



ON-CAMPUS FOOD SYSTEMS

PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION & BEST PRACTICES



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Production, Distribution & Best Practices

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In association with the Public Good Initiative

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Sierra Youth Coalition



For over a decade, the Sierra Youth Coalition (SYC) has supported high schools and universities across Canada in becoming leaders in sustainability, student empowerment and community engagement. We've seen that the values, leadership skills and relationships developed on campus foster a lifelong culture of sustainability and stewardship. SYC's recent work with Meal Exchange on the Campus Food Systems Project, has led to the creation of a strong national network of university leaders who are rethinking how food can transform their campus community.

Students are making transformative changes in their campuses and community food systems. They are creating socially and ecologically conscious food offerings. They are collaborating with Food Service Providers to make meaningful connections with local fisheries. They are providing space for community organizations on campus and opening their hearts, minds and kitchens to opportunities.

However, there is much work to be done. There are more gardens to be grown, more local farmers to support and more stories to share. Working on agro-ecological food systems not only benefits our communities but also provides incredible experience for everyone involved. You will meet new friends, feel healthier and see the fruits of your labour!

The Public Good Initiative Research Team has done an incredible job with this report. The PGI Group has captured important stories that are shaping the role Universities play in ecological, social and agricultural systems. This small document is packed with thoughtful research, conversations and findings. This document will be useful to any inspired student who is looking to make change and not looking to reinvent the wheel. This resource is like fertile soil - providing the foundation for growth.

We hope this report sparks conversation ideas and provides you with the ideas you need to get started.

Whether you are interested in health, ecological, social or cultural issues, food provides so much opportunity for positive change.

For more resources and insight in the student food movement please visit [The Campus Food Systems Project](#) website.

In good food,

Sarah Archibald

Campus Food Systems Coordinator
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Table of Contents

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS ON-CAMPUS • 1

BACKGROUND • 1

WHY LOCAL FOOD? • 1

CAMPUS CASE STUDIES • 2

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO • 2

GUELPH UNIVERSITY • 3

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA • 4

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA • 5

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO • 6

VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY • 6

ON-CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION: BENEFITS, BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS • 7

BENEFITS TO ON-CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION • 7

BARRIERS (AND SOLUTIONS) TO ON-CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION • 8

3-STEP CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION GUIDE • 11

Local Food Systems on Campus

A REPORT ON HOW TO INCORPORATE LOCAL FOOD ON CAMPUS

BACKGROUND

Sierra Youth Coalition has been looking into the barriers and challenges that are faced by universities and colleges in adopting local food practices on campuses. Some of the challenges include: costs, student demand and limited labour capacity. There is, however, a substantial amount of research that is available to unearth these challenges in addition to numerous case studies of local food opportunities on campuses across Canada. This report breaks down this information that highlights how students, chefs and administrators can work together to overcome the barriers of local food growth, distribution and consumption on campus.

WHY LOCAL FOOD?

There are many benefits for growing, eating and cooking with local foods. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Lower greenhouse gas emissions – good for improving your school's carbon footprint
- Support for the local economy
- Encourages an understanding of the ecological and economic practices of the supply chain on campus
- Higher nutritional benefits than imported foods
- Fresher food is tastier
- Many heirloom vegetables cannot survive transportation, so growing your own vegetables allows for greater variety
- Ultimately cheaper – the initial costs of starting may be high, but practices such as seed saving make it a very affordable option
- Nurture a community environment in your school
- Maximize the utility of underutilized spaces on campus
- Potential to be used as an experiential learning tool on campus
- Community gardens promote food security
- Provide physical and mental health benefits for Students involved or those who get to enjoy the aesthetics of the gardens
- Canadian grown food has some of the highest safety standards in the world – buying local ensures that these standards are followed



Campus Case Studies

A LOOK INTO HOW CAMPUSES SUCCESSFULLY USE LOCAL FOOD

PURPOSE

These case studies will provide post-secondary student groups across Canada with illustrative models of how to successfully design and implement local food initiatives on campus.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

HARVEST NOON

During the 2012 Graduate Student Union Elections, the membership voted to establish a refundable levy for the Toronto Sustainable Food Co-op. The levy is \$1.00/year for full-time graduate students and \$0.50/year for part-time graduate students. The funding resulted in an on-campus café that provides local, sustainable and organically produced food to students while also working to support food security and accessibility.

