

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022





LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

To the DU Community,

It is bittersweet to be writing this letter to you.

The 2021-2022 school year was such a whirlwind, a rollercoaster, a transformation – you can pick your metaphor. This was a year of deep change, deep reflection, and laying the groundwork for some innovative, thoughtful, and creative changes for the Center for Sustainability. I have been thrilled to see how our little office has shifted and developed over the last five years, and how this team has stood up to the challenges of the pandemic's third year, the uncertainty of personnel changes, and bustle of the return to in-person university life.

But as I expected, our students, the backbone of this office, met that challenge head-on and did some amazing things this year, which you will get to discover in the coming pages. Beyond getting to recognize the great work of

this office in these pages, the work of many from the Center for Sustainability was recognized around campus as well:

Leah York, a senior at the Center for Sustainability, was given the Kimmy Foundation Community Service Professional Award. The DU Kimmy Foundation Community Service Professional Award reflects the Foundation's commitment to the professional advancement and service of capable young men and women in their growth and development as world citizens. Leah was awarded this honor based on her history of community service while at DU, and her post-graduation plans to continue doing good in her community.

Derek Brannon, the Center's Graduate Program Coordinator, was named the Graduate Service Student of the Year in this year's Crimson and Gold Awards from the Office of Student Engagement. Derek was given this honor based on the many hours he has spent giving back to his community through student mentorship and other contributions.

Sarah Schuller and Megan Holiday, both third-year students in the Sustainability Internship program, were recognized at this year's Undergraduate Service Students of the Year during the same awards ceremony. Megan and Sarah, along with their work at the Center, took on a project as CCESL Scholars to teach climate science and sustainability to middle school students in Denver. This work earned them this prestigious award.

I had the humbling experience of being named this year's Student Staff Supervisor of the year by the Office of Student Employment. The wonderful students at the Center for Sustainability nominated me for my commitment to their growth and my willingness to show up and be honest, vulnerable, and transparent with my work and decision-making. It was truly an honor to be recognized.

Later this year, I was also surprised to receive a You Rock Award from the Provost's Office, based on the work I did leading this year's Earth Day of DUing efforts. While the event was one of my proudest moments this year, it could have only been done with my incredible collaborators, so it felt strange taking the award alone.

On the organizational side of things, this was the Center's first year being part of the Public Good and Research group, housed in Academic Affairs with the Center for Community Engagement to Advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL), the Pioneer Leadership Program (PLP), and the Living and Learning Communities (LLC) program. This opened the door for more collaboration, more partnership, and new approaches to engage the hundreds of students who participate in our various programs. Several interns at the Center for Sustainability were able to work as CCESL Student Scholars and received ACE Grants to support their work. Our students worked with the Environmental

Sustainability LLC to plan a lecture and discussion with Robin Wall Kimmerer, a noted scientist and keeper of native wisdom. I was able to mentor and give feedback on over half a dozen PLP projects focused on sustainability. And I truly believe this was only the beginning.

Such an exciting year was not without its challenges. Perhaps here is where I must address the elephant in the room: for the last five years, this letter came from our Executive Director, Chad King. It was Chad's vision and leadership that got the Center for Sustainability up-and-running, and his dedication to amplifying student voices that built the Center's foundation on student leadership, creativity, and passion. We have created such a special place on this campus, and we have Chad to thank for much of that work. Chad resigned from his role during the Winter Quarter this year, which left big shoes to fill, many question marks to address, and, if we're honest, a bit of chaos in our office as we figured out how to function with half as many full-time-staff members.

Returning to a fully in-person campus was more of a shock than we expected it to be this year. While it was fantastic to spend most of the school year together in a more traditional campus environment, many of our students and staff were still exhausted from the mental and emotional toll the more dire parts of the pandemic had taken on us personally, our families, our friends, and society at large. As the year went on, many of our students reported feeling burnt out, disengaged, and overwhelmed by their many obligations to academics, work, their families, and others. I would have been impressed with the work our team did in a normal year; I am doubly so knowing the hard battle they were each fighting to keep up with the many demands on their time and energy.

Finally, the biggest reason why this letter is bittersweet: yes, I am writing to you because Chad is no longer at DU, and after a decade of service, his absence is still being felt. But beyond that, this letter is serving as my own farewell to the University of Denver, as the week I am writing this letter is among my last on campus. It is an honor to be able to show you what we accomplished this year, despite many challenges, and to leave the way open for the team who has stepped in as leaders.

Dr. Sarah Bexell was named in July of this year as the Center for Sustainability's new Faculty Director. She has been at DU teaching in the Graduate School of Social Work and serving as the Director of Humane Education for the Institute for Human Animal Connection for many years and has graciously stood up to take on this new role as well. I know she is the right person to lead the Center's next chapter with thoughtfulness, creativity, and care. I cannot wait to see where things go under her lead. At her side is Derek Brannon, a graduate student we were impossibly lucky to find two years ago, as he began his doctoral journey at the Morgridge College of Education. He stepped in this winter to support our internship program, and has brought a lightness, energy, and skill that impresses me weekly. Our interns are in capable hands as he continues to lead and mentor them. They will do incredible things.

