LSA SUSTAINABILITY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Fall 2026 Update

Stories, Resources & Actions

October 29, 2026

Authored by LSA Sustainability Faculty & Staff



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.

State of University Sustainability & Carbon Neutrality

The College of Literature, Science and the Arts aligns our environmental goals with those of the broader University of Michigan, so LSA Sustainability starts each update with an overview of University level work. Broadly, U-M has goals to reduce carbon emissions and waste, increase community awareness and engagement with environmental work, activate campus as a "living lab", and transform the physical campus.

To learn more, check out the Planet Blue carbon neutrality page and this FY25 Operational Update.

Some Recent Goal Progress

RESILIENT GROUNDS

Reducing chemical use, expanding native planting areas, and addressing storm water management

Key University Actions:

New native planting areas outside of Wolverine Village and all other new construction, new goal to protect 75% existing green space in the Ann Arbor campus area.

Key LSA Actions:

LSA just hit 8,000 new native plants added to campus since 2023. We'll hit 10,000 plants in March with a new garden on the Diag. Bird safety retrofits are also underway.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Direct carbon emissions come from on-campus power, vehicles, and purchased energy

Key University Actions:

U-M launched the Maize Rays program and is actively adding 25 megawatts solar panels to facilities across central and north campus.

Key LSA Actions:

LSA just finished installing our first ever geo-exchange system beneath Lorch Hall. This will reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool the new building.

WASTE REDUCTION

Decreasing materials sent from campus to the landfill through compost, recycling, upstream reduction, and reuse

Key University Actions:

U-M expanded Move Out donations (15 tons of materials donated in May 2026!) and now composts all Game Day waste from the Big House at the Campus Farm.

Key LSA Actions:

Launched our LSA Circularity Hub, an off-campus warehouse allowing the college to store, repair, and redeploy assets like furniture across campus.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Educate U-M students, faculty, and staff to continually grow a culture of sustainability.

Key University Actions:

U-M established its annual Climate Week and launched new opportunities to grow sustainable career opportunities for current students

Key LSA Actions:

Launched new orientation programs, Climate Cafes, and installed a camera on the North Quad peregrine falcon nest.

Learn more about each of these LSA actions in the rest of this report!



These mushrooms, leaves, and creatures are pieces from an ongoing LSA Sustainability art project launched in Climate Week 2026. All of these materials are recycled from campus.



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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Campus Bird Updates

LSA strives to support year-round and migrating birds living on campus by expanding native planting areas designed to provide good food and shelter for birds, installing bird-safe glass on new construction projects, and reducing window collisions at LSA facilities through special decal projects that make our buildings more visible to birds.

Led by Dr. Ben Winger, Curator of Birds at the Museum of Zoology, in collaboration with the Office of Campus Sustainability and Innovation, LSA has been a partner in a multi-year migration survey to identify problem areas for window collisions. Thanks to 2025-2026 volunteers, the catwalk connecting the North University Building to Weiser Hall was the first LSA retrofit. The Biological Sciences Building is planned to be retrofitted in 2027. The Lorch Hall renovation will feature bird-safe glass.

Learn more about bird protection on campus or sign up as a migration season volunteer at this link.



Mural designed by LSA student Suher Salim

Spot an injured bird on campus? Report it here and call the Bird Center of Michigan at 734-762-9640 to see if it can be treated!





Washtenaw Bird & Nature Alliance is commissioning a carillon piece to commemorate the relationship between the carillon and the peregrine falcons.



Falcon Nest Camera: Launching February 2027!

Peregrine falcons are the fastest animal on land - capable of diving at over 200 MPH. While they once neared extinction in North America due to pesticides and habitat loss, they are making a huge comeback in urban areas. Tall buildings, including U-M's own North Quad, are similar to the tall cliffs that wild falcons choose as nesting sites. North Quad has hosted falcon chicks for almost a decade. A new streaming camera will help monitor the birds' growth and behavior for years to come.

