

Campus Food Systems Initiatives Study Final Report

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Research Methodology	2
Recruitment Source.....	2
Recruitment Method.....	3
Methodological Revisions.....	3
Recommendations	4
Ethical Considerations.....	4
Research Design.....	5
Case Studies	6
Garden Initiatives.....	6
Ryerson University.....	6
University of Toronto.....	7
Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo Campus).....	8
Farmers' Market Initiatives.....	9
Simon Fraser University.....	9
McGill University.....	10
University of Northern British Columbia.....	11
Case Study Summary	12
Lessons Learned	13
Appendix A - Interview Questions	17
Appendix B - Recruitment Email	20
Appendix C – Consent Form	21
Appendix D - Information Sheet	24
Appendix E – Proposed Recruitment Changes	26

Introduction

This report provides an overview and analysis of the *Campus Food Systems Initiatives Study*, led jointly by Meal Exchange and Ryerson University as part of the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) project.

The purpose of this study was to discover what the links are between getting student led campus food systems initiatives started, how to maintain them, and how community partnerships participate during this process. The study's research objective was to provide an analysis of alternative food systems projects on six Canadian university campuses in order to highlight successful project elements and identify common project challenges.

Data was collected through qualitative interviews with students directly involved in campus food systems initiatives, specifically, food gardens or farmers' markets. Qualitative interviews were designed to elicit responses from project leaders that would draw out the overall project narrative, highlight important themes, identify project enablers and obstacles, and reveal the role of on-campus and off-campus partnerships.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project evolved considerably over time. Most of our methodological attention concerned the recruitment of participants, the ethical considerations involved in this recruitment, and their subsequent participation in the study. Initially we set out to gather a multi-stakeholder perspective on campus food systems initiatives by interviewing students, faculty, and administrators actively or previously involved with campus initiatives. We asked potential participants for 30-45 minutes of their time for a phone interview (Interview questions are outlined in Appendix A). Taped interviews were subsequently reviewed for analysis. A closer review of original project methodology and amended methodology is outlined below.

Recruitment Source

Six universities were selected for participation in this project. In order to satisfy our goal of including three food garden initiatives and three farmers' market initiatives, students were selected based on their pre-existing relationship with Meal Exchange, and on the type of campus food system initiatives they were involved with. The three universities with food garden initiatives included in the study were: Ryerson University, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Toronto. The three universities with farmer's market initiatives were: McGill University, the University of Northern British Columbia, and Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo campus).

Recruitment Method

Students were our initial recruitment point of contact. Caitlin Colson (of Meal Exchange) contacted students by email (Appendix B). If students responded to this email and agreed

to participate they were sent a consent form to review prior to their interview (Appendix C). Louisa Hawkins (Ryerson University) scheduled interviews with each participant and then conducted an interview at their convenience.

Relying on a snowball sampling method, we asked student participants to pass on a study information sheet (which was emailed to them following their decision to participate) to faculty and administrators involved in their campus initiative. This information sheet outlined the project and its overall goals, provided potential participants with sample interview questions, and included researcher contact information (Appendix D).

Methodological Revisions

Following our first five interviews (with student project leaders from Ryerson University, Simon Fraser University, the University of Toronto, McGill University, and the University of Northern British Columbia) and a long period of time (almost 2 months) without securing any more participants, we decided to draft a protocol resubmission for Ryerson's Research Ethics Board (REB). This document outlined proposed recruitment changes that would address some of the challenges we were experiencing in recruiting participants (especially faculty and administrators) for the study (Appendix E). This resubmission also addressed the fact that in order to satisfy our original goal of including six different campus initiatives we needed to recruit from one more university.

Our initial project proposal we identified the University of Alberta as a primary recruitment source and the University of British Columbia as an alternative recruitment source. Our attempts to recruit a student project leader from the University of Alberta were unsuccessful, as were our subsequent attempts to recruit a student project leader from the University of British Columbia. Following REB approval of our proposed amendments, using our updated recruitment method, we were able to interview a student project leader from Vancouver Island University (one of three additionally selected campuses). We were also able to interview another student from the University of Toronto and another student from the University of Northern British Columbia.

