from 2001 to 2015. Fr. Garanzini said to Mr. Searle, "your job as a Board member is to learn about the University, and my job as University President is to show you things that you might get excited about funding."

Mr. Searle was an early adopter of the Biodiesel project when it was just a concept, and even following his full terms on the Regents and Board of Trustees, he has stayed with Loyola over the years because of Nancy Tuchman. "Nancy and I have been partners in sustainability for decades," he said.

Before he got involved, the School of Environmental Sustainability's Biodiesel Lab was in a pilot phase and operated out of a space the size of a closet. Thanks to Mr. Searle's support, it is now a state-of-the-art facility in the SES building where students convert used cooking oil into fuel for campus buses and use the byproducts to make soap for campus washrooms.

"Michael and Nydia Searle's support and partnership have been an enormous catalyst all along the journey from our origin as a center of excellence (2005) to becoming the Institute of Environmental Sustainability (2013) and now the School of Environmental Sustainability (2020)," said Nancy Tuchman. "The Searles' belief in our work right from the beginning has inspired new innovations in environmental work that have stronger connections with economic development and business management. I will always be grateful for their continued moral and financial support of this project and hope they will continue to partner with SES and that I can continue to work with them beyond my retirement from Loyola." ■



“ SES is what differentiates Loyola from other universities in Chicago. We are the sustainability school. Here is where Loyola can make a multidisciplinary contribution. Consider the move to running buses on biodiesel. You need political scientists to work with government. You need business people to assess economic aspects, marketing to pitch the idea, and scientists to assess air quality of tailpipe emissions. Loyola brings all these skills to the table.”

— MICHAEL SEARLE

DONOR HONOR ROLL

Support SES

Your gift will support our efforts to train future environmental leaders. Make your contribution at LUC.edu/SupportSES2024.

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Eileen (BA '70, MEd '74) and Robert Schuetz Jr.

Betsy Scott

Angela and Dale Sutton

Tammy and Steve Tsakalios

*Deceased

The background of the page is a photograph of two women walking from left to right across a green field. They are wearing dark blue polo shirts and dark pants. The woman on the right is carrying a black folder with an orange tab. In the foreground, there is a simple, light-colored concrete bench. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. At the top of the page, there is a dark red horizontal bar on the left and a yellow horizontal bar on the right.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

The Loyola University Chicago community acknowledges its location on the ancestral homelands of the Council of the Three Fires (the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi tribes) and a place of trade with other tribes, including the Ho-Chunk, Miami, Menominee, Sauk, and Meskwaki. We recognize that descendants of these and other North American tribes continue to live and work on this land with us.

We recognize the tragic legacy of colonization, genocide, and oppression that still impacts Native American lives today. As a Jesuit, Catholic university, we affirm our commitment to issues of social responsibility and justice. We further recognize our responsibility to understand, teach, and respect the past and present realities of local Native Americans and their continued connection to this land.

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