

Project Goals

The primary goal of our compost initiative is to increase the amount of waste diverted from landfills in a cheap and accessible way, while educating members of the UChicago community on the impact of diverting organic waste from landfill. Our project proposal was to expand our current community compost bin program from one bin (located by the Smart Museum) to four permanent compost bins on campus which would be accessible to the UChicago community. Our plan was to station four locked 35-gallon compost bins, discreetly placed near campus buildings, namely the Logan Center, Ida Noyes, Reynolds Club, and The Smart Museum, where this program is already running smoothly. In order to successfully scale this program, we planned to run a tabling event to notify students of the program, hand out individual compost bins that could be used to transport household waste to the larger drop-off sites, and educate students and faculty about what materials are compostable and the environmental impact of composting through compost-related marketing and the compost quiz required to unlock the compost bins.

Implementation

Our work has and will continue to consist of collaborating closely with Urban Canopy to coordinate biweekly pickups, drop-offs, and any issues that arise regarding the compost bins. We have added pickup locations at the Logan Center and 5535 S Kenwood Ave. Students interested in participating are able to drop off their saved food scraps and compostables at any time once they have access to the bin. They gain access with the code to the lock on each bin; the code is sent once a compost knowledge quiz has been passed. This security will continue to prevent any problems such as contamination or bad actors. In collaboration with USG, House Sustainability Representatives, and the greater UChicago community, we have hosted three tabling events to give out individual compost bins and educate the UChicago community on how to compost and the impact of the practice. We have created posters and social media posts as well as worked with dorm sustainability representatives and department heads to advertise our program to the UChicago community. The posters contain a QR code that leads to the Community Compost Bin Code form, where students and faculty answer a set of compost questions in order to gain access to the bin code. We have and will continue to monitor the form and our email, to send the lock code to participants that pass the quiz. The role of Campus Composting leaders is to pay compost invoices, send out bin codes, and alleviate any problems as they arise. The simplicity of this program is why it has and continues to be successful. We have used the funding we received to pay for composting pickup/drop-offs by Urban Canopy, compost buckets and compostable bags, and advertising materials to market this program.

Outcomes

Currently, we have three community bins stationed on and around campus, and we are adding a fourth one within the next week. These bins have diverted over 2,200 pounds of organic material from the landfill since January. The current locations are the Smart Museum, the Logan Center, and the alley behind 5535 S Kenwood Ave. We are placing a bin in Kimbark Plaza next week. We are also in correspondence with multiple apartment complexes and departments to house additional bins. Beyond increasing our bin locations, we have run three tabling events and given out over 30 individual bins to students, and increased the number of households on the program from 44 to 120, nearly tripling the number of households affected by this sustainable measure. We also hosted an Earth Week composting awareness event with the student-run cafes; Ex Libris, Hallowed, and Harper featured a Mother Earth-themed drink and our signup QR code. In a

spring user satisfaction survey, 34% of regular users requested increasing the number of bins on campus, specifically calling for bins near dorms and more north of campus. We intend on continuing to expand this program in the following year — both in adding more bin locations, and increasing “awareness of the program and how easy it is,” as described by a current weekly bin user.