

ACADEMIC YEAR 25-26

ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Soka University of America



Prepared by Student Sustainability Educators



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Message from the President

This past academic year (2025-2026) at Soka University of America has been marked by extraordinary progress in advancing sustainability as a shared campus commitment.

At SUA, sustainability is guided by the principle "To foster leaders for the creative coexistence of nature and humanity." Our mission to develop global citizens who live contributive lives is reflected in our efforts to engage the entire campus community in incorporating sustainable practices across all facets of university activity, including teaching, research, planning, operations, and student engagement.

A core part of these efforts is our responsibility to be engaged and responsive partners beyond campus boundaries. We recognize that sustainability work cannot happen in isolation. In 2025, SUA strengthened its commitment to collaboration by formalizing partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Soka Amazon Institute and Earth Charter International (ECI). These partnerships expand opportunities for shared learning, global dialogue, and collective action toward ecological stewardship.

Institutionally, SUA has also made significant progress, including the successful recertification of our AASHE STARS rating at the Silver level in 2025, as well as recognition as a Top Performer in the Investment Category. These milestones reflect both our achievements and our ongoing commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

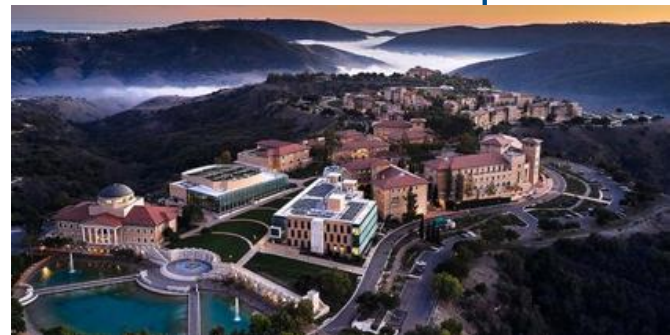
Looking to the future, Soka University of America will continue to empower our students, faculty, and staff to drive the changes needed to enhance our campus's environmental sustainability. By setting clear benchmarks for success and sharing our achievements, we aim to serve as both a model of sustainable practices and a catalyst for future leaders and advocates of sustainability.

Sincerely,

Edward M. Feasel
President, Soka University of America

Soka Awards & Certifications

- **AASHE STARS Silver 2025**
2025 Top performer, Investment Category
- **AASHE STARS Silver 2018**
- **AASHE STARS Bronze 2017**
- **2012 OC Metro Green Team Award**
- **Princeton Review Featured Green Colleges**
- **LEED Building Certifications**



HELLO FROM OUR Sustainability Team



Soka University Sustainability Committee was created in 2010 as a means for all areas of the campus community to engage in dialogues regarding sustainability. The committee helps to create a centralized forum by which students, faculty, and staff can examine how to foster sustainable campus living.

Members of the Committee include student representatives (Sustainability Educators), staff from all campus departments (Operations, Security, Finance, Administration, Reslife, Dean of Students, Facilities, Dining Services, Student Services, Environmental Health and Safety), and faculty (Dean of Faculty and professors). The Committee meets once a semester to discuss progress, review guidelines based on the community's feedback, and set future expectations for a more sustainable Soka.

“FOSTERING GLOBAL LEADERS FOR THE CREATIVE COEXISTENCE OF NATURE AND HUMANITY”

Sustainability Educators (SSE) represent student voices in the Sustainability Committee. The goal of SSEs is to foster a culture of care for both people and planet among students. SSEs receive training and resources to become a leader for sustainability and organize activities, projects, and educational communications that support environmental awareness and social justice at SUA. SSEs also work to establish relationships and connections with students in order to create awareness about their role in their community.



2025-26 Sustainability Educators

From left to right: Khue Nguyen'26, Raven Gellerman'26, Mareva Dijoux'26, Masaaki Ikeda'28, Aliya Cherkova'28, Aakash Baral'29, Siena Gould'29.

