

FALL 2025

LSA SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

Stories, Resources, and Action

Authored by LSA Sustainability
Faculty & Staff

November 26, 2025

This report is best viewed digitally to take advantage of links and resources throughout. Please message sustainable-lsa@umich.edu if you have any questions.

View the other [LSA Sustainability updates](#).

Learn more about the broader [Planet Blue initiative](#).



A Welcome Letter

In September, I became the inaugural **Faculty Sustainability Advisor** to LSA. Before that, I co-led the “Year of Sustainability” for LSA and co-chaired the LSA Carbon Neutrality Task Force. I am excited to continue supporting LSA’s sustainability goals and sustainability team in this new role.

When Jane Goodall passed away in early October, I began reading her final book, “The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times.” In it, she talks about the power of hope to inspire action. She writes, “Hope is often misunderstood. People tend to think that it is simply passive wishful thinking..This is indeed the opposite of real hope, which requires action and engagement.” She later writes, “We must find ways to help people understand that each one of us has a role to play, no matter how small. Every day, we make some impact on the planet. And the cumulative effect of millions of small ethical actions will truly make a difference.”

The actions – both small and large – that we are taking in LSA to reduce our energy, waste, and water footprints truly make a difference. In this report, you will learn more about LSA’s efforts (i) to reduce energy by putting energy-intensive research equipment on timers and reducing HVAC on season days, (ii) to reduce waste by removing deskside bins and increasing access to compost bins, and (iii) to impact how students and the world understand climate change through our research and teaching. If you have ideas for making LSA more sustainable, reach out to us at sustainable-lsa@umich.edu or attend an upcoming office hour.



Dr. Anne McNeil

*LSA Faculty
Sustainability Advisor*

Carol A. Fierke

Collegiate Professor of
Chemistry,

Macromolecular
Science and

Engineering, and the
Program in the

Environment; Arthur F.
Thurnau Professor.

Say hello to the LSA Sustainability Team!

Jenna Steele - LSA Sustainability Coordinator

Caitlin Jacobs - LSA Sustainability Manager

Quinn VanZile - Intern

Anne McNeil - Faculty Advisor

Not Pictured: Lauren May (Intern) and Sam

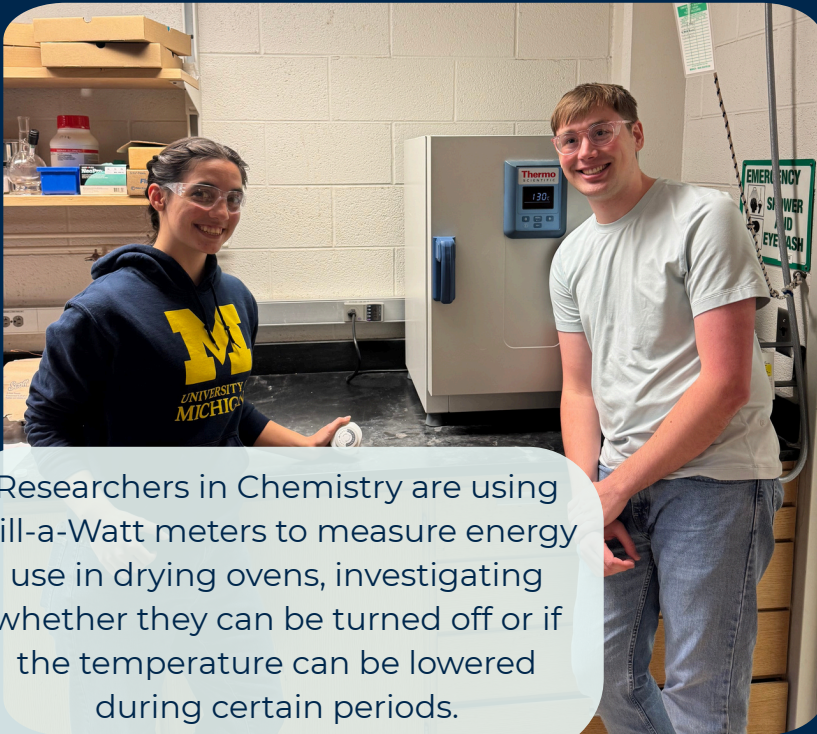
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Sustainable Operations - Energy