Thanks, as always, to the incredible campus and community partners who support our work and make such important campus changes possible, to the leadership that has continued to push sustainability as a campus value, and to the many people who have contributed to making the Center for Sustainability such a special place for students to learn and thrive, and such a wonderful place for me to have spent the last six years of my career.

Sincerely,

Emily Schosid

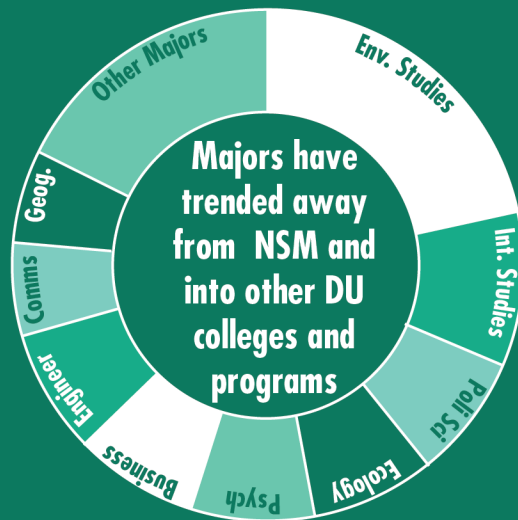
Assistant Director of Sustainability Programs

SUSTAINABILITY INTERNSHIP

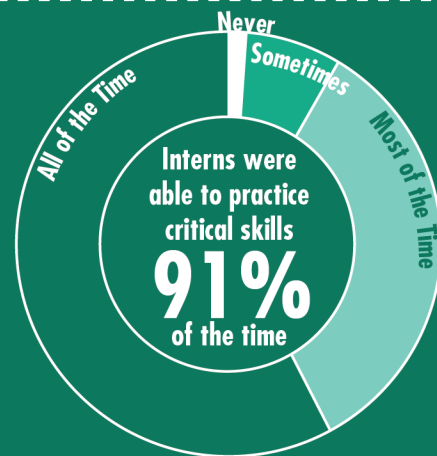
Over the last two years, interns have been filling out quarterly self evaluations around skills acquisition aligned with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):

In 2021-2022 the Internship had **37 students** representing **21 majors**

I felt that a lot of my sense of community came from my experiences at the center. I met so many wonderful, motivated individuals who drive really helped influence my own interests, drive and motivations.
-Leah York, Sustainability Intern



When asked about particular skills the interns are able to practice during their work at the Center, throughout the entire school year, they answered "most of the time" or "all of the time" (a 3 or 4 on a likert scale) far more often than "rarely" or "never" (2 or 1 on our likert scale):



Career Development

Communication

Critical Thinking

Equity & Inclusion

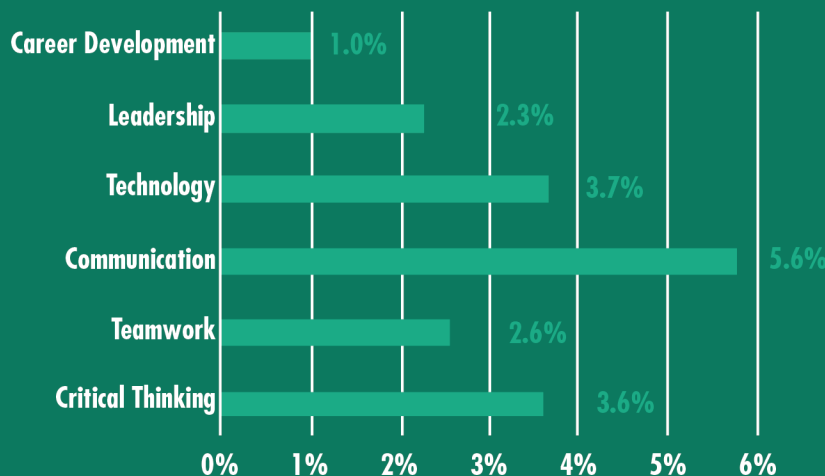
Leadership

Professionalism

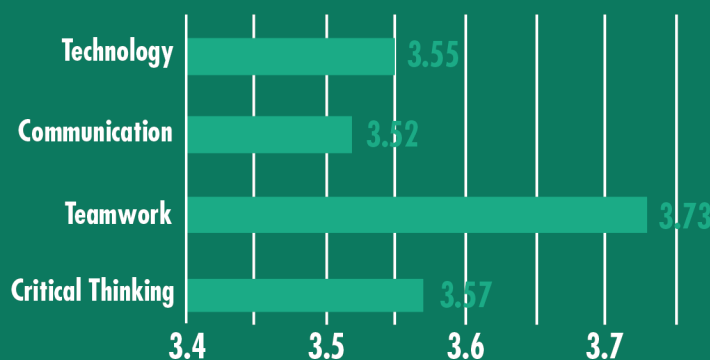
Teamwork

Technology

Each year, we adjust our training and development for the interns, and this year we saw 6 of the 8 NACE competencies increase for students over the 2020-2021 school year:



Shown below are some skills that student interns felt they got the most practice with and were most proficient with throughout the year. These scores are the average score for each skill on a 4-point likert scale, self-reported by interns:





Our students reported being proud of reaching many professional goals such as:

- ★ completing bike training
- ★ learning how to collaborate
- ★ involving more students
- ★ learning event planning
- ★ training on energy audits
- ★ cleaning up the bike shop
- ★ improving volunteer recruitment
- ★ understanding energy data



many personal goals:

- ★ improving communication skills
- ★ improving at networking
- ★ gaining a work-life balance
- ★ learning time management
- ★ improving organization
- ★ learning sustainable living
- ★ improving mental health
- ★ improving physical health.

Interns frequently reported being proud of **THREE** major skills:

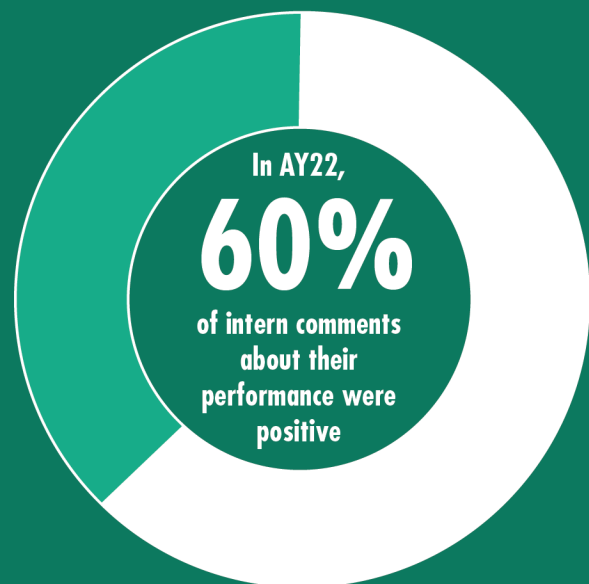
Growing into their role during the academic year

Remaining flexible and adaptable in a changing workplace

Learning how to advocate for their own needs

along with many secondary skills:

- ★ Bike Mechanic Skills
- ★ Graphic Design
- ★ Event Planning
- ★ Business Operations
- ★ Energy Audits
- ★ Food Insecurity Knowledge
- ★ Organizational Skills
- ★ Professional Skills
- ★ Living Sustainable Lifestyles



Despite a majority of comments from students indicating a positive experience with the Sustainability Internship and their work throughout the year,



was an issue that came up for students, particularly in the spring quarter.

Students reported a



reduction in their ability to find a work-life balance between fall and spring quarters.

There were specific questions about skills that students reported the greatest improvement on from the fall quarter to the winter quarter:

9%

I am able to use Teams and any other digital tool or program effectively to complete my tasks.

7%

I can engage and educate the greater DU community about issues of sustainability and what we do at the Center.

6%

Any written work I do for the Center is professionally written and is easy to understand.

6%

I understand the important functions and role of my team at the Center.

I love the community I got to be a part of this year and the people I have met through working here. I never really attended events on campus in the past but this year I got to plan the events and go to them, and it was so much fun. After spending a year entirely isolated in a dorm and feeling disconnected from everyone because of covid, my time at the Center really brought me back to campus and made me feel like an actual college student for the first time since I was a freshman.
-Lydia Bazikos, Sustainability Intern



EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENT

Swap & Shop events, a perennial favorite for our community, saw an increase in occurrence & participation:

Fall Quarter: **400** attendees

Winter Quarter: **140** attendees

\$1 Clothing Sale: **50** attendees

Law School Event: **60** attendees

Halls Event: **30** attendees

This year, Interns and Graduate Fellows at the Center for Sustainability planned

➔ **13 events** ←➔

&

managed

➔ **8 programs** ←➔

which, all told, engaged over

➔ **3,200** ←➔

students, faculty, and staff at DU.

This year's Move Out Donation Drive engaged

23 volunteers

who put in more than

➔ **80** ←➔

volunteer hours helping our staff organize, pack, and store several tons of collected materials.

This event had the most equal participation among faculty, staff, and students at DU.