The Toronto Sustainable Food Co-op worked on a similar student group project called Hot Yam!, which provided a weekly vegan lunch for \$4. Seeing the demand by the student body for access to healthy and affordable food, the Co-op expanded its scope. Working with local producers and like-minded on-campus groups, Harvest Noon was established, delivering clean, healthy and fair food alternatives on campus. The café also throws food-related events to nurture a food-friendly campus.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Speak to your student unions about establishing a levy and opportunities to find funding to lightly subsidize local foods.
- Creating a co-op with low membership fees that help to support the movement and day to day operations.
- Alternatively, provide options for those who are unable to pay the fee such as volunteering a certain amount of hours in return for membership.

GUELPH UNIVERSITY

Guelph has taken a very unique approach towards incorporating local food into its campus food system. The university is situated near farmland, which has allowed Guelph students to create lasting relationships with farmers that ensure local food is constantly available for their students. They have also acquired a state-of-the-art food processing lab (using the money awarded from Friends of the Greenbelt), that is used to freeze, preserve and can food to ensure that during the winter seasons they are still able to meet a quota of local produce.

Guelph's ability to network with supportive groups, such as Sustain Ontario and Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance has ensured that they have a strong foundation to assist them in shaping more sustainable campus services. Another unique factor is that they have a very dedicated leader behind this entire endeavor, Mark Kenny, who participates in the Elmira Produce Auction. This auction is a locally owned corporation that works to increase family farm income by connecting their seasonal fruit and produce directly with consumers. Without Kenny's commitment, the campus would lack access to this opportunity.

SUGGESTIONS:

- See if your school has a food policy statement. Guelph has a very coherent vision statement and an ultimate campus goal. This ensures that all student and faculty project are working towards one succinct end.
- Connect with community organizations and groups, such as Taste Real - Guelph Wellington's Local Food Initiative. They will have background knowledge on projects that you are working on and will be able to support your project. They may also assist in connecting you to key stakeholders.
- Don't be shy for applying for funding if it will support your imitative. Guelph's application for a food processing room in the TD Friends of the Environment grant helped them make their dream a reality.

- Try to find a “local food champion” in your university administration or within the local community. These individuals can be a great resource in helping further your cause at a higher level.

UBC Farm, located on UBC’s South Campus, is managed by the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems and offers learning and research opportunities for community members and university staff and students. UBC Food Services tries to use as many fruits and vegetables grown at the farm as possible.



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA:

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has created and implemented a sustainable campus food guide. This was spearheaded by the UBC Food System Project, which is a collaborative initiative that works to connect partners, such as academics and the university’s administration, who are working on improving sustainability and increasing the amount of food systems on UBC’s campus. Aiming to achieve the efforts of the project, the guide is a valuable source to those looking to advance their own campus’ food systems.

Adding to this outstanding network of individuals working towards improving UBC’s local food status, the University also has a faculty and student driven farm. This unique feature doubles as a learning tool while also providing food for the campus.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Scan what is already available on your campus. Do you have a group or faculty that focuses on local food or sustainability on campus? If so, contact them and express your interest in increasing the availability of local food at your school. If your campus does not have any of these resources, perhaps it is time to start an initiative!
- Having an organized set of students interested and passionate on the issue is an invaluable source. If there is a lack of a voice on your campus, try and locate advocates through different departments or uses of your school’s social media.
- Focus your target. Have a well-defined problem that you are addressing and ensure that your scope is not too large. This will increase the likelihood of a successful project.

- Have clear measurements and a clear way of reporting and defining measurements. This will be a critical asset whenever applying for funding or asking for approval by the school for access to land and/or funds.
- Network with school Chefs, local growers, and community members. They can help you gain connections and vouch for your cause.

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Food systems on this campus are incredibly unique in the sense that they are entirely self-operated. This was caused by their geographical isolation from being on an island. However, as transportation has improved they still remain completely franchise free from corporate food service providers. This freedom has put a “natural focus on local purchasing” and ensures that all the money that is generated stays on campus. Typically, franchise take 10-15% of royalty-type fees from the Universities in which they operate. The savings go towards “refreshing [their] facilities, buying new equipment and building more outlets as the campus expands.” Reducing or getting rid of franchises presents the opportunity for decisions to be made with less interference from outside stakeholders and allows the school to be able to adapt quickly to any changes in food systems.

