

Climate HQ Annual Report

2025-2026 Academic Year

SF SU



SF State students and Rotary Club members plant native species at the Literacy for Environmental Justice Candlestick Point Native Plant Nursery.



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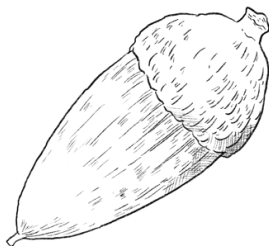
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CO-DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

From Co-Directors

Kai Burrus, Aritree Samanta,
and Autumn Thoyre

Just as federal commitments to climate action are being dismantled and climate impacts ramp up, this year has been the most consequential in SFSU Climate HQ's history. We became the first major public university in the nation to require climate justice education for every undergraduate. We launched the country's first Climate Justice Education Certificate for PK-12 teachers, and funded the entire first cohort with full scholarships. We placed 15 students as paid interns in frontline community organizations and we restored Bay shorelines with community leaders. We presented our model of change to higher education leaders across the country. We watched the seeds we planted four years ago take root far beyond our campus.



We have never been more proud of what this community has built together. And we have never needed your support more urgently.

Climate HQ was made possible by a visionary founding gift from Neda Nobari, and has been sustained by connections throughout SF State as well as the generosity of community members, alumni, family, and friends. Every one of those investments is visible in the work that has taken root these past four years. But roots need sustained water to thrive. Our founding gift ends in December 2026. Without continued funding, the fellowships, teacher trainings, internships, seed grants, and community events cannot continue.

We cannot let these roots go dry at this moment when our students are graduating into a world that desperately needs their climate leadership. The roots are deep. Help us keep them alive.