This year, the 5th Annual Sustainability Conference had:

12 Sessions

38 Speakers & Panelists

86 Attendees

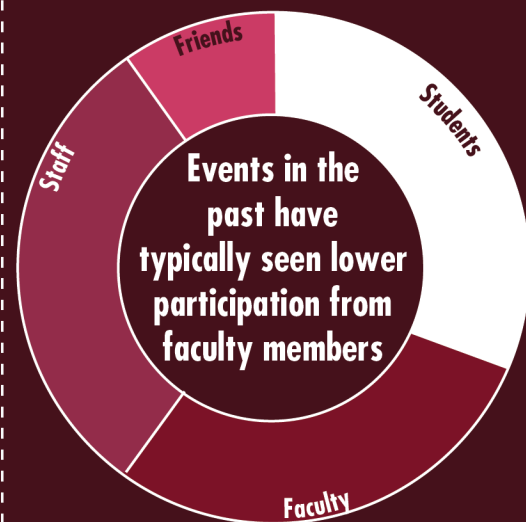
The third annual Sustain-o-Ween included:



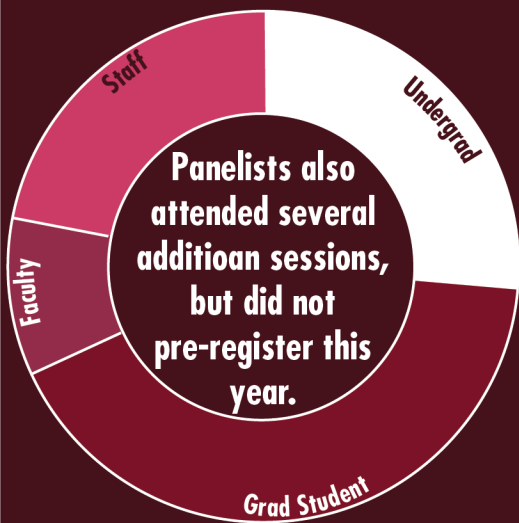
5 Events

&

545 Attendees



Sometimes I did fall into the rut of feeling like nothing I was doing was making a difference, but then when I participated in events like the Swap & Shop and Energy Challenge, I get to see how my involvement, our involvement, was making waves in our community. I saw how many people were getting involved with me when I talked about the programs the Center has. -Claire Broemmer, Sustainability Intern



This Conference was planned entirely by the Graduate Fellows in the Center for Sustainability, based in their personal interests and curiosities. It was the first conference held in person, on campus.

This year's Move-in Thrift Tent Sale was our busiest one ever, attracting more than

500 shoppers

The First Year at the brick & mortar Thrift Store attracted more than

700 students this year.



EARTH DAY OF DUING

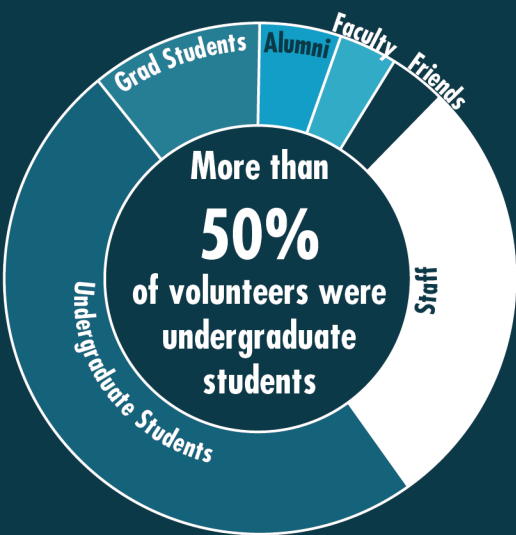


The event engaged:

**24 Community Partners on
28 Service Projects**

as well as

400 volunteers who completed
1,200 Service Hours



More than
50%
of volunteers were
undergraduate
students

1,100 Pounds
of trash collected & sorted on trails
buildings throughout Denver

30 Trees & Gardens
mulched at Sloan's Lake & Denver
Botanic Garden

9 Gardens
prepped & planted on DU Campus &
throughout the City

12,500 meals
served and distributed by We Don't
Waste & SAME Cafe

over 100 kids
engaged & educated at Fisher Early
Learning & the Ricks Center

2 miles
of trail restored in Jefferson County

500 cigarette butts
collected from sidewalks in Denver

6 bat boxes built
while launching a citizen science
project tracking bat populations

The 2022 Earth Day of DUing had
6 Planning Partners:

Center for Sustainability
Center for Community Engagement
Community + Values
Staff Advisory Council
Alumni Engagement
DU Grand Challenges



8 Funding Partners:

USG Sustainability Committee
Office of the Chancellor
Office of the Provost
4D Student Experience
Community + Values
Alumni Engagement
DU Grand Challenges



13
campus and community partners
were committed in 2020
and chose to work with us
a 2nd or 3rd time

Two student groups received a total of

\$10,000

in ACE Grants from DU Grand Challenges and CCESL
for work related to Earth Day of DUing.

