

LAUDATO SI' CHALLENGE

2026 Event Program

Interdisciplinary Student Solutions for Environmental Justice

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 | Mooney Hall 336 | Seton Hall University

About	<p>The Laudato Si' Challenge invited Seton Hall undergraduate students to present practical, research-informed responses to environmental issues inspired by Pope Francis's Laudato Si' and the Catholic intellectual tradition.</p> <p><i>The inaugural Laudato Si' Challenge was held on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, in Mooney Hall 336. The program below reflects the final event schedule, participating teams, judging panel and 2026 results.</i></p>
Hosted by	Center for Catholic Studies and the University Core
Event hours	11:00 AM-2:00 PM
Awards	1st Place: \$1,500 team award 2nd Place: \$750 team award 3rd Place: \$500 team award
2026 Results	<p>1st Place: Sisters of Water — Carly Hunter, Adeline Hulsey and Bella Kaplan</p> <p>2nd Place: Project Planet — Talynn Diaz, Nicole Uretzky and Zahir Mooring</p> <p>3rd Place: Loraxes — Amy Kugelman and Floey Seals</p> <p>Honorable Mention: Iron Equity Initiative — Jack Smith and Aakash Arumugam</p> <p>News recap: https://www.shu.edu/catholic-studies-center/news/inaugural-laudato-si-challenge-winners-announced.html</p>

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

Final event schedule from Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

Time	Team / project	Student team members	Brief description
11:00-11:15	<i>Arrival & Welcome</i>	-	<i>Visitor arrival, seating, and opening welcome.</i>
11:15-11:30	Iron Equity Initiative <i>Iron Equity: A Nutrition & Environmental Justice Solution</i>	Jack Smith Aakash Arumugam	A free AI-powered app that screens for iron deficiency using eyelid images, connecting nutrition access, environmental conditions, and health equity.
11:30-11:45	Microplastics <i>Microplastics and Laudato Si'</i>	Crisnahi Garrido Floey Seals Emmi Panagiotidis	An exploration of microplastics, their effects on human and environmental health, and why this issue matters through the lens of Laudato Si'.
11:45-12:00	Durable Diplos <i>Trash to Throne: How Plastic Pollution Becomes an Innovation</i>	Jordyn Conaway Emilia Torres Villegas Joseph Charles F. Mondia	A proposal to transform plastic pollution into useful recycled products, reframing waste as an opportunity for practical environmental innovation.

Time	Team / project	Student team members	Brief description
12:00-12:15	Loraxes <i>Data Centers and Laudato Si'</i>	Amy Kugelman Floey Seals	A closer look at the environmental costs of AI data centers and mining, with solutions grounded in care for our common home.
12:15-12:30	Sisters of Water <i>Freshwater Pollution: Agricultural Runoff, PFAS, and Biological Solutions</i>	Carly Hunter Adeline Hulsey Bella Kaplan	A team-based response to freshwater pollution that examines agricultural runoff, PFAS, and biologically grounded pathways toward remediation.
12:30-12:45	<i>Midday break</i>	-	<i>Short midday break, judge reset, and room transition.</i>
12:45-1:00	Project Planet <i>Project Planet</i>	Talynn Diaz Nicole Uretzky Zahir Mooring	AquaHarvest proposes floating 'smart gardens' that filter polluted waterways, recover nutrients, and grow food for underserved communities.
1:00-1:30	<i>Afternoon Intermission</i>	-	<i>Brief intermission, judge reset, and schedule transition.</i>
1:30-1:45	EcoMed <i>Smart AI Waste Sorting: Reducing Medical Waste & Environmental Harm</i>	Sophia Lu Vivian Wang	A smart AI waste-sorting system designed to reduce medical waste overclassification, unnecessary incineration, and related environmental harm.
1:45-2:00	<i>Program Close</i>	-	<i>Final review period and event close.</i>

JUDGING PANEL

Session I 11:00 AM-12:30 PM	Session II 12:30-2:00 PM
<p>Judith Stark, Ph.D. Professor Emerita, Department of Philosophy</p> <p>Kelly Shea, Ph.D. Associate Professor of English/Director of First-Year Writing, Department of English</p> <p>Linda Karten Senior Director, Marketing and Communications</p> <p>Reverend Nicholas C. Sertich, S.T.L. Director of Campus Ministry</p> <p>Thomas Seat, Ph.D. Teaching Fellow, University Core Curriculum</p>	<p>Linda Karten Senior Director, Marketing and Communications</p> <p>Reverend Nicholas C. Sertich, S.T.L. Director of Campus Ministry</p> <p>Thomas Seat, Ph.D. Teaching Fellow, University Core Curriculum</p> <p>Nancy Enright, Ph.D. Professor of English, Director of the University Core</p> <p>Jonathan Heaps, Ph.D. Director of the Bernard J. Lonergan Institute</p>

With thanks to the Center for Catholic Studies and the University Core for co-sponsoring this inaugural student initiative.