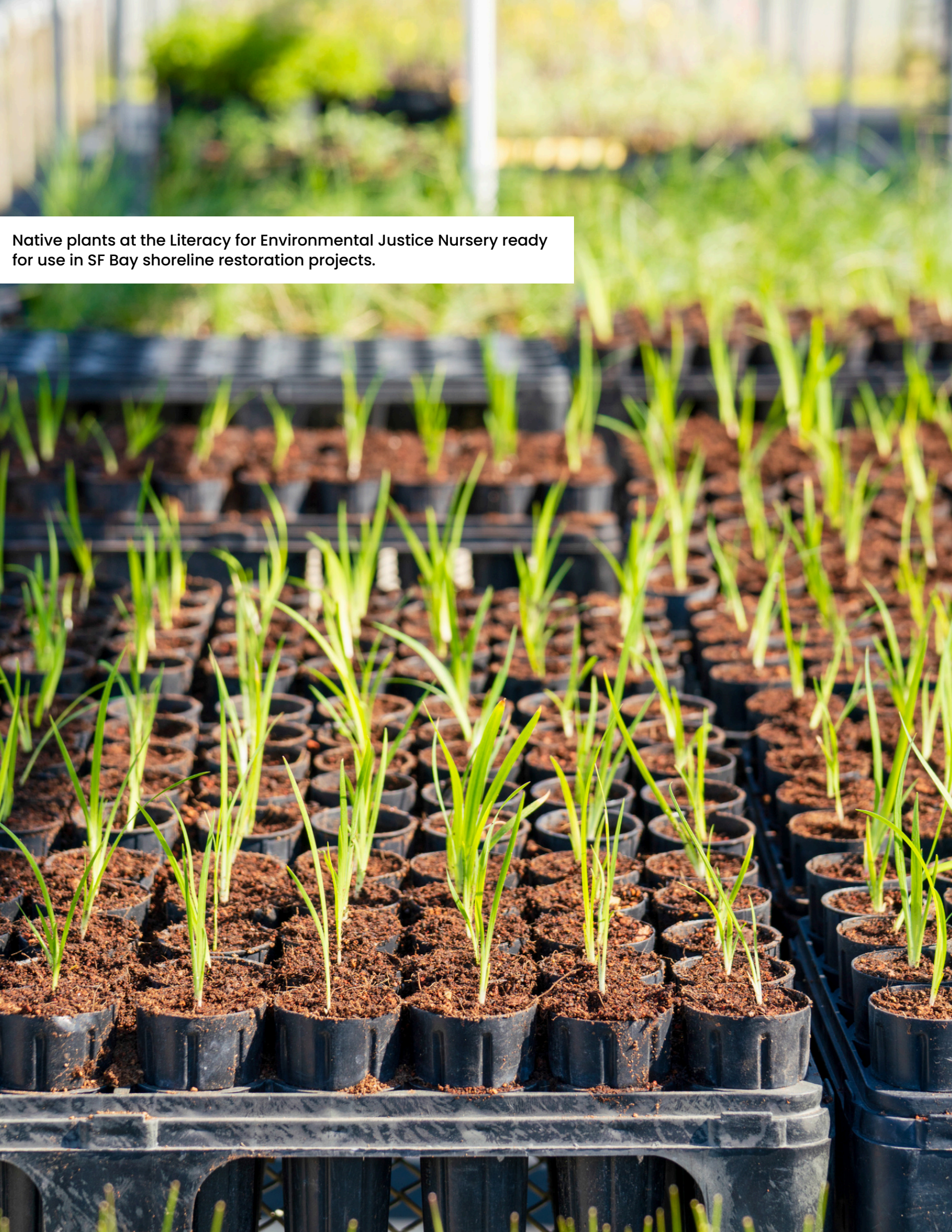
OUR MISSION

Rooted in Justice

**CLIMATE HQ'S MISSION IS
TO MOBILIZE THE NEXT
GENERATION OF CLIMATE
JUSTICE LEADERS FROM THE
FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES
MOST IMPACTED BY THE
CLIMATE CRISIS.**

We have created a new model for the role of the university in climate change that is interdisciplinary and rooted in hope, justice, and community.

Our vision is a world where frontline communities drive equitable climate solutions.



Native plants at the Literacy for Environmental Justice Nursery ready for use in SF Bay shoreline restoration projects.

OUR INITIATIVES

Climate Change Certificate

This interdisciplinary, justice-centered Certificate gives students a foundational understanding of climate change's causes, effects, and solutions so they can take action in their communities.

Climate Teaching Certificate for PK-12 Educators

This program's goal is to prepare teachers to become leaders in climate justice education at their schools, in their districts, and beyond.

Climate Action Fellowship

Fellowships support students engaged in research, scholarship, creative activities, or outreach related to climate change and projects can be on-campus or off.

Faculty Mini Grants

These grants support faculty in incorporating climate change into their research, scholarship and creative activities whether for the first time or in a deeper way.

Climate Justice Internship Program

This new program places 15-20 undergraduate students in a semester-long paid internship with partner organizations committed to climate justice.

Faculty Learning Communities

This program supports faculty members in creating or deepening the ways their teaching engages with climate change and social justice.

Climate HQ Storytellers' Lab

This Lab provides support and mentorship for students telling their stories about climate and ecological justice.

Annual Events

Events are designed to connect SF State students with environmental action, community engagement, and career pathways in climate and sustainability.



CUMULATIVE IMPACT

Thousands of Seeds

3000+

students take a class in climate justice each year
under the new graduation requirement

1000s

of students, interns, and fellows have gained
extensive professional development

140

students have earned the undergraduate
certificate in climate change

100+

faculty, staff, and students have participated in
Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs), impacting
thousands of additional students

Because a university-wide survey was conducted after Climate HQ took root but before the climate justice graduation requirement began, its results reflect the influence of Climate HQ's events, fellowships, internships, certificates, and other programs — not compliance with a new mandate. Nearly two thirds of SFSU graduates report learning about climate change, and nearly half say they've taken climate action: evidence that Climate HQ is shifting institutional culture, not just running programs.

Surveys report that **70%** of Climate HQ event attendees take new climate actions afterward.



SF State students in the Climate Justice Internship Program restore landscapes in San Francisco.

TRANSFORMING THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN CLIMATE ACTION

Historically, most university climate work has been disconnected from frontline communities. Climate HQ's approach is different because we focus on interdisciplinary connections to the frontline communities that are leading the way in equitable climate solutions. This year, Climate HQ formalized a new model for University-based climate solutions through 3 programs, each the first of its kind in the nation.

Climate Justice Education Certificate for PK-12 Teachers

Climate justice education has to start before college. This year, Climate HQ launched this first-of-its-kind Graduate Certificate, giving teachers the knowledge, tools, and community to bring justice-centered climate education into classrooms from preschool through high school.

The result? Our entire first cohort received full scholarships to ensure equitable access to transformative professional development, impacting hundreds of PK-12 children.

Climate Justice Internship Program

This new program places students with the frontline organizations that are doing the most urgent climate work in the Bay Area.

The result? This year's inaugural internship cohort (see p. 17) took a major step toward leadership positions in their fields.