The Earth Day of DUing team was committed to smart
purchasing, equity, and anchor institution goals:

Breakfast from **Maria Empanada**, a woman- and
immigrant-owned business

Transit from **Hermes Worldwide**, a black- and
woman-owned business

Reception catered by **Sexy Pizza**, a local business who
donates a portion of profits to local social causes

T-shirts made from an **organic cotton & recycled
plastic tri-blend**

It was great connecting with other
DU folks & doing work that helped
our earth and the Denver community!
-Day of DUing Volunteer



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

After closing in Spring 2020 and throughout the COVID19 pandemic,

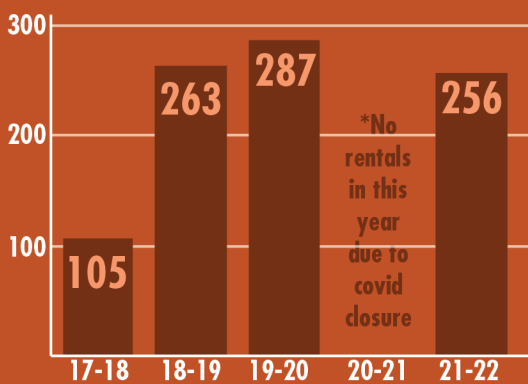
DU Gear Garage

finally reopened again this year.

The program rented out

256 items

on par with rentals in years before the pandemic closure, and a great come-back for the program.



In Winter 2022, the Center for Sustainability launched

Crimson Compost,

a program designed to give access to composting service to students living in FSL housing and apartments who cannot use the City of Denver curbside program. This year, we registered

6 users

including

2 sorority houses

providing composting access to nearly

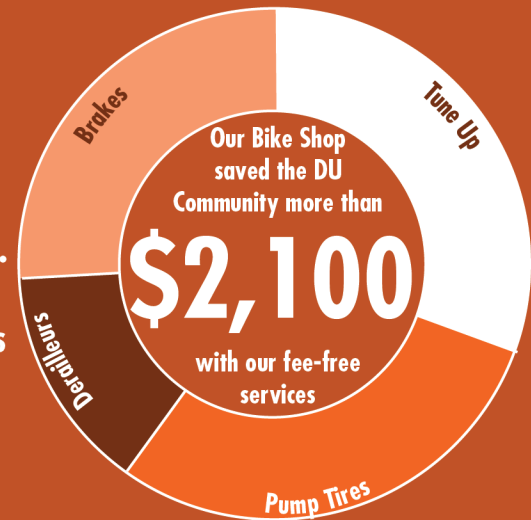
100 people.

The DU Bike Shop fixed

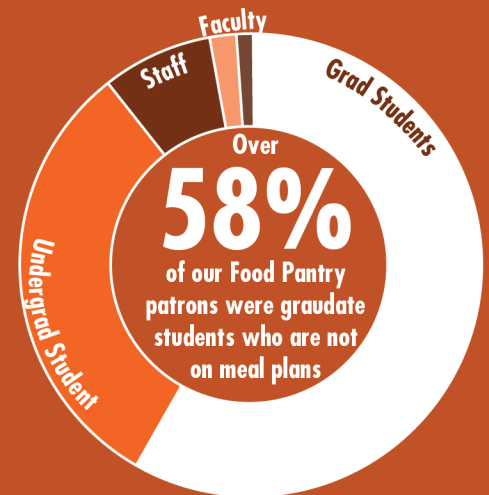
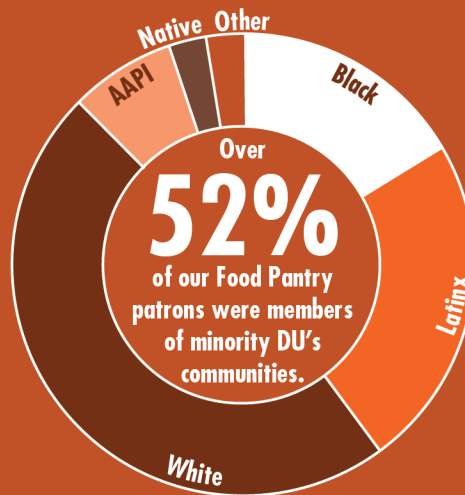
109 Bikes

this year, which meant that more people were able to ride a bike around the city rather than driving. Our shop does not charge the DU community for labor and customers pay for parts at-cost.

Bikes make our city much more accessible to students.



The DU Food Pantry offers a supplementary food source to anyone in the DU Community who needs to use it.



This year, we gave away **2,763** pounds of food to **165** people. This equates to providing over