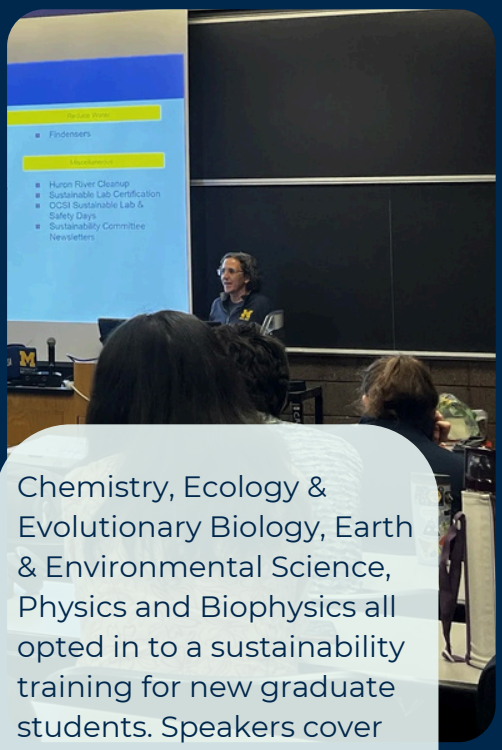
Sustainability in LSA Orientations

Sustainability efforts at LSA depend on experts and champions across all programs. Teeing up new community members with the basics, like recycling on campus, expands what is possible and sparks new ideas tailored to specific departments. Sustainability staff are always happy to organize a training or join an existing meeting.



The Planet Blue Ambassador Training is also available on demand and fully virtual via this Canvas site. LSA had 949 individuals trained in FY26!

GRADUATE STUDENTS



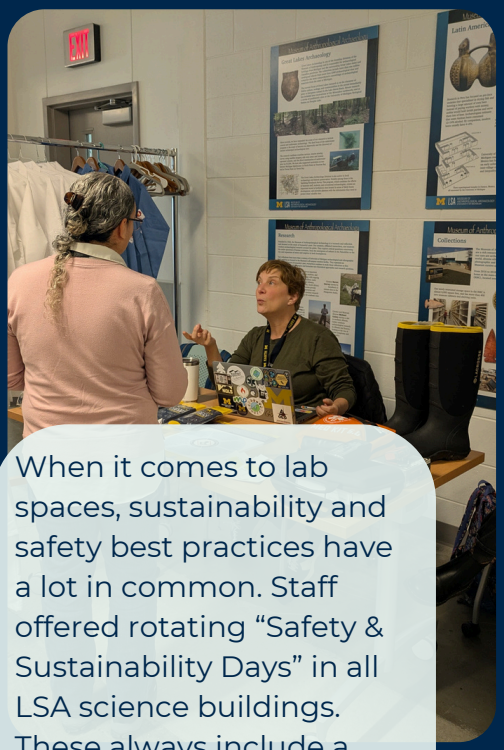
Chemistry, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, Earth & Environmental Science, Physics and Biophysics all opted in to a sustainability training for new graduate students. Speakers cover safety, waste, energy use, and more. Contact us to request a training!

NEW FACULTY



Campus sustainability content was included at new faculty orientation for the first time this year. If you couldn't make it or would like a refresher, this link will take you to our New Faculty Guide.

SAFETY & SUSTAINABILTY



When it comes to lab spaces, sustainability and safety best practices have a lot in common. Staff offered rotating "Safety & Sustainability Days" in all LSA science buildings. These always include a Planet Blue Ambassador Training and safety resources.