Climate Justice Graduation Requirement

This year, SF State became the first major public university in the nation to require climate justice education for every undergraduate.

The result? More than 3,000 students a year now graduate as climate-informed voters, community members, and leaders.

SF State students enjoy the views at our Baylands Park habitat restoration event with Save the Bay.



SHARING OUR MODEL

Disseminating Seeds

CLIMATE HQ'S MODEL OF CLIMATE JUSTICE IS RESONATING FAR BEYOND SAN FRANCISCO.

This year, our leadership team carried our vision to higher education leaders across the country by presenting at the Second Nature Higher Education Climate Leadership Summit and at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Climate Solutions Now Conference, and by bringing our justice-centered perspective into California's 5th Climate Assessment.

Our model and organizing helped catalyze the formation of CSU ADAPT, a system-wide consortium moving the Climate HQ model from a single campus to the network of 22 California State University campuses that serves 500,000 students annually.



Climate HQ intern Angela Tafur gives a workshop on student climate action at the California Academy of Sciences.

TRANSFORMING LEARNING

Recognizing that climate change is an all-hands-on-deck crisis requiring solutions from every part of society, Climate HQ has created proven programs that train students from every discipline to participate.

The Interdisciplinary Climate Change Certificate

A total of 140 students from across the University have completed this Certificate, preparing them for leadership positions.

Student Spotlight

Akani James, Angela Tafur, and Andrés Mota used their Certificate training and experiences as student climate leaders to give a workshop at the California Academy of Sciences entitled, "How to Launch and Champion Youth-Led Climate Action."

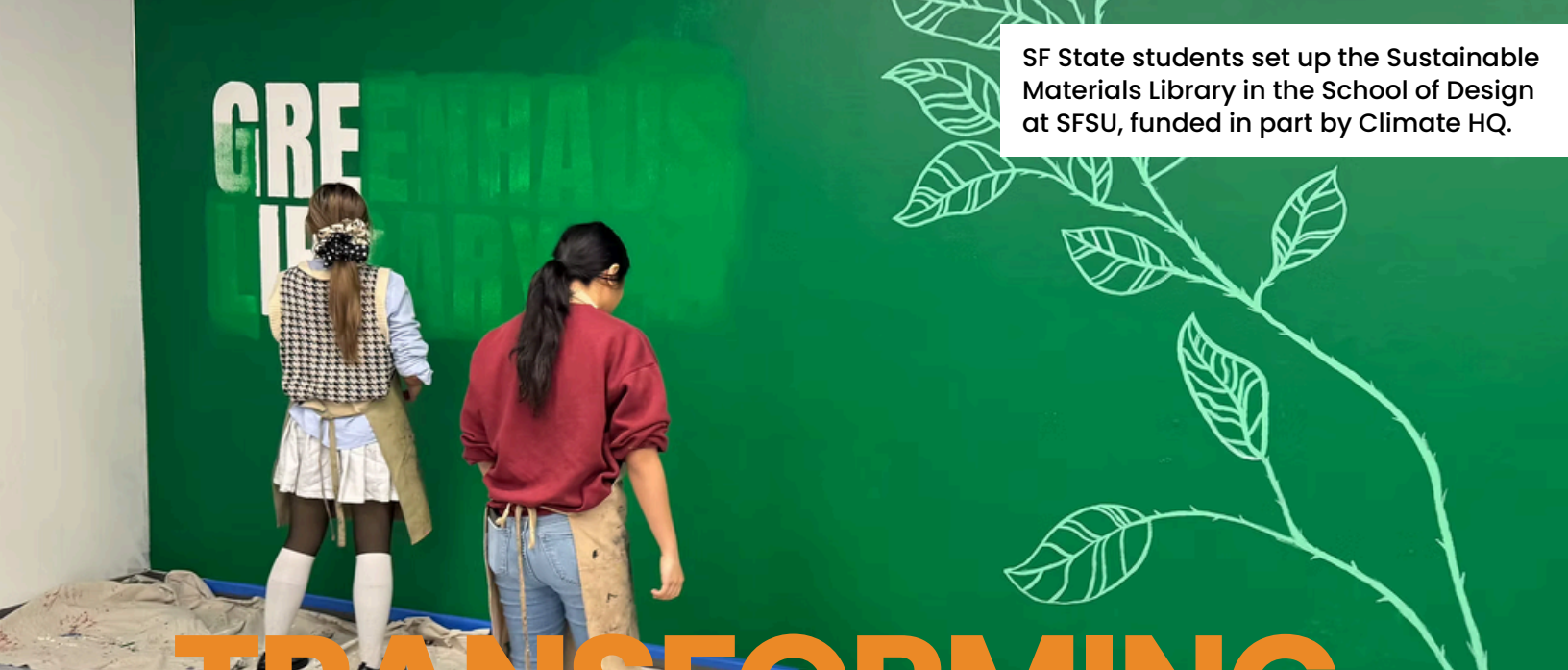
Climate Action Fellows

21 students in 17 disciplines have advanced climate justice through their year-long fellowships, including two fellows funded by the SF Rotary Club and two by the CA Coastal Conservancy.