➔ **2,300 meals** ⬅

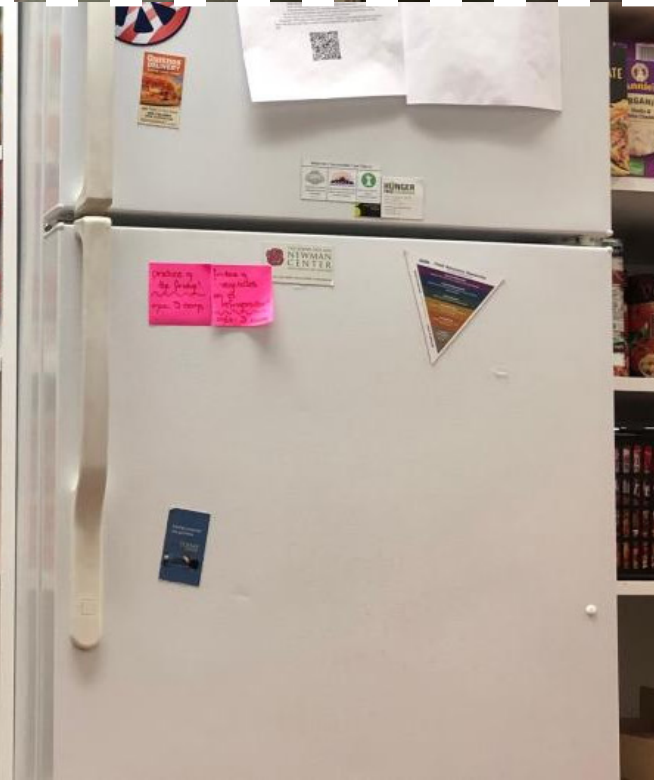
➔ **The DU Thrift Store** ⬅

became a central resource at DU for community members to find low-cost, gently-used items for their residence halls, apartments, and office spaces.

The Move-In Tent Sale provided materials to over

➔ **500 families** ⬅

while the brick and mortar Thrift Store began a culture of reuse and the rejection of "fast fashion" at DU.



BUILDING BUSINESS SKILLS

Many juniors, seniors, and grad students reside in apartment buildings and therefore do not have access to the City of Denver curbside compost service. Seeing this gap in access, in Winter 2022 our students launched

Crimson Compost

a student-run compost business aimed at students who cannot access city services.

The students:

Wrote a business plan

Did market research

Did pricing research

Created tiered membership

Created a recruitment plan

&

piloted the program with

4 members

&

2 sorority houses

Preparing the Thrift Store for its grand opening in October of 2021 was a multifaceted project that required the a mix of teamwork and long hours considering factors like price-points, in-take, store layout, advertising, customer service skills, sustainable business ethics, and more. All of this paid off as we welcomed a line out the door on our opening day and received excited feedback for the future of an on-campus thrift store. -Kayla Fatemi, Thrift Store Student Manager

This year, the Center for Sustainability launched the

Sustainability Marketplace

which housed the first brick and mortar, year-round

★ Thrift Store

along with the

★ DU Food Pantry

★ DU Gear Garage

&

★ Crimson Compost

The Sustainability Marketplace made nearly

→ \$14,000 ←

for sustainability programs after its grand opening in October 2021.

Our Marketplace & Programming teams continued our partnership with Health Promotion to run

Swap & Shop

events every quarter this year.

The team figured out how to bring the event to other groups on campus for partnerships with

★ Aurora Public Schools

★ Sturm College of Law

★ Centennial Halls

★ Pioneer Leadership Prgm

These events made over

→ \$1,500 ←

for sustainability, gender violence prevention, underserved families in Aurora, and student programs.

In FY 2022, The DU Food Pantry fundraised more than

→ \$27,200 ←

receiving more than

→ 1,300 ←

donations from

→ 825 ←

individual donors.

These funds were raised through:



Microdonation campaigns by our Marketplace Team



Serving as the beneficiary of Advancement's DU Zoo Lights Night Fundraiser



Our ongoing and productive partnerships with Advancement & Alumni Engagement.

Our Energy Team was able to secure more than

→ \$17,000 ←

for the purchase of carbon offsets to cover carbon emissions from:

Operations at Sturm Hall and the Community Commons

Parents Traveling to Denver for Parent & Family Weekend

Students traveling around the world for Study Abroad

These funds were secured through a grant from SusCom & donations.



Apartment Compost



Household Compost



Fraternity/Sorority House Compost



COLLABORATIONS & COLLECTIVE IMPACT

We collaborated, planned, co-created, and organized with **41 Campus Partners**

&

25 Community Partners

on workshops, volunteer opportunities, fundraising, event planning, operations, strategic planning, and more

This year the Assistant Director participated in the:

- ★ Student Employment Committee
- ★ University Food Committee
- ★ Sustainability Council
- ★ Council Reorganization Ad-Hoc Committee
- ★ 4D Learning Cohort
- ★ Carbon Neutrality Working Group
- ★ Programming Council

To collaborate with campus partners more effectively.