UVic has 32 food supply agreements, 27 of these agreements are with companies based on Vancouver Island, and the remainder is located on the Lower Mainland. The implementation of this supply chain has been a slow process that has been introduced over 20 years. Like many other campuses, they joined a regional organization that helped them connect and create relationships with local farmers. UVic uses the Island Chef’s Collaborative that enabled them to create a distribution network, which brings agricultural products directly to campus.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Some might argue that having well-known franchises on campus would draw in more business due to the power of brand names. However, phasing out franchises and incorporating more local options not only stimulates local economies but it also reduces the amount of fees your school needs to pay out to large corporations. This in turn translates into more money kept within the school and potentially more funding for future projects!
- If you are lobbying the university administration on behalf of your local food project, attempt to have solid numbers to back up your arguments. Clearly outline the financial costs as well as the savings your school will gain by moving to a local food model
- Try to get existing suppliers on board the university’s main produce supplier for delivering local farmers produce to saving them on transportation costs. Alternatively, farmers could take their produce to the produce distributor to include in their delivery to the campus. Include these relationships into the supply agreement.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

The University of Waterloo hosts the UM Farm Market which allows students access to seasonal, locally produced honey, baked goods and produce throughout the school year. Furthering the schools dedication to local food, with all food procurement, the University has made a commitment to buying local food whenever possible.

A group of students started a student-driven on-campus food garden throughout spring and fall. Since its inception, the garden has facilitated food production and allowed students to gain gardening expertise. Following the model of the University of Calgary Community Garden, this project shares its bounty with the volunteers and with an on-campus vegetarian and vegan meal service called, Food Not Bombs.

SUGGESTIONS:

- See if there are any like-minded food services on campus that you can build a relationship with to increase the demand for on-campus food production.
- Go beyond this guide and see what other campuses are doing. Get in touch with your university's sisters schools to see what kind of food movements they are participating in.

VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

Vancouver Island University's food services are prepared by culinary students, and orders their produce from food distributors, the campus herb garden, the Campus Peace Garden, and the aquaponics greenhouse.

The VIU Culinary Arts Institute introduced gardening and harvesting into the curriculum, which also contributed to garden maintenance. VIU has two aquaponics greenhouses, a food production system that uses water rich in fish to cultivate plants: one for research and another for food production sold to campus cafeterias. Through on-campus food production, VIU saved money on produce purchases as well as benefit the culinary and aquaponics program, since the profits are directed to them. Students from Recreational and Tourism classes also benefit from the greenhouses, as they study the relationship between aquaponics and the culinary studies. Also, to ensure the university follows health and safety standards, the school has set up a "Food Safety Plan" which describes what processes the produce harvested from the gardens and greenhouse undertakes to meet the standards of health authorities.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Create relationships with individuals and groups from your university, such as faculty members and clubs, and make local food initiatives applicable to the school curriculum.



On Campus Food Production: Benefits, Barriers and Solutions

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY WHO WANT TO PRODUCE FOOD ON CAMPUS

PURPOSE

This guide aims to empower students, staff, faculty and administration at university and college campuses across Canada to engage in the production of food on-campus. On-campus production of food includes gardens, greenhouses, aquaponics facilities, window farms and much more.

This guide begins with a brief overview of some benefits of on-campus food production and advice on how to get started. This guide then identifies a number of key barriers students, staff, faculty and administrators may face in the creation and continuation of on-campus food production and distribution mechanisms. In response to these barriers this guide outlines a number of practical solutions the campus community should consider.

BENEFITS OF ON-CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION

- Fosters community around environmental, ecological, and food security issues and awareness.
- Promotes local, agro-ecological food production by producing food in a sustainable manner, without the use of pesticides, chemicals, or genetically modified plants.
- Provides students, faculty and staff an opportunity to apply classroom knowledge, and integrate food production experience into academic research and course activity.
- Increases biodiversity and sustainability, such as providing habitat and food for beneficial organisms (such as butterflies, bees and birds, etc.).
- Provides opportunity to address food access by providing local, fresh foods to community members, campus food banks and food

services.

