

# **K-12 Dining Subcommittee Report**

## **UC Global Food Initiative**

### **Past & Future Lessons Learned from K-12 Schools**

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## Introduction

The UC Global Food Initiative (GFI) Best Practices Subcommittee called 'Working with Local School Districts to Develop Healthy and Sustainable Dining Options for K-12 Students' (K-12 Dining) consists of key stakeholders and subject matter experts including UC faculty and staff, K-12 partners, and nonprofit community organizations. The subcommittee aims to expand system-wide existing best practices from different UC locations through the development of an implementation toolkit that, once successfully deployed at other UC locations, could be exported to non-UC locations across the state and country.

In developing this toolkit, the subcommittee also reflected on lessons the University has learned from K-12 schools. We asked, "How has how our exposure to and work with local school districts inspired progress around healthy, sustainable food at the UC?" This report documents a sample of past and future lessons learned within the key GFI focus areas of curriculum, operations, policy, research, and service.

## Curriculum

### **Inspiring Engagement in Science and Food, Amy Rowat**

In her work developing science curriculum for continuation high school students at John R. Wooden High School, Dr. Amy Rowat, Professor of Integrative Biology & Physiology, has also been inspired to change the way UCLA students connect with science.



Her Science and Food Program at UCLA aims to promote knowledge of science through food, and food through science. Now, in generating lessons for ethnically diverse high schools students, she sees opportunities to further engage students at UCLA by connecting with their personal interests and experiences: "I want to have the high school students do independent projects where they choose a food and explore the underlying science. I think this could be especially interesting, since I imagine students could choose a food that is familiar to them (grandma's pickles, tortillas, etc.)." Rowat plans to incorporate these topics into her UCLA curriculum, where they could possibly engage a diverse population of students in UCLA classrooms.

In addition, she hopes that the farm-centered curriculum she is developing for John Wooden can also inspire more farm-focus in UCLA curriculum as well.

*Learn more about Science and Food: <http://www.scienceandfood.org>*

### **Partners & Co-Educators, Kathy O'Byrne**

As Director of the UCLA Center for Community Learning, Dr. Kathy O'Byrne supports civic engagement for UCLA undergraduates and faculty through the integration of teaching, research, and service alongside community partners. In summer of 2015, the Center launched the inaugural course on Food Justice in which students learned about food policy, science, public health, and environmental issues, and worked 120 hours at food justice-oriented sites across the Los Angeles.

"Our K-12 partners, and all our non-profit partners, function in the role of co-educator," says Dr. O'Byrne. "UCLA students meet teachers and students who tell them (and allow them to experience) what public education in Los Angeles is like, the challenges students face, diversity issues related to academic standards and achievement, and the occasional inequity in resources available to various parts of Los Angeles."

Working in the community, students talk to people who are different from themselves, and students often develop an appreciation for their own privilege, empathy, and an understanding of the complex systemic issues that neighborhoods face. In turn, this influences student academic success, and often inspires students to pursue community-oriented internships and careers.

"Overall," Dr. O'Byrne says, "K-12 schools share details of their work to help students reach their full potential, realizing John Dewey's theory of education's role as an important part of a thriving democracy and a civil society."

*Learn more about the Food Justice Course:*

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBBCbOr9sf0&feature=youtu.be>*

### **Supporting Student Advocacy, Andy Rice**

Dr. Andy Rice, the ASPIRE Fellow in Socially Engaged Media in Undergraduate Education Initiatives at UCLA, is teaching documentary production techniques focused on food systems in a freshman course titled "Food: A Lens on Environment and

Sustainability." The course includes sessions on K-12 food procurement, distribution, consumption, and advocacy, and opportunities for students to make short films about school food and gardening in schools.

Along with Dr. Wendy Slusser, he also led an independent study course for upperclassmen to work with the Urban School Food Alliance on making short, whiteboard animations to communicate national policy platforms to improve K-12 school food and nutrition education.



Exposure to and collaborations with K-12 partners have enriched the UCLA curriculum and inspired a number of students to go on to work in food advocacy or policy related fields.