The Center for Sustainability worked with **15** campus partners to plan and cross-promote

6 events for a shared **Earth Week:**

Your Brain on Climate Chaos
A Call for Climate Justice
Fireside at Five: Green Justice in Denver
Conversations with Robin Wall Kimmerer
Earth Day of DUing
DU Nature Challenge

The Executive Director and the Assistant Director worked with DU MarComm to develop

4 Articles for the DU Magazine:

"Buried in Plastic"
"DU accelerates the pace of its carbon-neutrality efforts"
"Elevating the DU Experience"
"New Solar Panels Boost DU Energy"

An ongoing partnership with Health Promotion led to a series of **Swap & Shop** events for the fourth year in a row. These events drew over

600 attendees, brought in over

\$1,500 for gender violence prevention and sustainability programs, and inspired partnerships with

4 new partners to run additional Swap & Shop events:

Aurora Public Schools
Centennial Halls
The Sturm College of Law
Pioneer Leadership Program

THRIVE
AT DU

This year, the DU Food Pantry partnered with the **Colorado Womens College**

&

Graduate School of Social Work

to expand the services and reach of the pantry.

The CWC partnership led to several workshops designed to get Food Pantry users signed up to receive SNAP Benefits

&

GSSW worked with us to open a secondary Food Pantry location on the south side of campus to make resources even easier for the community to use.

"Collaboration is one of the most important tools to be equipped with as we prepare to enter the professional world. This experience taught me the importance of clear and timely communication and of compromising/meeting in the middle." - Megan Holiday, Sustainability Intern





Questions about Domestic Violence?

Relationship abuse, dating violence, and domestic violence are used by one partner or partners to gain power and control in a relationship.

Visit DU.edu/CAPE for specific examples or if you have questions.





 **latinestudentalliance** • Follow
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 **latinestudentalliance** LSA E-Board helping out at the @sustainabledu Fall Garden Work Day. Thank you to everyone who helped out!!

LSA E-Board ayudando en el Día de Trabajo del Jardín de Otoño @sustainabledu. ¡Gracias a todos los que ayudaron!

43w

 **_brianaaguilar_** 🍊🍊🍊
43w 1 like Reply

 **sustainabledu** Thanks LSA!!!!!!!
43w 2 likes Reply



DENVER COMMUNITY

In Fall 2021, the Center's Waste Team piloted a litter challenge that led to nearly

→ **500** ←

pieces of litter getting picked up during the month of October.

This year, the Center for Sustainability spent more than

→ **\$4,200** ←

with Maria Empanada, a local, woman- and immigrant-owned restaurant in Denver, including

→ **\$3,400** ←

on a single order during Earth Day of DUing.

The restaurant contacted us to let us know that our large order had made the difference in a challenging post-covid landscape for restaurants.

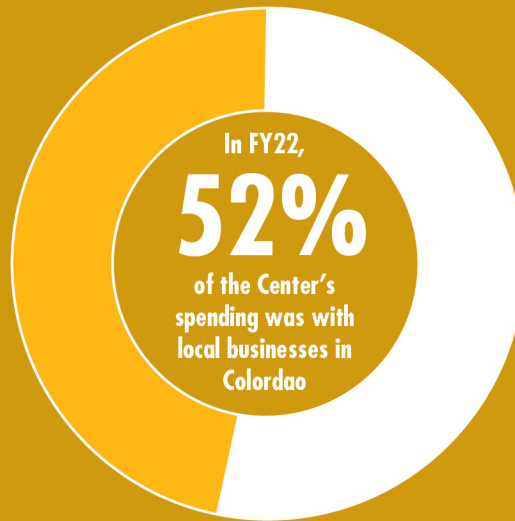
The Assistant Director met monthly with sustainability professionals from other colleges and universities in Colorado along with the **Governor's Energy Office**

→ **&** ←

Colorado Department of Higher Education

to build collective action on climate solutions. A conference to discuss our opportunities for collaboration took place in Summer 2022.

The Center for Sustainability is committed to DU's role as an **Anchor Institution** and chooses to spend funds with local, women - and BIPOC-owned businesses whenever possible.



[Events like Earth Day] reinforce the importance of coming together as a community, meeting one another, and it really strengthens our relationships as as University doing good together...I feel great about the difference we were able to make in the local community and I would definitely join in again. I hope even more people join in next time. -Earth Day of DUing Volunteer

The Renter Efficiency Program for Students (REPS) trained **5 Interns**

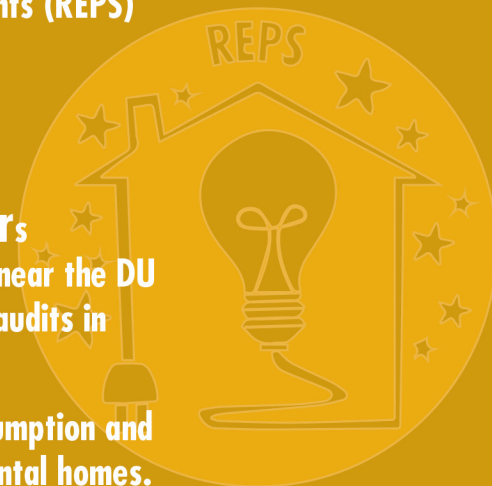
→ **&** ←

4 Community Volunteers

to perform energy audits in rental homes near the DU Campus. This team performed energy audits in

6 Rental Homes

in order to reduce their daily energy consumption and make improvements on old, inefficient rental homes.