BARRIERS TO ON-CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION (AND SOLUTIONS)

AWARENESS BARRIERS

Spreading awareness about the benefits of on-campus food production is essential in order to build interest in such a project on your campus. Students and university faculty alike are generally busy people which can make spreading awareness about on-campus food production difficult. Capturing the attention of students whose minds are on that upcoming exam – or upcoming pub night – is not an easy task.

SOLUTIONS:

Educate your peers

With your network in place, the next step to spreading awareness about on-campus food production is educating students and faculty about the benefits of local food. This education can take place in a variety of ways: from low-key events like the screening of a documentary about food systems, to academic functions featuring a lecture or talk from an expert in the field, to more social and involved events like field trips to local farms. Collaborate with dedicated faculty and propose ways to integrate the garden into their teaching and coursework. Students at **McGill University** offers workshops, such as herb gardening, to generate student interest in their student-run ecological garden.

Collaborate with campus and community organizations

Organizations who are committed to raising awareness about food security and sustainability are often willing to support initiatives such as campus gardens. These organizations act as a source of information and guidance, as well as an opportunity to publicize the garden to the local community. One of **University of Alberta's** campus gardens was initiated by Sustain SU, the student sustainability service, in collaboration with Alberta Public Interest Research Group (APIRG) to promote local food production using organic techniques.

The Ryerson HomeGrown Community Gardens were started by nutrition graduate students, along with other students, faculty and staff, to promote local food on campus. This garden is located on Gould Street, across from the Student Campus Centre.



FINANCIAL BARRIERS

As with any project, the availability of funding will be in all-likelihood a barrier for you to begin on-campus food production. The good news is that there are a variety of options available to students and faculty who wish to engage in on-campus food production.

SOLUTIONS:

Seek a student levy from your Students Union or Sustainability Office

Seeking a levy on students in order to subsidize the costs associated with on-campus food production is a viable option for addressing financial barriers. This levy would ideally be implemented through your campus's student administrators and could be increased in time to match the growing costs of your successful on-campus food production. **Trent University** implemented a non-refundable levy to support the university's organic gardens infrastructure maintenance and summer employment for a garden coordinator. **Vancouver Island University's** "Campus Food Movement" is working to institutionalize and secure funding. They obtain their funding from the Vancouver Foundation, which is matched by the university's Provost Council, and is also funded by VIU's Sustainability Advisory Committee.

Create an on-campus food co-operative

Creating a co-op with low membership fees is another way to help financially support on-campus food production among students. You can get creative with the membership fee structure and in some instances substitute fee payment by members with volunteer hours. Undergraduate students at **Concordia University** pay 25 cents per course credit to automatically register themselves as a member of Le Frigo Vert, a non-profit, organic food co-operative which sells micro-greens grown in the campus greenhouse.

Apply for external funding

There are a number of external grants and funds available for students and faculty looking to embark on environmentally-focused endeavors on campus. Students at **Guelph University** have obtained funding for their on-campus food production through the "TD Friends of the Environment" grant. Another funding opportunity is the "Project Orange Thumb Grant" to help support community garden groups or civic organizations in U.S. or Canada.

Develop funding models

Develop funding models to maintain a consistent funding source for your campus garden. You can run small-fee workshops that are open to students and the community on topics that cover all aspects of gardening, local food systems and food security. Examples of such workshops include tips on gardening, permaculture design, seed saving, and composting. **York University** raises money for the infrastructure of their garden by selling seedlings, and **Acadia University** sells their produce to the community and food service barriers to generate revenue.

TURNOVER BARRIERS

Most students will spend between two-five years in college/university which will inevitably create issues regarding high turnover for your on-campus garden. Having primary coordinators leave your garden at such a rapid pace can make even the most mundane of administrative tasks more difficult than they need to be. Thus, ensuring the sustenance of such a program on your campus is the ideal.

SOLUTIONS:

Keep membership open

Recruitment of new members to your on-campus food production group should always be happening so to ensure that there are an adequate supply of students who know the processes involved in administering your garden once you graduate. Moreover, many campus gardens maintain a few spaces for community members and staff to share and pass on knowledge. At **Dalhousie University**, the Friends of the Garden was formed to help maintain campus gardens. Membership is free to 'Active Members' who volunteer 40 hours a year.