In order to expand our potential sample pool (having acknowledged that the snowball sampling, involving the passing on of our study information sheet, was not allowing us to recruit faculty or administrators), we began to search for publicly available contact information (as permitted by the REB following our protocol resubmission). Finding publicly accessible contact information for students, faculty, and administrators proved to be more challenging than initially expected because many campus initiative websites provide only a collective project email contact rather than individual contact email addresses. Recruiting faculty and administrators was challenging because email requests either went unanswered or, as in one case, a faculty member expressed interest in participating in an interview, but was unable to spare the necessary time required.

Despite our methodological revisions, we were not able to meet our goal of interviewing a minimum of two students, one faculty member, and one administrator from each university (25-30 people). The eight student project leaders who were interviewed for this

study were able to provide us with valuable insight into what it takes to implement and operate a food garden or farmers' market on campus. Each student was able to outline both the successes and challenges of their experience as a project leader of a campus food system initiative. Their stories may now be passed on to those who would like to start similar projects at their own university.

Recommendations

An overall reflection on methodology used to date informs the following recommendations. In order to continue this project and achieve the original objective of a multi-stakeholder perspective on campus food systems initiatives, the following should be addressed:

1. Ethical Considerations

In designing a project that would meet Ryerson's Research Ethics Board's approval, we were very careful in our initial project proposal to avoid potential ethical boundaries that could have been encountered during recruitment and interviewing. Our protocol resubmission was approved by the Board very quickly and our methodological amendments were helpful in moving our research forward. We recognize now that we limited ourselves in our initial proposal in our attempt to secure REB approval. For example, instead of listing our six preferred universities to recruit from with only one alternative, we could have listed more alternative universities. This would have allowed us to move on more quickly from sending so many unanswered emails to the universities from which we were unable to recruit.

If someone were to restart or even continue this project, it may be more constructive to **meet with the Chair or the REB coordinator** to discuss the project and any possible limitations of recruitment. This would give researchers a clear understanding of the institutional and ethical boundaries of conducting research affiliated with Ryerson University, or any other institution's Ethics Board. One ethical question we could have asked is whether we could accept email contacts of those involved in campus initiatives from the student project leaders we interviewed. Some interviewees offered to provide us with this information in order to help us with recruitment, but we refused these offers due to the ethical commitments set forward in our project protocol.

2. Research Design

Recruitment **timing** is something we identified as being extremely important. Much of our recruitment was conducted during the winter semester exam period and then during growing and market season. Since we were recruiting students as a first point of contact, and asking them to help us recruit faculty and administrators, the timing of this recruitment and request should be re-evaluated. Contacting students at the beginning of a semester, when they were not facing the pressures of writing final papers and studying

for exams, may mean they would be more inclined to respond to our request and be more willing to volunteer their time to be interviewed.

In reflecting on methodology and the overall design of project research, we should consider what it means to participate in the research. As previously noted, timing may have played a part in our recruitment challenges, but perhaps the **time commitment** required of participants influenced recruitment success. Our recruitment email asked participants for 30-45 minutes of their time for a phone interview. This may have been intimidating and since some interviews only took 22 minutes (they ranged from 22 minutes to 46 minutes depending on how much detail interviewees wanted to go into), this time estimation could be amended for future recruitment. During the interviews, we found that the planned probing questions were not required because participants were so passionate about describing and talking at length about their campus initiatives.

Participant **compensation** may also be something in the design of the project that could also be addressed. We did not offer any compensation due to an extremely limited budget. Although there may be budgetary considerations prohibiting this suggestion, it should be considered. A gift card, or perhaps a donation to their campus initiative, would be an appropriate way to compensate/thank participants. This compensation would not be an overwhelming incentive to participate, but would show our appreciation for their time. We acknowledge that the practicalities of providing, documenting, and confirming compensation to participants in a telephone interview may make it difficult to provide these small incentives, but it is something to consider.

Initially we limited our recruitment population to those with whom Meal Exchange had existing or previous connections to campus food projects. This defined **potential sample size** to some degree and perhaps constrained the recruitment process. In our protocol resubmission to the REB we expanded our sample pool to include any person involved in the campus initiative with publically accessible contact information. In order to search for this information we were mostly reliant on interviewees offering names of those they worked with. Moving forward, it would be helpful to incorporate a question in the interview schedule that asked directly for names of other project stakeholders.