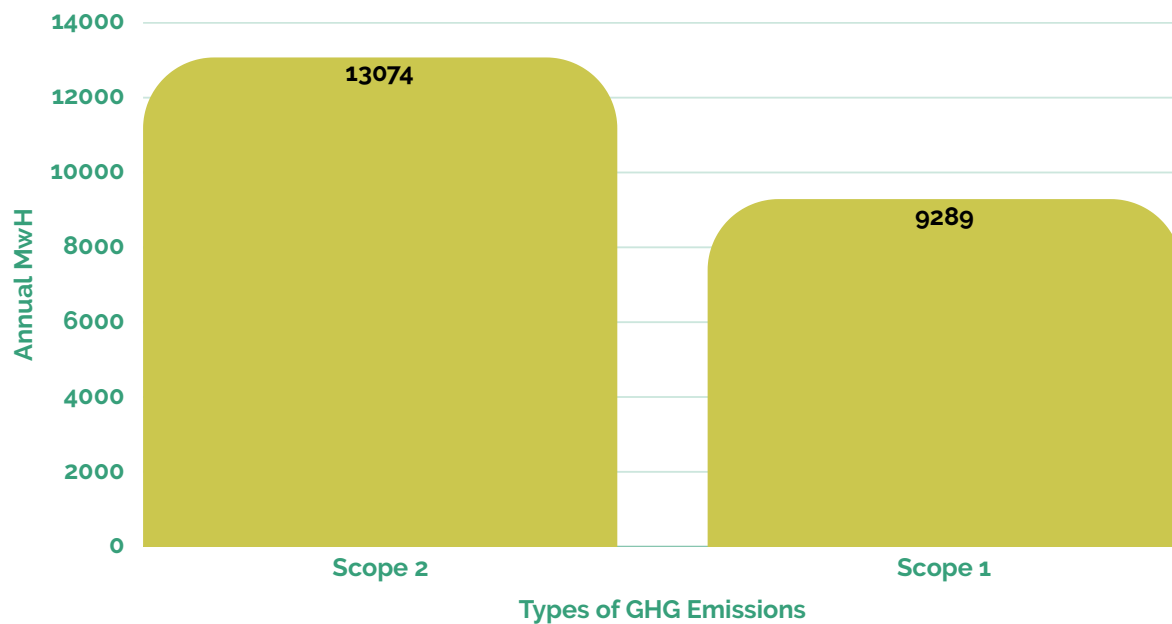
ENVIRONMENT

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)

In the academic year 2023-24, Scope 2 emissions from purchased electricity represent the largest share of campus emissions at 13,074 MWh. Scope 1 direct emissions from stationary combustion (boilers, heating) totaled 9,289 annual MWh. Scope 3 and biogenic emissions were not calculated for this year.

Definition of GHG emission categories according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Scope 1: Direct emissions that occur from sources controlled or owned by the organization.
- Scope 2: Indirect emissions from the purchase of electricity, heating, cooling.
- Scope 3: Other indirect emissions not mentioned in Scope 2 such as employee commuting, waste generated in operations, purchased of goods and services.



ENERGY

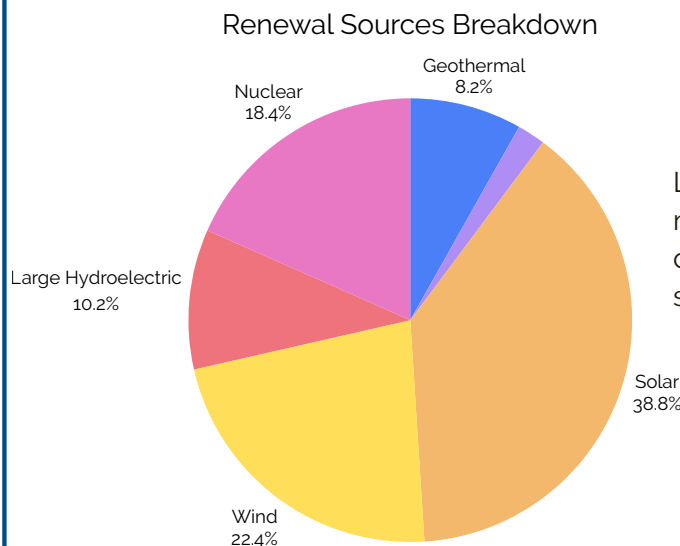
- Renewable Sources
- LEED Certifications
- LED Lighting

Aerial view of Soka University solar panels and green roof



Energy from Renewable Sources

In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, **~49%** of Soka University electricity came from renewable sources.



LEED Certifications

Soka University has 5 LEED Gold Buildings:

- Performing Art Center (PAC)
- Maathai Hall
- Marie & Pierre Curie Hall
- Lokahi Residential Hall
- Ubuntu Residential Hall

Lokahi and Ubuntu are LEED v4 certified,, making Soka University one of the first colleges in the nation to meet this new standard



LED Lighting

Almost all lighting on campus are LED. LED lights are **50% more efficient** compared to traditional lighting.