Launching soon: Sustainable Office Days

Lab spaces may use more electricity than the average office, but offices are just as important to U-M's overall sustainability goals. LSA Sustainability will soon launch Sustainable Office Days, allowing us to rotate through administrative and classroom buildings to offer a full day of trainings and other resources. We hope to see you there! In the mean time, some of the top ways offices can make a difference are:

- Switching single-use plastic items for compostable and/or reusable options
- Take advantage of Office Supply Reuse Days
- Offering plant-forward menus at catered events
- Submitting work orders for leaks and other issues
- If practical, investigating carpooling with co-workers

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Become a certified Sustainable Office or Lab

Climate Cafés

Emotional wellbeing in a changing world

When it comes to climate change, scientists like Dr. Katherine Hayhoe believe that talking about it is the most important place to start. But what do we do when it's hard to talk about, or is just emotionally overwhelming?

LSA Sustainability, the Planet Blue Ambassador Program, Student Life Sustainability, the School for Environment and Sustainability students, and the Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations have partnered to bring Climate Cafés to the wider community this semester.



Climate Café Facilitator Shiho Apperson-Ito

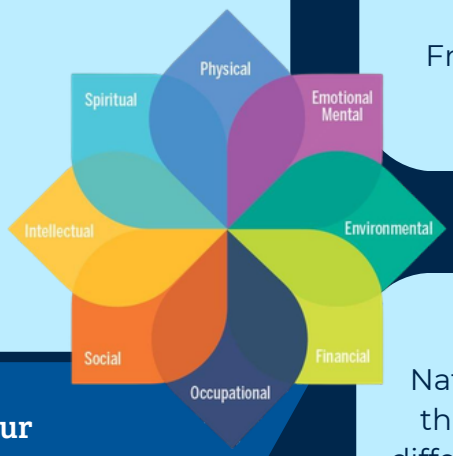
What is a Climate Café?

A Climate Café is a space where community members come together to pause, connect, and talk about the environment and climate change.

Over coffee and snacks, participants share their experiences or simply listen to others, without pressure to feel a certain way or arrive at a particular solution.

The Climate Café structure utilized is inspired by Dr. Michaela Zint's EAS 581 course and the Climate Psychology Alliance-North America (CPA-NA) café framework.

After a spring 2026 Café, participants described their experience with words such as supported, calm, grateful, refreshed, and motivated.



Attend a Café

These events are free and open to any community member, but registration is required.

Friday, November 20th at 2PM at the Institute for Humanities Gallery

Thursday, December 3rd at 6PM at The Michigan Theater

Friday, December 4th at 10AM at the Michigan Union

Join Nature Rx

Nature Rx at U-M is a group of more than 30 volunteers representing 13 different university units who promote the health benefits of spending time in nature.

Take a nature break alone or with your colleagues! Just 10 minutes outside can improve mood, focus, and energy for many people.

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LIFE-CHANGING EDUCATION

Life-Changing Education

LSA Sustainability is partnering with the Office of the Provost to fund projects developed by students as part of an LSA course. Here are a few highlights from the year so far:

Cut Flower Farm Expansion



Photo credit Daisy Hall

Students grow, arrange and sell organic flowers to campus event planners!

The Sustainability and the Campus course attracts sustainability student leaders each year. This funding took an idea from last years' team to action, allowing students to expand and monetize their organic flower farm. You can buy them for your events!

Pollinator Walk & Learn



Transform new pollinator gardens into an educational exhibit!

Students in an ENVIRON 391 course led a survey about campus biodiversity. They found that lack of signage could be contributing to lack of awareness of native gardens and their benefits. New signage walks all USB visitors through common questions.

Campus Laundry Microplastics



Taking action for the Huron River Watershed, right from the dorm!

Machine washing plastic-based clothing can lead to microplastics entering the environment. A cohort of current students and sustainability alumni are working together to capture and analyze these fibers using new filters, in partnership with Prof. Mel Duhaime (EEB).

Apply for funding!

Are you taking or teaching a class that includes ideas for the future of campus?

Any LSA student in an LSA course, or crosslisted course, is eligible to apply for funds. Students will need their course instructor to "sign off" that the idea is a good one before the proposals are reviewed by LSA Sustainability.