*Watch the whiteboard animations:*

<http://www.urbanschoolfoodalliance.org/leveling-the-eating-field-cnrr/>

## Operations

### **Confidence to go Commercial Soda-Free, Wendy Slusser**



Bruin Plate, UCLA's holistic undergraduate dining experience, celebrated its grand opening in fall 2013. Prior to opening, Bruin Plate was in planning stages for over two years. During menu development over the 2012-2013 school year, UCLA's Healthy Campus Initiative was working on initiatives to feature healthier beverages more widely on campus utilizing the "choice architecture" concept. At this same time, UCLA's former Director of Dining Services, Daryl Ansel, and his colleagues, Dolores Hernandez, RD and Joanne McGill, visited an LAUSD high school and learned how students graduating from LAUSD in 2013 and other K-12 schools across California had never had commercial soda served in their campus cafeterias or sold in their vending machines.

This visit to the high school and the leadership demonstrated by K-12 schools helped give UCLA's team the conviction and confidence that UCLA students would not miss commercial soda. So, Dining moved forward with making Bruin Plate commercial soda-

free, and indeed the popularity of Bruin Plate surpassed expectations. Students wait over an hour to eat dinner at Bruin Plate, and Dining has received zero complaints from students about the lack of soda. Over several months of conducting exit surveys, Dining was surprised to find that not one student said they would not go to Bruin Plate because there was no commercial soda.

In addition, preliminary data from another dining hall at UCLA suggests that less than a quarter of students choose to drink commercial soda when it is available, with over half choosing water as their preferred beverage.

Based on this lesson learned, Daryl Ansel encouraged other universities to visit local school districts to build a better understanding of where students are coming from and to provide a stronger continuum of service.

Learn more about Bruin Plate: <http://bruinplate.hhsmarketing.org>

## **Healthy Vending**

As universities move forward with efforts to increase healthy vending on campus, success stories from K-12 schools provide crucial support for financial feasibility. In particular, research reports\* that implementing nutrition standards for competitive food (e.g. foods sold via vending machines, student stores, fundraisers, etc.) resulted in increases or no change in revenue.

K-12 leadership on improving the nutritional quality of competitive foods, and studies on the feasibility of these efforts, helps to inspire universities to provide healthier vending options for university students, staff, and faculty.

\*Link to CDC report: [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/pdf/financial\\_implications.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/pdf/financial_implications.pdf)

## **Multi-Pronged Approaches to Education, Kate McDevitt**

Kate McDevitt is passionate about improving the lives of underserved children in San Diego through educating kids and teachers about the benefits of good nutrition and the importance of physical activity in the prevention of chronic disease. As Senior Manager of School Wellness Programs in the department of pediatrics at the UC San Diego School of Medicine, McDevitt and her team have reached more than 40,000 San Diego County children by providing local schools and teachers with a blueprint to implement health and wellness topics in class curriculums.

Beyond the classroom, one of her team's "passion projects" is Harvest of the Month, a program of the California Department of Public Health designed to open communication between chefs, farmers, parents and community leaders to discover local seasonal fruits and vegetables that can be served in school salad bars, as well as to identify business partnerships with local farms and produce distributors.



"I want nothing more than to help educators inspire their students to adopt healthy lifestyles through good nutrition and physical activity," says McDevitt.

McDevitt's collaborative and multi-pronged approach to education in K-12 schools can inspire UC educators and food service staff to think outside the classroom and integrate holistic wellness lessons across dining halls and spaces on campus.

*Learn more about UC San Diego Center for Community Health's Harvest of the Month efforts: <http://ucsdcommunityhealth.org/news/harvest-of-the-month-watch-this-new-video/>*

## **Policy**

### **Farm to School, Gail Feenstra**



Gail Feenstra, Deputy Director at the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program (SAREP), recently led two successful farm to school tours in K-12 school districts, Riverside Unified and Elk Grove/Sacramento City. The goal of the tours was to provide an opportunity for policy- and decision-makers to experience the benefits of the farm to school program firsthand. Participants learned about the positive impact of local procurement on farmers and food service staff; watched students build their lunch plates with local fruits and vegetables from the salad bar; and visited school gardens where students planted orchards and engaged with tour participants about what they were learning in the garden.