The use of **snowball sampling** (using the study information sheet) to recruit faculty and administrators was unsuccessful. Moving forward with this project it is necessary to interview non-student project stakeholders. Instead of asking student project leaders to recruit faculty and administrators affiliated with their campus initiative, these stakeholders should be contacted by researchers directly. This takes us back to the challenge of gaining access to contact information that is not publically accessible, but may be offered to us by student project leaders. Again, this is an issue that would need to be discussed with an Ethics Board representative.

Case Studies

In the spring and summer of 2013 eight interviews were conducted with student project leaders from six different campus food system initiatives across Canada. The project narratives shared by these students are summarized below.

Garden Initiatives

Ryerson University

The focus of *Ryerson's HomeGrown Community Garden* is on growing fresh produce and on knowledge sharing. This project started in 2011 with a proposal for an edible container garden on a main street (partially closed to traffic), which runs through campus. The initiative now has eight garden sites on campus. Their focus is on creating a complete food systems cycle on campus, from growing food, to bringing community together for food sharing, rain collection and seed saving, and bringing food waste back to the gardens through composting.

During the initial stages of the project proposal, student leaders had to confront concerns that growing food would not be aesthetically pleasing and that people would steal produce from the gardens. Over time project leaders learned to address these concerns and found it helpful to have examples of successful garden projects (such as the University of Toronto's Sky Garden) already implemented at other universities. Ryerson architecture students were involved in designing plans for the garden, which helped to accentuate the potential beauty of food growing and supportive structures.

This garden initiative is strongly supported by faculty and administration, and Ryerson's President has also shown his support for the project. This has opened new funding opportunities for the initiative and given it more credibility. Collaboration with other campus organizations is prioritized by this initiative. Project volunteers collaborate with Ryerson's Early Learning Centre to maintain a children's garden where children can learn about growing food. The garden also donates one third of all garden produce to the Community Food Room on campus.

Advertising to raise awareness of the garden has contributed to its growing success and sustainability. Donations to the garden of plants and soil have come from community members, such as university staff and parents from the Early Learning Center. Incorporating the garden into experiential learning programs is something that project leaders believe would increase student involvement in the initiative and promote its existence to a wider audience of students, guaranteeing participation every year.

Having an evaluation period that involves open communication with community partners has helped the success of Ryerson's garden. Meeting the needs of community partners has ensured a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship. Constant outreach to students helps combat the naturally occurring challenge of student turnover. Providing volunteers with different levels of participation engagement in the garden allows for

flexibility and a low-pressure environment for involvement. Securing funding means that staff can be hired to manage the garden, but paying staff takes up a significant portion of the project budget, so student volunteers help to offset this potentially unaffordable cost.

Some current goals of this initiative are to have a student run restaurant that would incorporate garden produce, expanding the garden to the rooftop, building a bigger scale composting system, and fostering relationships with faculty who are conducting related research. Student project leaders recognize the fact that the garden helps to brand the university in a positive light. They have found that having a project that connects people through food fits in with the university's vision of promoting green space, and building community means being supported in a way that makes their initiative sustainable.

University of Toronto

The Sky Garden is located on the roof of U of T's engineering building. This campus garden initiative was started by three civil engineering graduate students who recognized an opportunity to use the empty space on the top of this building. As with initiatives at other universities, these students found they had to cut through plenty of bureaucratic barriers before seeing their project realized.

Key to this initiative's success has been its simplicity. Having a semi-hydroponic automatic irrigation system means that watering the garden is relatively low maintenance compared with other campus gardens that must rely heavily on volunteers to water their gardens.

Initiative leaders were able to secure corporate sponsorship, which allowed them to hire work-study students who were able to give the project the consistency it needed to be successful, and attract the positive attention it receives due to its unique design.

Recruiting volunteers for this garden is done largely through word of mouth advertising and ensuring a presence during campus events that are food related (such as seed exchanges), so that project leaders can educate people about their initiative. Summer tours are also offered for this purpose, as are workshops on urban agriculture. Workshops have educated people about building their own composter and how to undertake urban beekeeping. There are two beehives in the garden, and a composter (built by members of this initiative) in the quad to facilitate this type of instruction.

There is a vegan restaurant on campus that donates food waste to the garden and sometimes they are able to incorporate produce from the garden into their cooking. Eighty percent of food grown is donated to the campus food bank.