Funds close on 6/1/2027 or when depleted, whichever comes first.



Photo credit Ashlee Bise

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Lab Safety & Sustainability

View our resources.



A safe lab is often a sustainable lab, too! LSA's Safety and Sustainability teams work together to implement projects at the intersection of these college priority areas. This includes evaluating high-energy (but critical!) equipment like fume hoods and cold storage. Here are a few programs available to all LSA lab groups.



Switch out your Hotplates

Older model hotplates can sometimes spontaneously heat, even when they are turned off. This is especially true for hotplates manufactured before 1984. These are a fire risk and an energy hog.

Resources:
Fisher Scientific offers LSA special trade-in deals and pricing.



Clean out your Freezers

Regularly cleaning out ULT freezers can reduce ice and dust buildup. This helps the machine run more efficiently, reducing energy needs and the risk of unexpected failures that can compromise samples or strain the motor.

Resources:
LSA has a roaming ULT freezer you can request during cleanings.



Donate, Reuse, and Borrow

Lab clutter is a safety hazard and a sustainability opportunity! Consider donating what you don't need to the Lab Reuse Program. If you need supplies, check the Lab Swap Shop for free, reused options like glassware. You can also borrow some field supplies.

Resources:
Lab Swap Shop in room 5004 of the North University Building

Key Operational Milestones

The LSA Sustainability team is always working on a mix of educational and operational projects. Here are a few important projects that wrapped up since the last report. Lorch Hall is LSA's first geo-exchange construction project, and the Circularity Warehouse allows LSA to more efficiently design and outfit space across campus.

Lorch Hall Geo-Exchange installation is complete!

Lorch Hall, home to LSA's Economics and Linguistics departments, is undergoing a massive renovation and expansion. Over 6 miles of geo-exchange loops now sit beneath what will soon be the new atrium space. These systems allow us to use the earth as a heat sink in the summer and a heat source in the winter. The reduction in heating / cooling load is a key decarbonization strategy for the facility. LSA is pursuing LEED Platinum certification for Lorch.





LSA's Circularity Warehouse is operational!

LSA manages over 2 million square feet of U-M's campus. That's a lot of classrooms, labs, and offices full of furniture. The LSA Movers constantly manage and recirculate items during renovations and reconfigurations. A new centralized warehouse allows the team to more easily store larger items, monitor the inventory, and redeploy assets. The warehouse also streamlines specialty recycling, including e-waste and metal scrap.

Operational sustainability happens at all scales. Have an idea specific to your building? Consider applying for LSA Sustainability Grant Funds. Read more about the fund and apply **here!**

U-M Climate Week

Thank you to the LSA community members who supported and attended Climate Week programs! From tours at the Kelsey Museum to Campus as Lab promotional events, CW2026 was another showcase of LSA's strength across the disciplines.

LSA Sustainability is an organizing partner for U-M Climate Week. If you have ideas for CW27, let us know!

Here are some snapshots from the week:

Resources

CRLT Blog on teaching Climate Change

U-M Library Climate Week Challenge

Lorch Hall Groundbreaking Ceremony





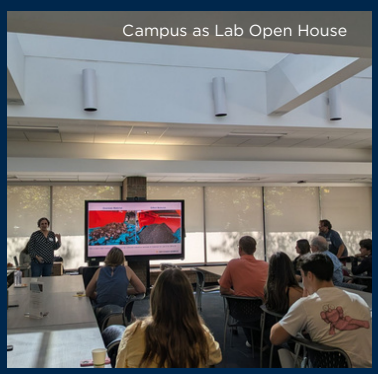
President's Tailgate



Student-made butterflies at Kickoff



Water Management Panel



Campus as Lab Open House



Kelsey Tour



Recycled mushroom craft at EarthFest

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NOMINATE AN INDIVIDUAL , EVENT OR GROUP TO FEATURE IN THE NEXT UPDATE