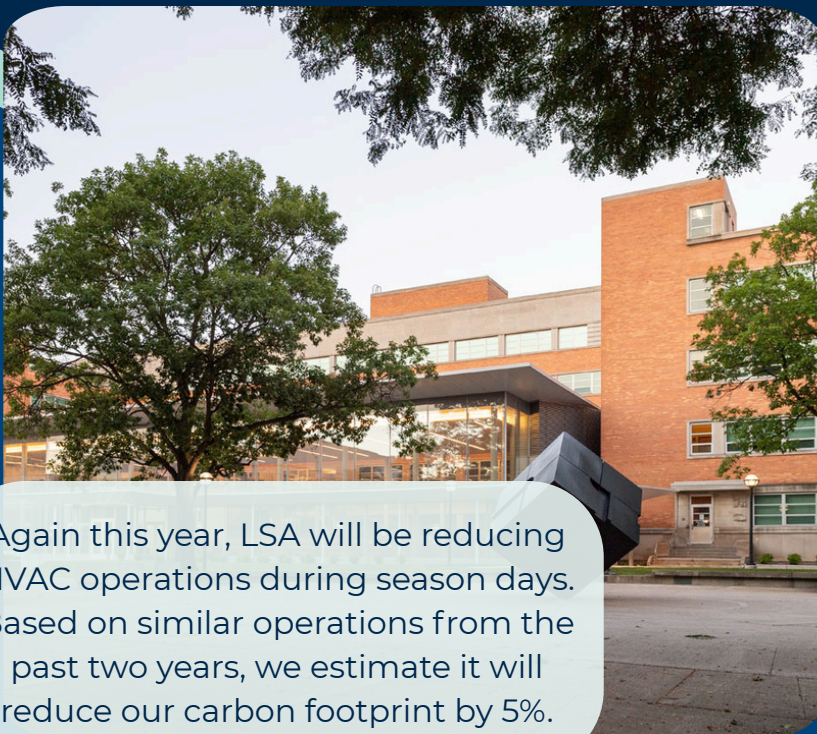
In the 2025 fiscal year, LSA buildings used 64,146,969 kWh of energy, which is equivalent to about 95,000,000 miles driven by an average gas-powered passenger vehicle. As we make the transition to renewable energy on campus - including [geoexchange at Lorch Hall](#) - individual champions and LSA are committed to reducing our impact.

METERING LAB EQUIPMENT



Researchers in Chemistry are using Kill-a-Watt meters to measure energy use in drying ovens, investigating whether they can be turned off or if the temperature can be lowered during certain periods.

SEASON DAYS



Again this year, LSA will be reducing HVAC operations during season days. Based on similar operations from the past two years, we estimate it will reduce our carbon footprint by 5%.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- [Request a Kill-a-Watt timer](#) for your lab through the Office of Campus Sustainability.
- Raising the temperature in an ULT freezer from $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $-70\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ can [reduce energy consumption by 25%](#). Take a look at [these UM labs](#) that have made the switch!
- Building on successful Sustainable Lab Days, we will be partnering with the Office of Campus Sustainability in 2026 to visit a different LSA Lab Building every month. Keep an eye out for more information!
- During the cold Michigan winter months, please remember to keep your windows closed; this can throw off [building systems](#), making temperatures harder to maintain and increasing energy use.

Sustainable Operations - Waste

In the 2025 fiscal year, 58% of our waste at the University of Michigan was landfilled. LSA is committed to expanding opportunities to divert waste, which include compost bins in all LSA staff kitchens, piloting paper towel composting in select labs, and a Lab Swap Shop.