Student Spotlight

Marcello Garbo, an undergraduate in Chemistry, focused his fellowship on integrating solar energy collectors into existing infrastructure. He'll begin a PhD in Chemistry at UC-Irvine in fall 2026. Garbo says:

"This experience has shaped the kind of scientist and mentor I want to become: someone who pursues impactful research while also prioritizing equity, accessibility, and community impact."



SF State students set up the Sustainable Materials Library in the School of Design at SFSU, funded in part by Climate HQ.

TRANSFORMING TEACHING

Climate HQ's programs support faculty across the disciplines to reimagine how they connect their work to the communities most impacted by the climate crisis.

Faculty Learning Communities

More than 100 faculty, staff, and students from almost 40 departments have brought climate justice into new teaching territories.

FLC Spotlight

Kenya Mejia, Alanna Cooney, Alyssa Kubota, Fatemeh Khalkhal, Jenna Wong, and Stephanie Claussen, all faculty in the School of Engineering, focused their learning community on bringing climate justice into engineering spaces. They reflect:

"One of the most impactful aspects of this FLC was the interdisciplinary dialogue, which challenged [us] to think beyond technical solutions to climate change and instead approach climate-conscious design through the lenses of justice, identity, and collective transformation. This shift allowed [us] to reframe sustainability not as an add-on, but as central to [our] pedagogy."

Faculty Mini-Grants

These grants seed faculty-led climate solutions. They have funded more than 30 faculty and students so far, across almost 20 departments, to take research risks and work across disciplinary boundaries.

Mini-Grant Spotlight

Faculty and staff in Design, Fine Art, and the Office of Sustainability used their mini-grant to help launch the West Coast's first climate change-focused materials library for architects, designers, and creators. JD Beltran, faculty member in Design, says:

"We stand at an inflection point: the materials we choose are the most powerful design decision we'll ever make. This library was built on the belief that we don't have to choose between creating beautifully and creating responsibly — and that the world can't afford for us to get that wrong."



Tiles from the Living Seawalls of the Bay Project, funded in part by Climate HQ.





Design students conduct fieldwork connected to the seawall project for the 2026 BioDesign Challenge.

MINI-GRANT SPOTLIGHT

Living Seawalls of the Bay

With mini-grant funds, Fernando Carvalho (Associate Professor in the School of Design), Kathy Boyer (Professor of Biology and Interim Director of the Estuary & Ocean Science Center (EOS)), and Josie Iselin (Lecturer Faculty in the School of Design) collaborated to support teams of students to design living seawalls as a form of adaptation to sea level rise in the SF Bay. Student teams created award-winning projects.

Students April Anderson, Jason Lee, and Dominic Taylor co-created “Coastal Resonance,” a project that won the Outstanding Institutional Collaboration award at the 2026 BioDesign Challenge Summit. The funds allowed this team to attend the BioDesign Summit in NYC, covering flights and accommodation for students and faculty.

Students Vivack Chan, Katalina Ruiz, and Athena Valli created another project, “Adaptive Living Seawall,” that was nominated to participate in the fall 2026 PANDO Sustainability Awards.

In Fall 2026, the Coastal Resonance team will be producing prototypes to be pilot tested in the Bay, with mini-grant funds also covering costs for materials and manufacturing. Dr. Carvalho reflects:

“My diverse students will be able to learn about methodology to study marine biology and ascertain changes that may be happening because of climate change. Many of my students come from urban areas and they never have gotten close to the shore in the SF Bay estuary.”



Still from Ndjimu (Deep Cobalt),
a film featured in Climate HQ's
4th Annual Film Fest.

CLIMATE STORYTELLING

Held at the Coppola Theater on Earth Week, Climate HQ's Fourth Annual Film Festival featured Petna Ndaliko Katondolo's "Ndjimu: Deep Cobalt" and Greta Snider's "In the Maritime Frequencies," alongside the first public screenings of projects by Climate HQ's seven Storyteller Fellows.