Soka University has been **saving ~\$600,000 annually** from LED lighting compared to the original campus design mixing fluorescent, incandescent, and halogen.

Soka University partners with Bon Appétit for sustainable dining service.

78 tons of food waste were recycled and diverted from landfill in 2025, representing 7% of the total organic waste stream (excluding landscaping waste)

REPURPOSE

Our chefs get creative and turn extra food into new meals. For example, excess chicken being used for next day's soup!

Our Bistro manager Alvaro Ruiz and homemade cake pops!



SUSTAINABLE DINING WITH BON APPÉTIT

BISTRO WASTE DIVERSION

Soka University's dining hall adheres to CR&R waste separation guidelines and California SB 1383, which requires facilities to have all recycling, composting, and landfill bins.

CHEF-TO-END-HUNGER

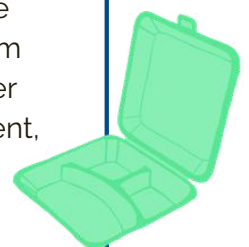
Soka University participated in CTEH program to redistribute excess food to local food agencies to serve the meals.

"UGLY FOOD" PROGRAMS

Over 40% of produce are wasted because they are deemed "ugly" for store shelves. Bon Appétit at Soka partners with growers to purchase those food and turns them into delicious meals.

TUPPERWARE PROGRAM

The tupperware program aims to reduce single-use boxes and dishware loss in the dining hall. We launched a digitalized POS program in 2025, which students can register with their ID to make it more efficient,



LANDSCAPE

Landscaping Services focus on sustainability, irrigation, and water conservation.

Water-efficient Irrigation Systems

Soka University uses a multi-stream rotator, micro-irrigation, and 2 types of nozzles (rotary and fixed) to water plants on campus. Compared to traditional systems, these nozzles and rotators help reduce runoff, distribute water evenly to prevent dry spots, wind resistance, and support healthy roots (longer run time, slower application for deeper infiltration).



Fixed Spray Nozzles



MP Rotator

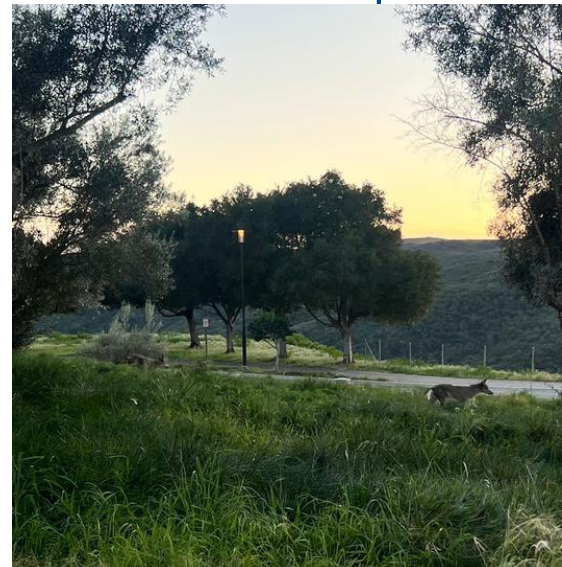
Turf Conversion

Approximately **150,000 square feet** of drought-tolerant plants were installed on campus. These plants offer multiple benefits: compliance with local water restrictions and conservation goals, reduced need for supplemental irrigation and mowing, and plant diversity for pollinators.

The campus currently has over **1,920 trees and 10,000 plants**, **18%** of which are native plants. Recently, we added tags on the bigger trees to display the trees' names and information.

Durable Green Roofs

No replacement was needed for the green roofs during the academic year, as they have proven to hold up well with 3 varieties of Sedum.



LANDSCAPE

Soka Instructional Garden and Ajachemen Garden

Soka Instructional Garden (SIG)

SIG received a major upgrade summer 2025:

- Installed 6 new garden plots.
- Increased 15 to 21 total raised beds.
- Repaired and configured 6 hydroponic gardens which grew 120 plants.

SIG is used for classroom instructions, community gardening by students, growing flowers for plant dyes, and growing vegetables for the Soka Bistro. There is a current plan to use the garden for a summer program "Living in Harmony" proposed by Soka Institute for Global Solutions.

Walking Stick-Romero Elders Garden

The plot of garden on Soka campus was dedicated in 2024 to the Ajachemen tribe, the original owner of the land. The garden is used to plant over 25 species of native plants crucial to the traditional Ajachemen basket weaving and provides gathering spaces for the tribe.



