

My name is Samantha Black and I was an SFPIRG board member from 2011-2013 while completing my undergraduate degree in economics. My time at SFPIRG was invaluable to my development as a critically thinking member of society and academia. I entered university knowing that I benefited from growing up white and wealthy, but didn't know what to do with that information. I wanted to help others but didn't have a framework for how to do so respectfully and constructively. At SFPIRG, I learned from the staff and my fellow students how systems of oppression operate within society and how they often go overlooked or are misrepresented. Through the relationships formed at SFPIRG, I learned the importance of using my privilege to create space for and give a voice to those who are so often left out of the conversation. This contributed to my commitment to pursue advanced degrees in order to one day have the right academic tools to be able to be in a professional position that allows me to be an effective advocate and ally.

I am currently a PhD candidate in economics at the University of Western Ontario where my research focuses on climate change and its impact on people's mobility and well-being. After graduating, my goal is to work with governmental or non-governmental organizations working on climate change policy in order to highlight the impact that climate has on those who have no power to change it. Not only did my time at SFPIRG help me to develop my communication, organization, and leadership skills, but it also gave me the confidence to pursue lofty goals and a foundation for understanding how my actions can affect those around me. These are lessons that will stay with me forever. SFPIRG changed my life and I would not be the same without it!