Storyteller Fellows

This year's film fest featured films by professionals, but also films by student filmmakers. Supported by new, year-long paid Storyteller Fellowships, students created innovative shorts using documentary, stop motion animation, experimental, and other techniques. Erica Pulley, Co-Lead of the Storytellers' Lab, explains:

"Most of the Storytellers had no previous production experience, so without the Storytellers' Lab, their stories may have remained untold."

Storyteller Fellow Spotlight

Ariel Peraza is an Ethnic Studies MA candidate and first-generation Latinx mother of Indigenous descent. Her Storytellers' project was a documentary rooted in her own experience with an Indigenous-led horsemanship program. By uplifting participants as knowledge keepers, the film challenges colonial frameworks of extraction and presents Indigenous understandings of reciprocity and interconnectedness as essential solutions to the ongoing impacts of climate change. Peraza says:

"I am leaving this experience with more confidence and a stronger belief in the power of storytelling... It confirmed that our stories are worth telling, and that we are capable of telling them ourselves."

CAREER READY WITH CLIMATE HQ

Climate Justice Internship Program

The unpaid internship model of environmental leadership development often excludes low-income and first-generation students from professional development because it forces them to choose between experiences that launch their careers and paying rent. This is why Climate HQ insisted on creating an internship program with paid opportunities.

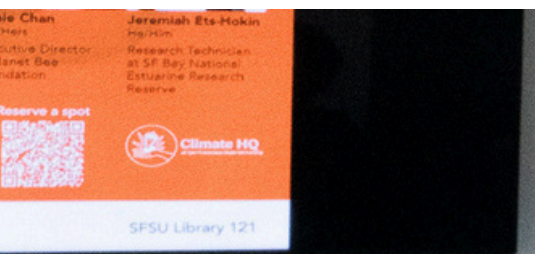
The result? 15 students from 10 majors – including Sociology, Business, Computer Science, Philosophy, and Biology – have gained experience working with grassroots climate justice organizations such as PODER, Movement Generation, Local Clean Energy Alliance, and the Goldman Environmental Fund.

Career Events and Community

Supporting professional development, networks, and belonging, Climate HQ organizes career panels and speakers each year, connecting students with climate justice professionals across sectors.

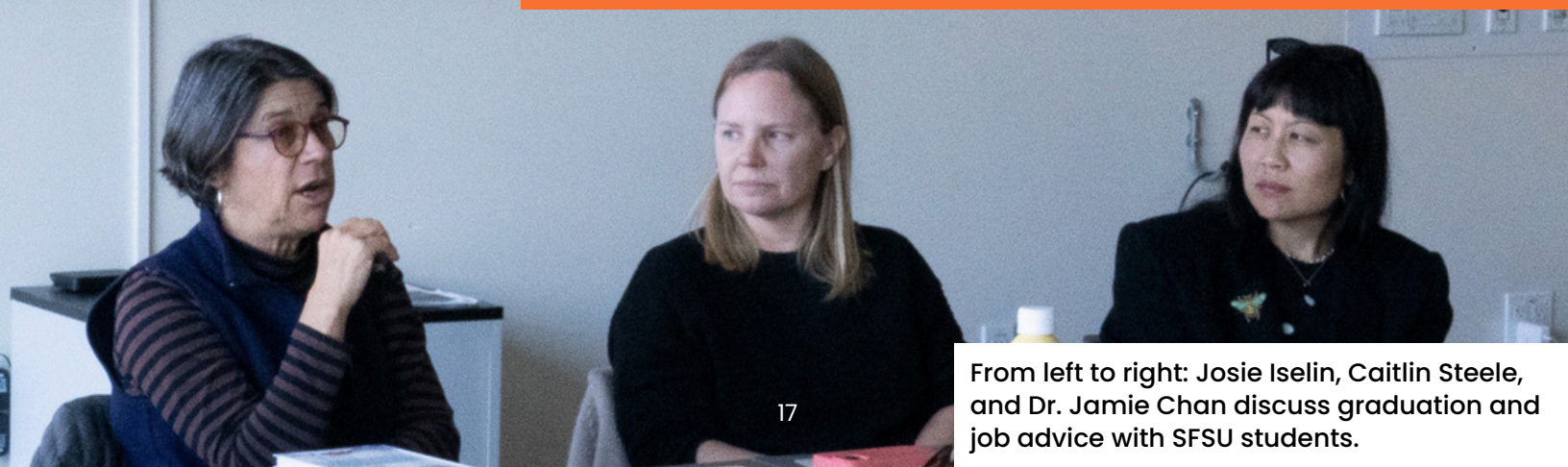
“It makes me feel like I belong here. This was a nice reminder/refresh of what I need to do to get a career I love.”