WASTE BIN STANDARDIZING

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Before

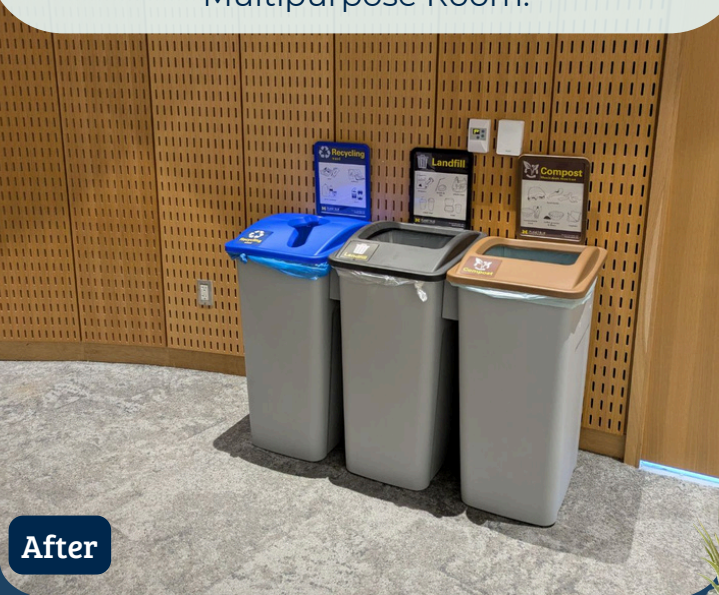


In partnership with the Office of Campus Sustainability and Custodial Services, we are piloting the removal of desk-side bins in select buildings. Centralized bin systems will be updated to ease the transition. Pictured here are updated bins in the LSA Multipurpose Room.

- For office parties and events, consider hosting a Zero Waste Event; materials are available upon request.
- Not sure where to throw your waste? Check out the Where to Throw tool!
- Before buying new, check out the Lab Swap Shop for lab supplies or the LSA Sustainable Stockroom for sustainable alternatives to common office supplies.

Since its opening in June 2024, the Lab Swap Shop has diverted over 18,000 pounds of waste and saved researchers nearly \$1M in procurement costs!

After



Sustainability Across Academia

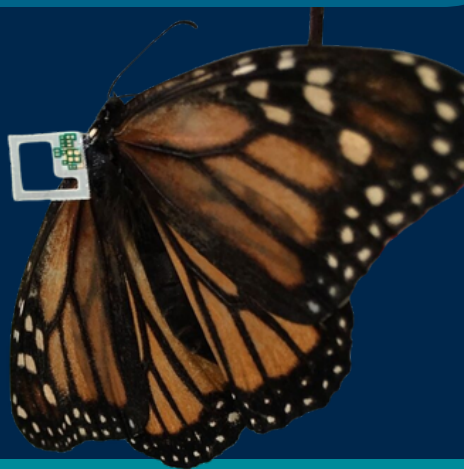
LSA offers over 350 sustainability courses, has over 200 faculty experts, and has countless staff who are sustainability champions. From climate science to the history of zero waste and monarch butterfly migration to climate wayfinding, LSA has courses and research for almost every interest area.

Research

Monarch Butterfly Backpacks?

Every year, groups of migrating monarch butterflies make it to their overwintering site in Mexico with incredible accuracy. Despite never having been there, these pollinators fly over 3,000 miles to a very specific forest type, just over 4 acres large.

Today, Dr. D. André Green, in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, is researching monarchs to understand *how* these small beings know exactly where to go. Through partnerships with engineers, they place small solar-powered “backpacks” on the monarch butterflies to monitor their migration.



Teaching



Interdisciplinary Environmental Topics

A brand new class, ENVIRON 245 - Climate Wayfinding: Identifying your role in the movement for a sustainable future, will be taught by Clara Gamalski, from Student Life Sustainability.

Students will have the opportunity to reflect personally, professionally, and collectively on sustainability. This course emphasizes connecting to personal motivations, using creative problem-solving, developing leadership capacities, and the practice of building relational power.

During Climate Week, the Graham Sustainability Institute announced the launch of the Michigan Community Climate Action Fellowship, a co-curricular partnership with the Michigan Climate Action Network (MiCAN). Students will be placed with a partner organization over the summer and will take mini-courses in the Fall and Winter semesters. This program is open to any U-M undergraduate, and applications are due in December!