Seek an on-campus advisor

Seeking out an advisor among your college/university's faculty is another way to ensure longevity in your project. While students may come and go every few years, the status of on-campus staff is presumably more stable and consistent. Ideally, the advisor you select will be equally (if not more) interested in on-campus food production and will be able to act as a resource of knowledge and experience for new students.

Seek external advisors

Seek out an advisor from environmental/local food groups to ensure a degree of permanence in the administration of your on-campus garden. **McGill University** is in partnership with Santropol Roulant, a local non-profit organization, to maintain their "Edible Campus Garden", an urban garden that supplies fresh produce to the Montreal community. Most local environmental organizations would be happy share their knowledge of local food practices and formally partnering with them can ensure that the know-how of on-campus food production is not lost with every new induction of student administrators, especially when students will help by



McGill's Macdonald Student-run Ecological Gardens is a student-led initiative, supported by professors, local organic farmers and volunteers, that integrates agriculture into the university's food services, curriculum and internships.

SEASONAL BARRIERS

Unfortunately, the academic year typically runs during some of the coldest months in Canada which can make the task of growing on your garden difficult.

SOLUTIONS

Utilize indoor facilities

If your university has a greenhouse, inquire if they offer space for year-round indoor gardening. If no green house or indoor facilities are available, seeking the building of one is another option. **University of Northern British Columbia** is installing a [Dome-Greenhouse](#) for year-round production in a Northern Climate.

Field to freezer

Guelph University has adopted a '[field to freezer](#)' approach to growing and storing on-campus food. Conduct the majority of your on-campus production during the warmer spring and summer months and store it in freezers for distribution during the academic year.

Grow what's in season

The local climate of where your on-campus farm is located will largely dictate what you can grow during the academic year. Be sure to dedicate your on-campus food production during the academic year to in-season foods. In order to provide well-rounded food options for your campus' menus, seek to incorporate sustainable foods from the local community.

3-STEP CAMPUS FOOD PRODUCTION GUIDE

In order to begin effective on-campus food production, a number of key actions need to take place:

1. VISIONS AND GOALS

- Investigate if your university/college has a local food or sustainability strategy or policy. If there is none, this is an opportunity to create a local food culture by familiarizing yourself with your campus' planning, facilities and sustainability offices. Find out your University or College's future goals and determine how a campus garden can help promote this vision.
- Draft a proposal stating the overview and vision of the project. Be sure to identify: the benefits of a campus garden, a plan for the management of the garden, a tentative budget, potential sites and layouts for the garden, and a contact list of students, faculty and staff dedicated to the garden.

A student at Vancouver Island University found that her campus has a Mission and Vision Statement, Adding Value to your community Report, Report to Community, Campus Plan Process, Master Plan, Regional Action Plan, Sustainability Plan and many more plans that support good food work on campus.

2. SUPPORT AND PERMISSION

The Sierra Youth Coalition put together a proposal with the University of Ottawa to support an on-campus Community Garden. [Here](#) are some excerpts from the proposal.

- Engage the support of the campus community (operations department, food services, biology department, student government associations, other food groups on campus).
 - Contact local farmers, gardeners, and organizations for advice on gardening. Collaborate with groups with similar initiatives, such as horticultural, forestry or architecture groups, to support garden development.
 - Explore funding options from within the university (such as student unions, faculties and departments, and sustainability funds) as well as from fundraising events, environmental organizations, community foundations and corporate sponsorships.
- Determine what you intend to do with your food once it is produced.

3. LOGISTICS AND MAINTENANCE

- Consult your local library to find gardening book. For example “[The Market Gardener](#)” by Jean-Martin Fortier is a comprehensive book.
- Maintain a schedule of when to plant seeds, transplant seedlings, water, weed, and harvest crops.
- Be familiar with the planting schedule of your region (i.e. growing seasons).
- Determine what tools and materials you will need, and find space to store them (i.e. a shed near the garden, access to greenhouse, maintenance department).
- Work with volunteers, student associations and campus departments to establish methods to ensure year-round maintenance of the garden.