

Learning From the Ground Up

Experiential Learning in Food Systems Across University of California Campuses

Kate Kaplan | UC Berkeley | Committee on Experiential Learning | UC Global Food Initiative

experiential learning
adjective | ex · per · i · en · tial - lear · ning
 the process of learning by doing and reflecting¹

Abstract

Experiential learning is **vital to strong curriculum**. These programs give students **tangible skills and experiences** that will prepare them for a career in their field of study. Such programs are offered across all ten University of California (UC) campuses, many with a **focus on food systems education**. However, **some universities have a deficit of hands-on opportunities** related to food systems, while others boast many programs from gardening experience to food-centered business projects.



Experiential Learning Programs Prepare Students for Careers

Providing access to experiential learning opportunities allows students to **receive hands-on skills** that will better prepare them for careers in food systems. Consequently, campuses without viable options **put their students at a disadvantage** for obtaining such skills. In order to successfully solve the biggest issues facing our food system today, **graduates must be better prepared** to tackle the challenges that exist outside of lecture halls.

Creation of a Living Document

Nearly 150 programs and over 200 academic courses have been identified that support experiential learning in food systems education across all 10 UC campuses. These data sets have been catalogued to create a **“living” document**. The database allows students and faculty to **easily search** opportunities and **facilitate connections** between programs and campuses.

Additionally, a **report** has been created on the **current state of experiential learning** in the UC system. The report categorizes opportunities by **program types** (Co-Curricular, Student Group, etc.) and **content areas** (Farm or Garden, Food Access, etc.).



Figure 1. Number of Programs and Academic Courses is Variable by Campus.

UC Davis and UC Berkeley support the highest number of both programs and courses, while UC Merced and UC Riverside offer a small selection.

