



The Alt Protein Project

University of Chicago sample Alt Protein Project application

This application from students at the University of Chicago is just one example of what a successful application for the Alt Protein Project looks like. We know (and appreciate) that every university ecosystem looks different and are eager to welcome universities and students with diverse backgrounds and strengths. Below is an example of an application from an ecosystem without a strong existing alternative protein university ecosystem. Visit our other example application, from Aston University, for an example of a successful application from a university that had an existing alternative protein research community .

NOTE: This example does not include questions from our application that contain personal information. The 2025 application also contains a new question (RE: different student communities you would connect with) that is not included in this 2024 example.

Does an alternative protein-focused student group already exist?

- No

Why do you want to lead a group of the APP?

- A UChicago Alt Protein Project has a high potential for success due to a combination of factors such as an available niche, a resource-rich environment, and passionate organizers with experience and excitement for alternative proteins. We have three major goals for 2023-2024: build a welcoming community, develop courses, and create career opportunities. First, the community will be built through industry talks and events like food tastings. An emphasis will be placed on diversity and open discourse. Second, developing Alt Protein courses within the Molecular Engineering department is highly achievable given recent expansion and student excitement (a talk we organized with Climax foods, for instance, had very high demand). Third, we plan to work with our careers office to establish alternative protein Metcalf Internships, which funds students directly and allows organizations to hire at no cost. There are currently a few Metcalf Internships with Mozza Foods that have been very successful.

What makes your university a good fit for the Alt Protein Project?

- In my first year at UChicago, I've met more driven, curious, and intelligent students than I ever could have imagined. These are people who were leaders in their high



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schools, and who will go on to be leaders in their fields. Many of the students I have met are passionate about creating change, and there is large interest in environmental sustainability and in alternative protein priority disciplines.

And yet there is a current lack of organization and direction surrounding alternative proteins, which will play a transformational role in our future. Beyond UChicago, there is only one other Alt Protein Project in the midwest and none in Chicago, a massive city with growing biotech and major manufacturing capabilities. Therefore there is a major opening for an Alt Protein Project, and given our access to a large body of talent, funding, and research, I believe a UChicago chapter will be highly impactful.

Are you aware of any existing alternative protein researchers or initiatives at your university? If so, please describe them below.

- There is large potential and an unmet need for alternative protein research at UChicago. The Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, located centrally on campus, became the first-ever molecular engineering school in 2019 with 123 million dollars in funding and commitments. Undergraduates have direct access to the institution through the Molecular Engineering major/minor, where they can specialize in fields like bioengineering and tissue engineering. In addition, computer science and the biological sciences, two alternative protein priority disciplines, are the 2nd and 4th most popular majors in the college. In addition, there are a number of well-funded programs/grants for undergraduates such as the Metcalf Program and the Polsky Entrepreneurship Center that could be leveraged to promote student engagement in alternative proteins. Finally, the University is a major research hub and manages three national laboratories. There is high demand and few barriers to promoting research and involvement in alternative proteins.

Describe your level of familiarity with alternative proteins

- I first became interested in alternative proteins in high school as a possible solution to the climatic effects of meat consumption. As a molecular engineering major, I have developed a strong interest in alternative proteins and plan to pursue a career as a researcher. At the Cambridge University Alternative Protein Society, I learned about the latest developments in the industry and engaged in discussions on the science and ethics of alternative proteins. In addition, I have been following industry news closely, including the progress of various alternative protein companies and the



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regulatory landscape surrounding them. My level of familiarity with alternative proteins is extensive, as I have taken courses in biochemistry and cellular engineering and have conducted research related to systems biology. I have been engaged with the alternative protein field for several years, and my experiences have fueled my passion for creating sustainable and ethical food systems.

What excites you most about the alternative protein space?

- I recently had some animal-free ice cream made with cultured whey protein. Before I took that bite, I was filled with excitement; I was tasting the future. When I put it in my mouth, it tasted, well... like ice cream. It was exactly what I should've expected. But that's the exciting part! We can make food that tastes the same without all the harm of our food system.

Climate scientists agree that a worldwide switch to a vegan diet could alleviate many of the worst effects of climate change. But due to personal tastes and cultural factors, many people are unwilling to switch. The technology of alternative proteins has the capacity to replace the vastly inefficient and inhumane cruel systems of meat production and prevent the suffering of trillions of animals. It can lead to a reduction in air pollution, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity. It is the future.

Describe the experience you and your co-organizers have that prepare you to build a vibrant and long-lasting community of students and researchers around alternative proteins.

- Two of our three organizers have significant experience in leading and building student groups.

Student #1: In high school, I founded a chapter of Students Opposing Speciesism when I saw that there were no student animal activist groups in New York City. After seeing how difficult it was to recruit members, I learned how to leverage social media and construct creative outreach campaigns to build our community. I worked with Peta and my fellow students to plan a variety of events, ranging from protests to food tastings.

Student #2: I've had the privilege of co-leading UChicago's Effective Altruism student organization for the last year. I'm passionate about field-building and have increased



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EA club membership by approximately 40 people this year alone. I've organized weekly social events, career advancement opportunities, brainstormed creative outreach methods, and helped put together reading groups and a speaker series.

How much time per week can you and your co-organizers each devote to organizing a student group for the next year?

- Student #1: 10 hrs | Student #2: 6/7 hrs | Student #3: 6/7 hrs