– Anonymous audience member, Climate HQ career panel.



“I want to incorporate climate justice principles in whatever work I do, since the inequities behind climate change intersect with so many types of work. For example, as a Psychology major, if I pursue clinical psychology, I need to be aware of how these inequities and impacts affect different people with different backgrounds in order to provide adequate care.”

– Jenna Rafla-Yuan, a Psychology major and intern at Local Clean Energy Alliance, on the impact of the internship program on her career plans.



From left to right: Josie Iselin, Caitlin Steele, and Dr. Jamie Chan discuss graduation and job advice with SFSU students.

Students Sandra Chavez and Ryan Phelan work on plant restoration at the Baylands park with Literacy for Environmental Justice.



GROWING INTO NEW GROUND



Climate HQ's Budding Partner: San Francisco Rotary Club

The SF Rotary Club has become one of Climate HQ's most committed and creative partners, funding two Climate Action Fellowships, collaborating on service days, and helping demonstrate that climate justice is not a partisan cause or a niche concern, but the work of every profession and every community.

Getting their hands into the mud at the Bay's edge, Rotarians joined Climate HQ students and staff for shoreline restoration projects with Save the Bay and Literacy for Environmental Justice, embodying the cross-generational and cross-sector work we're building together.

Planting and restoring the wetlands was especially meaningful because it combined hands-on environmental stewardship with collaboration among many like-minded people who share a commitment to caring for our world. Experiences like this remind me how powerful service and collective financial support can be when communities come together to create lasting impact.

- Bob Hermann, Rotary Club of SF Immediate Past-President '24-25



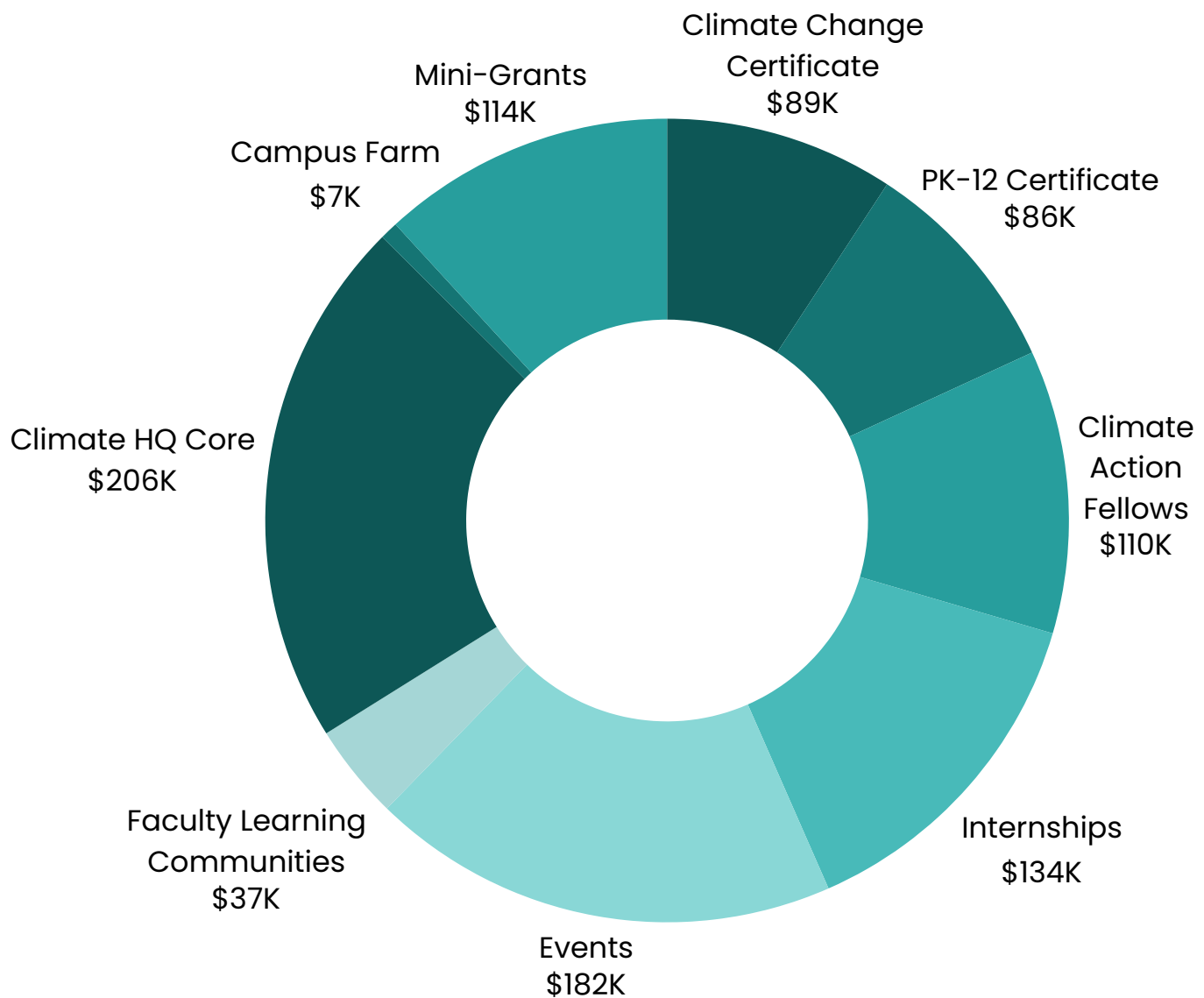
SF State students and members of the Rotary Club restore the Bay's ecosystem in a collaborative event.