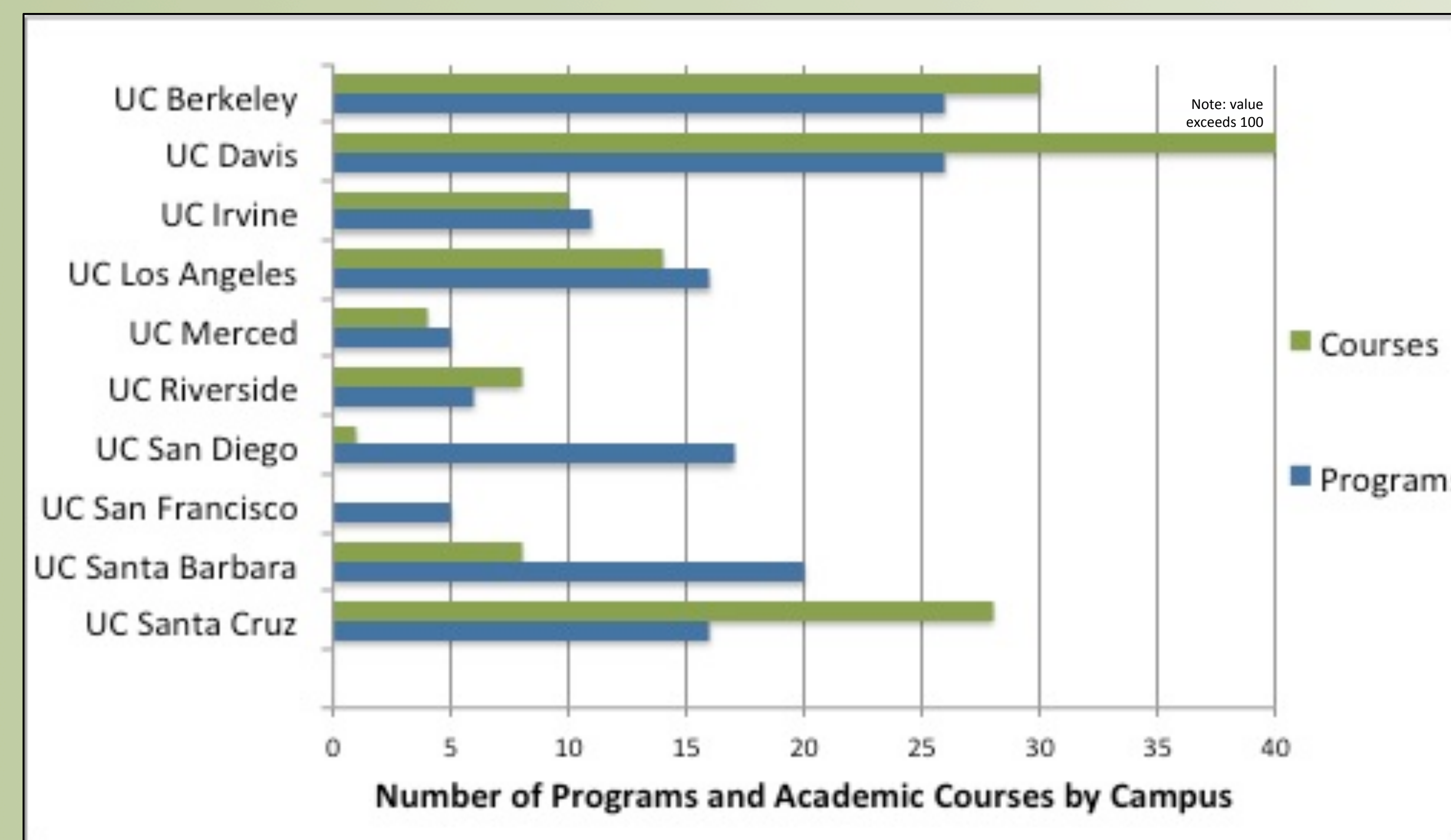
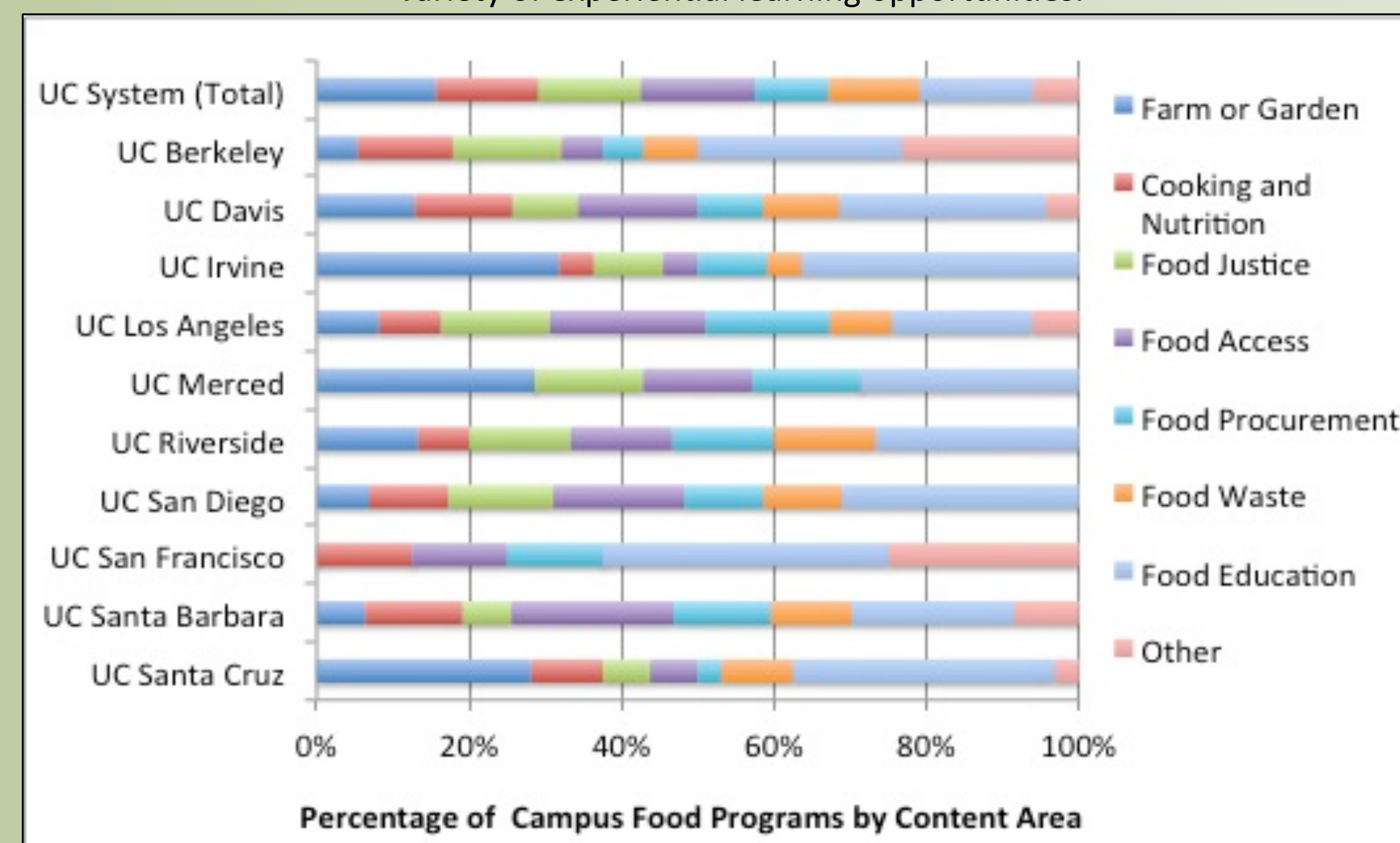


Figure 2. Variety of Programs by Content Area is Broad At Most Campuses

It is suggested that each campus identify its weakest content area and allocate resources accordingly to increase diversity of program opportunities. The UC System as a whole offers a fairly balanced variety of experiential learning opportunities.



Using Successful Programs as Models for Experiential Learning

Representatives from each identified program has received a survey regarding program logistics and successes. Using information from their responses, the following programs have been chosen as models to use for further expansion of experiential learning programs across all content areas.

- Berkeley Student Food Collective, Berkeley
- Student Organic Gardening Association, Berkeley
- Sustainability Education Internship, Davis
- Sustainable Living and Learning Communities, Davis
- Anthill Village Community Garden, Irvine
- DIG: The Campus Garden Coalition, Los Angeles
- Swipe Out Hunger, Los Angeles
- Merced Campus Garden, Merced
- Urban Garden Seminar, Riverside
- Taste Buds, San Diego
- Sustainable Food Working Group, San Francisco
- Associated Students Food Bank, Santa Barbara
- Department of Public Worms, Santa Barbara
- Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, Santa Cruz
- Program in Community and Agroecology, Santa Cruz



Experiential Learning Committee: Continuing Projects

In addition to a living document and report, the Committee on Experiential Learning will be completing two projects in the 2015-2016 school year:

- I. Development of a series of **student-created videos** to highlight **successes in experiential learning programs** in the UC system. Funding and guidance is given for the creation of **three videos** per campus.
- II. Development of **two experiential learning-focused, regional workshops and a national conference**. The events will encourage dialogue around experiential learning among students, staff, faculty and administrators from the UC system and the larger educational community.