The farm to school program in K-12 schools serves as inspiration for universities on

numerous levels. For example, UCs can enhance the student dining experience on campus by increasing local produce procurement and featuring engaging and interactive educational content about sustainable food procurement.

In addition, hosting tours of successful programs for decision-makers has also proven efficacious in the K-12 setting. Thus, universities should consider similar tours for university dining and other staff who may be inspired to expand local food procurement and education.

Learn more about the farm to school program: <http://www.farmtoschool.org>

### **Policies to Promote Food Recovery, Tyler Watson**



Food safety concerns have been a common barrier to food recovery efforts across institutions. However, efforts by K-12 schools helped lay the groundwork for the expansion of excess food donation at universities and beyond.

In particular, Los Angeles Unified and Anaheim City School Districts offer well-documented policies and procedures to serve as guidelines for establishing food donation programs.

Access the resources: <http://www.wastenotoc.org/#!/for-schools/cevv>

Learn more about the college Food Recovery Network: <http://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org>

### **Power in Numbers, Tim Galarneau**

When it comes to effecting change in the food industry, there is definitely power in numbers. Tim Galarneau, Community-Engaged Education Coordinator at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, has worked with ten small and mid-size school districts located in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties to initiate collective buying of fruits and vegetables through a joint contract process.



UC Santa Cruz staff and student project interns researched and developed a model multi-district RFP and selection process for produce that was executed and is in implementation this fiscal year. Over the next year up to five additional districts may join the collective project process. In addition, staff advised the district on formal measures to establish the Central Coast Purchasing Cooperative, which serves as a structure for districts to work across procurement needs to increase cost savings and increase healthy food for all kids.

Another group called the Urban School Food Alliance, which includes the largest six K-12 school districts in the country, also created a formal partnership to leverage their \$3 billion in purchasing power. This has resulted in successes such as driving food companies to supply only antibiotic-free chicken to schools.

These K-12 examples serve as lessons for universities to form similar alliances by region or affiliation to improve the quality of food served on campus, while maintaining affordable costs.

*Learn more about the Urban School Food Alliance:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W6iqksr3XI&feature=youtu.be&list=PLYpXuW3qDjBjEVy9VaZVdj3kzr8GGOBho>

## **Research**

### **Inspiration in the Field, Wendy Slusser**

“Working in K-12 schools often inspires research questions which fuels research studies at the University of California,” says Dr. Wendy Slusser, Associate Vice Provost of the UCLA Healthy Campus Initiative and HS Clinical Professor of Medicine and Public Health.



Dr. Slusser’s work promoting healthy eating, physical activity, and overall wellness for children and families in the Los Angeles Unified School District inspired her study on school salad bars as well as the development of the Fit for Health Program.

*Learn more about Fit for Health: <http://fitprogram.ucla.edu>*

*Find the salad bar study: Slusser, Wendelin M., et al. "A school salad bar increases frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption among children living in low-income households." Public health nutrition 10.12 (2007): 1490-1496.*

## Service

### **Care Farming in the Community, Jesse Flores**



As part of his service learning courses in the civic engagement minor at UCLA, undergraduate Jesse Flores became involved with the Kindred Spirits Care Farm at John R. Wooden High School (JRWHHS).

“Through my work at Kindred Spirits, I have been able to see my care farming bring forth a new form of schooling that highlighted JRWHHS students' strengths, rather than weaknesses,” says Jesse.

“Although the continuation high school students may not have been seen as successful in their old schools, at JRWHHS and with the help of Kindred Spirits, each

individual had an important role. Everyone helped care for the farm animals and maintain the garden, bringing to many of the students a sense of purpose and satisfaction.”

Noticing the health benefits that care farming provided to JRWHHS students helped Jesse realize that growing food could prove beneficial for other vulnerable groups. As a result, he has been inspired to connect care farming to his UCLA community. Jesse now leads outreach to students as potential volunteers and research on care farming as a legitimate form of mental health service for college students.

*Learn more about Kindred Spirits Care Farm: <http://www.kindredspiritscarefarm.org>*