FINANCIALS

Watering the Garden

Every root needs care to grow. This page shows how last year's funds were distributed across our initiatives – certificates, fellowships, internships, FLCs, mini-grants, events, and the campus farm – alongside Climate HQ Core, the small team that facilitates fundraising, grants, budget, and communications to hold this ecosystem together. We track every dollar carefully, because we take your trust seriously.

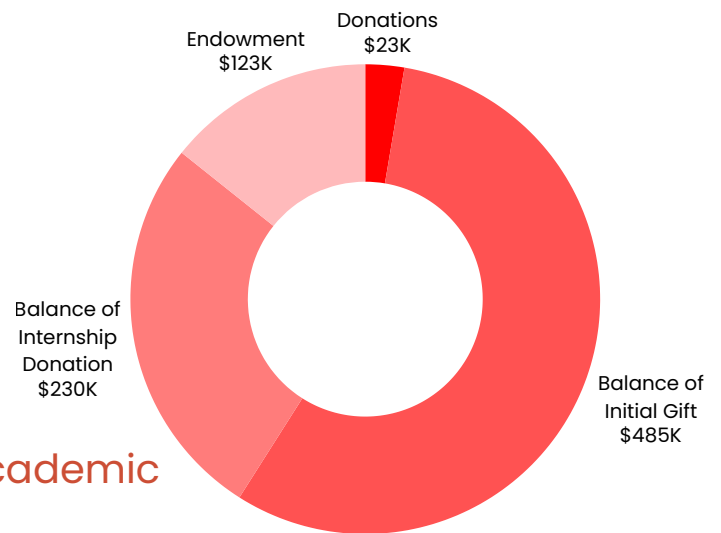
Spending By Initiative, 2025–2026 Academic Year



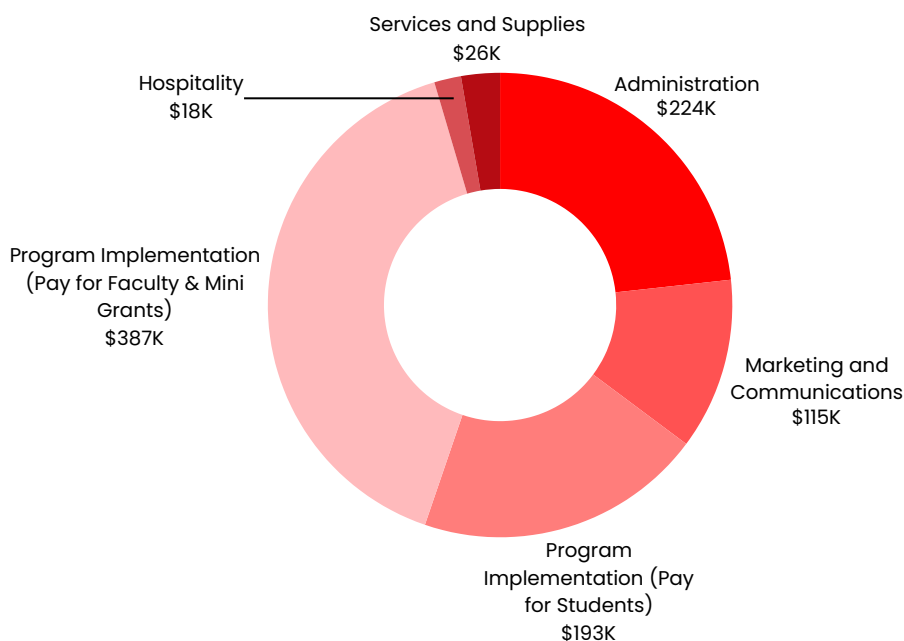
We believe the faculty, staff, and students doing this work should be paid for it.