The Assistant Director and the Thrift Store Manager appeared on an episode of

Getting Thrifty

a podcast hosted by ARC of Colorado. The episode discussed the DU Thrift Store and reducing fast fashion among college-aged students and community.

Materials collected during the annual MoveOut Donation Drive that cannot be sold in our store were donated to organizations across Denver:

- ★ Denver Dumb Friends League
- ★ Goodwill Industries
- ★ ARC Thrift Stores
- ★ Project Cure
- ★ A Bedder World Mattress
- ★ Denver Rescue Mission



GET

thrifty

PODCAST

RESEARCH

In Spring 2022, the Assistant Director worked with two marketing classes, a total of

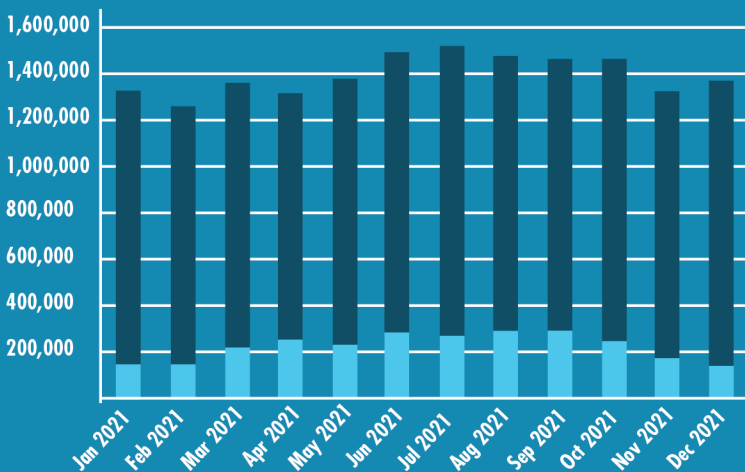
→ **50 students** ←

to research and find solutions to recycling and composting behaviors on the DU campus. With

→ **11 reports** ←

on various aspects of behavior, Professor Melissa Akaka will work with Emily Schosid to publish the findings with DU MarComm and other outlets.

This was the first full year with solar panels on campus; the Center worked with Facilities to track and report energy generated by solar as a portion of the campus's full energy needs, below:



The team found that the solar panels create about

→ **7-9%** ←

of DU's full energy needs, above what we anticipated.

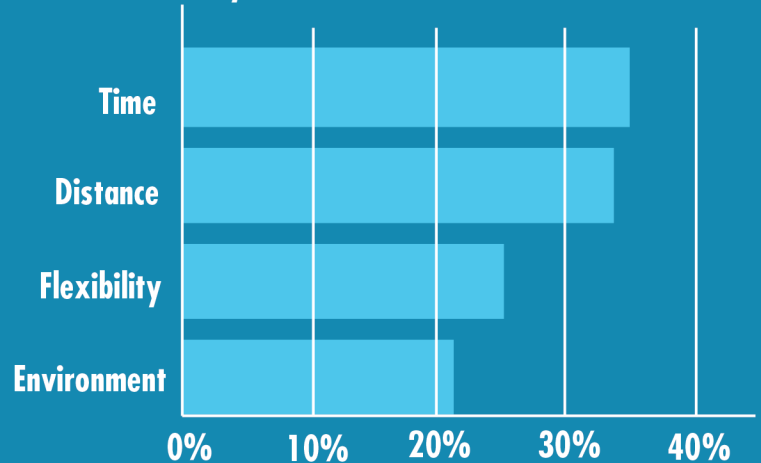
Two Sustainability interns received an

→ **ACE Grant** ←

understand the learning and experiences of attendees at the Earth Day of DUing. They analyzed qualitative data from attendees and found major benefits of the event included:

- ★ Getting to know others from DU
- ★ Doing good work outside of the campus
- ★ Getting to learn about other organizations

The Research and Reporting Team completed the annual Transportation Survey for the 5th year in a row. This year they focused on the impacts of COVID19 on commuting trends, as well as why people choose the commuting mode they use most often, shown below:



This year was a reminder of how important research is to the field of Sustainability both within the University's walls and outside it... Much research is needed to understand not only what our impact is on the environment today but analyze various policies DU may take to reduce its carbon and waste footprint through an environmental justice lens. The Transportation survey was just one example of the meaningful project our team works on to ensure these goals are met.

-Leslie Schilsky, Research Fellow

In Summer 2022, a team of graduate students formed to research policy

→ **&** ←

impacts to inform the Carbon Neutrality Task Force and recommendations to the Chancellor.

They will transition to a Research Fellowship hosted by the Center for AY23.

The Assistant Director worked with a CCESL Fellow to research

Waste Data

at DU, and to look for opportunities to improve waste diversion on campus. The Fellow included two

CCESL Scholars in the research as well.



CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY

energy challenge

DO IT
IN THE
DARK