Geoffrey Westropp - Garden Manager



Events being held in the garden



Classes being held in the garden



California Coast Live Oak (native tree)

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Because sustainability is a collected effort.



Professor Ian Read and students in Costa Rica



LC Spotlight: Sustainability in Costa Rica

12 students and Professor Ian Read travelled to Costa Rica to explore Costa Rica's approaches to sustainability, especially regarding social justice and tourism in a post-colonial context.



Spotted: SLOTH!

LEARNING CLUSTERS (LC)

A 3 weeks immersive research program in Winter Block

List of sustainability-related LC for 2025-2026

- Sustainability in Costa Rica, led by Professor Ian Read.
- Traditional Knowledge Insights for Living Well, led by Professor Chika Esiobu.
- #Landback: Mapping Acjachemen Sovereignty, Law, & Sustainability, led by Professor James Spady.
- Energy and the Environment, led by Professor George Busenberg.
- Consumerism and Ethics, led by Professor David Vivian.



Students' natural history journal

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student-led Sustainability Programs on Campus



SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS

Throughout the academic year, Sustainability Educators organized skill-building workshops to enhance sustainability awareness among the campus community. These events include:

- Zero Waste leadership trainings
- Film screenings
- Sustainability trivia nights
- Waste diversion workshop
- Mending workshops
- Composting workshop
- Plant dyeing workshop (in the garden!)

EARTH MONTH



Sustainability Educators host a series of sustainability-themed events every year in celebration of Earth Month.

2025-26 theme: Our Power, Our Planet

List of events:

- Panel speaker: Traditional medicines with Dr.Chika Esiobu
- Plant scavenger hunt
- Clothing Swap
- Cyanotype workshop
- Natural clothing dye workshop
- Sustainable product workshop

SUSTAINABLE LIVING GUIDE

First-year students receive a copy of the sustainable living guide in their Welcoming package. Sustainability Educators also presented to incoming students during their Orientation to answer any questions about sustainability at Soka.

SOKA CLOSET

Established in 2025, the Soka Closet is a program that allows students to obtain a wide selection of clothing donated by other students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community. Quality clothing is reused at Soka internally.

In addition, Sustainability Educators also collaborate with B2B on a professional closet specializes in business clothing.

GLOBAL CONFERENCES

A group of passionate Soka students were selected to participate in the 2026 Student Forum on Sustainability at Beijing Normal Hongkong Baptist University (BNBU), co-organized by Soka Institute for Global Solutions (SIGS).





4TH ANNUAL CLOTHING SWAP

1,080+

GARMENTS COLLECTED

This year Sustainability Educators hosted our 4th annual campus-wide clothing swap.

130

CAMPUS MEMBERS PARTICIPATED



CELEBRATING EARTH MONTH

Our Power, Our Planet!





STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Resources for staff to participate in sustainability

Soka University has several programs for staff that support ecological integrity, racial equity, and social justice.

- Training for a safe, inclusive, and equitable campus environment (i.e, Preventing Harassment & Discrimination Follow-Up Survey (Part Two) and Preventing Harassment & Discrimination: Non-Supervisors Clery Act and Title IX).
- Soka Institute for Global Solutions (SIGS) has a campus-wide Sustainability Panel Series.



~49% of staff participated in sustainability activities annually.

CONCLUSION

Reinforcing our campus-wide commitment to sustainability



For Soka University of America, this year marked a meaningful step forward in advancing sustainability across campus, driven by a commitment to measurable impact, transparency, and community engagement. Notably, we revived our AASHE STARS rating to Silver and were featured as the 2025 Top Performer in the Sustainability Investment category. Our Sustainability Team has been actively promoting sustainable living practices across campus, focusing on energy conservation, waste reduction, and everyday behavior changes that collectively contribute to a more resource-efficient community.

However, we also recognize that sustainability is a continuous process and critical work remains. Advancing carbon neutrality, strengthening our sustainability data tracking systems, and embedding sustainability more fully into everyday campus life will require sustained investment and innovation.

Moving forward, Soka University of America is well-positioned to build on this momentum by aligning our values of global citizenship and humanistic education with bold and actionable sustainability goals. Through continued collaboration and shared responsibility, we as a campus can serve as a living model in higher education for a more sustainable and equitable future.

Acknowledgements

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- Facility Services Partners (FSP): Scott Collins, Sergio Solis, Andy Garcia.
- Sequoia Environmental Services: Danny McNamara, Wendy Chen.
- Garden Manager: Geoffrey Westropp.
- SUA Archives Office.