That's why the majority of our funds go directly to program implementation, with the rest supporting the modest infrastructure needed to run responsibly. As we take root, we need water to grow: your investment helps us deepen and sustain this work.

Net Assets as of August 1, 2026



Spending by Category, 2025-2026 Academic Year



TRANSFORMATIVE GIVING

Roots Need Watering

THE ROOTS AND SEEDS CLIMATE HQ HAS PLANTED IN FOUR YEARS NEED WATER TO FLOURISH. WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN OUR FOUNDING AND NEW DONORS TO HELP US MOBILIZE THE CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADERS WE NEED.

Founding Donors

Neda Nobari

Climate HQ was made possible by a founding gift from Neda Nobari, who reflects:

"Climate HQ reminds us what higher education is truly meant to do: equip students not only to understand a complex and rapidly changing world, but to discover the confidence, creativity, and sense of purpose to help shape its future. By bringing together science, justice, community, and innovation, Climate HQ is preparing a generation of leaders who will build a more resilient, equitable, and hopeful world. The opportunity to be part of that journey has been a profound privilege."

Confidential donor

With a \$500,000 donation from an anonymous organization, Climate HQ was able to create and launch our new Climate Justice Internship Program in Spring 2026.

New Donors

SF Rotary Club

The SF Rotary Club began by funding two Climate Action Fellows and is now a long-term partner, co-organizing events like Bay shoreline restorations and a Bike Build.

CA Coastal Conservancy

Climate HQ partnered with the Coastal Conservancy to fund two Climate Action Fellows at Literacy for Environmental Justice since 2025.

People like you!

Over 40 people have donated since 2021 — including at our first Annual Celebration and Giving Day (pictured on p. 23), when two gifts honoring John Mathers sparked a \$2,000 matching fund, met by 18 more gifts in his honor.

"We support Climate HQ because our Bay shoreline and communities need protection from climate change. Their work keeps the Bay Area stronger and more resilient."

— Dan Joraanstad, Traveler,
Musician, Volunteer



OUR TEAM

Who Tends the Garden

Climate HQ Directors

Kai Burrus | Biology, Photography
 Aritree Samanta | School of the Environment
 Autumn Thoyre | School of the Environment

Climate HQ Staff

Alcides Fuentes | Program & Communications
 Specialist, Photography
 Lisa Galli | Budget Specialist

Climate HQ Team Members

Falu Bakrania | Race & Resistance Studies,
 Photography
 Adrienne Cool | Physics & Astronomy
 Gopal Dayaneni | Race & Resistance Studies
 Geoff Desa | Management
 Constance Gordon | Communication Studies
 Logan Hennessy | Liberal Studies
 Carolina Prado | Latina/Latino Studies
 Erica Pulley | Broadcast & Electronic
 Communication Arts
 Zubaida Qamar | Fashion, Interiors, Nutrition & Apparel
 Shawn Rosenmoss | School of the Environment
 Charli Sakari | Physics & Astronomy
 Stephanie Sisk-Hilton | Elementary Education
 Caitlin Steele | Office of Sustainability
 Mayuran Tiruchelvam | School of Cinema

Program & Communications Intern

Emet Levy | Class of 2026, graduated with a
 Masters in Design. He designed graphics for this
 annual report, as well as fliers, event programs,
 social media, and more. He was selected to be
 Point Blue's 2026 Maxwell Hanrahan Biological
 Illustration Intern.

Artist Spotlight: Rebecca Loza

Rebecca Loza | Class of 2026, graduated with a
 Bachelors in Environmental Studies. Her
 environmental artwork is featured throughout
 this year's Annual Report.

BioDesign Photography

Fernando Carvalho | Associate Professor, School
 of Design



Climate HQ
at San Francisco State University