NEW

Community Art Activation



In celebration of UM [Climate Week](#) and LSA's commitment to pollinator habitats, we've installed a roost in the LSA Building made of reclaimed materials.



Reused Materials

If you look closely, you'll notice that some of the materials look oddly familiar, like something right under your feet... That's because nearly all of this art installation is made using second-hand materials. The branches are made from carpet and leftover accent wall paints. The butterflies are made from old marketing materials, yarn, campus pamphlets, and many other materials.

Why Monarchs?

In addition to being beautiful, these charismatic beings hold scientific and social significance. We play a role in helping their journey south because monarch caterpillars will only eat milkweed plants, which can be found throughout campus. Additionally, Monarchs' annual migration to Mexico often coincides with Día de Los Muertos celebrations, where their colors can be seen in ofrendas.

Where you can see it

You can find the installation in the LSA Building, on the first floor, across from the Opportunity Hub, through the end of the Fall semester. While this is a public and collaborative art piece, we kindly ask that you do not add to or take from the installation without consulting our team.

Thank you to our many partners along the way...

LSA Facilities & Operations, U-M Museum of Natural History, LSA@Play, the Arts Initiative, Crafts for Conservation: VIPS Club, LSA Student Government TREES, Michigan Sustainability Community, UM Origami Club, and many more!



Climate Week Recap

On September 27 - October 5, the University of Michigan hosted its inaugural [Climate Week](#). The theme “Together for Tomorrow” brought our community together for over 70 events hosted by 30 different units.

Teaching Climate Change

In partnership with the Center for Research on Teaching and Learning (CRLT) and the Program in the Environment (PitE), we welcomed 20 faculty and teaching staff for a panel on integrating climate education into courses. Panelists included faculty members from Political Science, Chemistry, American Culture, and Art and Design.

Partners: Deb Meizlish & Sara Soderstrom

[View resources](#) from this event

Keep an eye out for an announcement about next summer's Embedding Climate Change in Courses (EC3) Retreat!



Partner: Alex Puerto

Ecologies of Migration

In partnership with LSA Undergraduate Education, we welcomed nearly 40 community members to a panel on the multifaceted world of animal and people migration. Panelists included faculty members from Earth and Environmental Sciences, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Latina/o Studies. This also served as the official launch of our collaborative art installation.

Bark Beetles & Bagels

In partnership with the Institute for the Humanities, we welcomed 45 community members to a curator-led tour of the Catherine Chalmers: Conifer Trees, Bark Beetles, and Fire exhibition in the Institute for the Humanities Gallery. While Chalmers' exhibit ended on October 24th, you can view her work [here](#) and visit the Institute for the Humanities Gallery [here](#).

Partners: Ed Diven & Amanda Krugliak



University-Level Action: Campus Biodiversity

After reaching the 2011 goal of reducing chemical applications on campus landscapes by 40% in 2019 (six years ahead of schedule), proposed goals have expanded to continue reducing chemical applications, conducting ecosystem assessments, increasing campus resilience through green spaces and infrastructure, and enhancing campus engagement through academic and research partnerships.

IMPROVING POLLINATOR HABITATS



LSA Sustainability is committed to expanding pollinator habitats on campus. Over the past year, our team has worked with partners in the Office of Campus Sustainability, UM Grounds, the UM Museum of Natural History, the Michigan Sustainability Community, and the LSA Student Government to improve pollinator habitats in five separate central campus locations.



Undergraduate Science Building



Oxford Houses



UM Museum of Natural History



Power Center



Mason Hall

BIRD BUILDING COLLISION MONITORING

Did you know that twice a year, millions of birds make mass migrations across the US? From September through October 2025, volunteers from the UM community conducted a seasonal inventory by walking around buildings daily. This data will help the university prioritize high-impact areas for possible interventions (like you see MSC students doing to the left!).

Report an injured or dead bird [here](#) at any time.