Student project leaders cite a long lasting and continuous effort from administrators and faculty involved in this initiative, and note that when someone has to leave the project this means that their replacement can find the support they need to carry out project goals.

Challenges with operating a campus garden from this rooftop have included having to be extremely conscious of weight restrictions, and being mindful of the dangers that heavy winds can cause if items in the garden are not properly secured. Initiative leaders wish to install a greenhouse next to the garden. The greenhouse they built for installation on the roof was turned down because it was not built in accordance to building regulations, so there has to be some reassessment towards this greenhouse goal in the future.

Although there is room for garden expansion on the roof, the weight restrictions have prevented project leaders from requesting more growing space. Student leaders see the growing popularity of urban agriculture and making the right kind of faculty connections as being two elements that will help their project expand in the future.

Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo Campus)

The Campus Community Garden was started by students who wanted to integrate their passion for gardening and alternative food systems on campus. Motivation for starting this project was to create a positive space that would benefit students. To this end students are free to help themselves to any ‘product’ from the garden. In addition to the main garden space, there are about twenty boxes in this garden for people to rent for their own personal growing at a cost of ten dollars per year.

As with the U of T’s project leaders, VIU’s project leaders want to install a garden greenhouse and see potential for collaboration with carpentry students, but have experienced resistance. This resistance has involved city bylaw restrictions regarding structure size and university policies regarding the initiative’s status as a club because club membership can never be guaranteed and, therefore, the future maintenance of the structure could not be guaranteed. Project leaders see the greenhouse as key to the garden’s success in year-round production of produce and as a showcase for sustainable agriculture.

Project volunteers have experienced significant time constraints in their dedication to their garden initiative. Project leaders believe that building a culture of food security on campus is as simple as getting more people involved, but have found participation (outside a core group of people already involved in sustainable agriculture projects) to be somewhat slow to develop. They are affected by the common issue of student turnover, but also by the fact that the project seems to be run by a few very passionate people who are also heavily involved in other food related clubs on campus. Student project leaders feel as though they need more help from ‘the top’, and more community support. They also believe that food security issues should be integrated into university curriculum.

Farmers' Market Initiatives

Simon Fraser University

The *SFU Pocket Farmers' Market* is run by the Coquitlam Farmers' Market, a nonprofit organization, which was started as a community economic development project by SFU students in 1996. Since this time it has moved off campus, but still has a presence on campus and a partner in Sustainable SFU, a campus student society. As a pocket market, farmers do not come to the market, but rather product is bought from them in advance and then sold at a weekly market. This means that farmers do not have to leave their farming and this initiative takes on the risk of owning product it must sell. Student project leaders see this as another way to support local farmers who face serious time constraints in their food production. Vendor profiles are available at the market so that consumers can familiarize themselves with the farmer's product. Project leaders have found that summer interns have helped a great deal in selling product at the market because they provide a consistent and reliable presence.

Another related project is the Harvest Box program, a bi-weekly initiative that produces food boxes of different varieties. There are three produce box types: one with local produce, one that is not necessarily local or spray free at a reduced cost, and a buy one get one free option that means a family in need in the local area will also receive a food box. The type of box purchased is dependent on the type of consumer. These boxes are purchased online and orders are sent to a project partner off campus who then delivers the boxes to the university. This program extends beyond student consumers and is available to the public as well, most notably in the downtown campus. The food bank on campus also purchases these food boxes for donation, as does the Women's Centre.

To make the market long lasting project leaders believe that communication with project partners is key, so they try to hold meetings every couple of weeks. They also see 'smart' marketing as integral to project success, as well as educating people on why the market is so important. Marketing strategies include weekly email 'blasts' announcing what product will be available at the market, having prominent signage, and tabling at campus events. The market relies on these strategies in promoting itself, especially since their campus location is not ideal, due to its position at the top of a hill and because in the summer there is a reduced number of students on campus. Project leaders have found that both the location and the timing of the market have huge implications for the success of the market, and that consistency is the most important part of initiative success. They also note that marketing initiatives are key to recruiting new volunteers.

Ensuring that project partners have the same goals is central to this initiative. Project leaders make sure they have a plan in place that involves clear commitments from partners. They also suggest that doing some consumer research would be helpful to any food initiative of this kind so that there is some informed knowledge behind the project goals

McGill University

The *McGill Farmers' Market* is an outdoor street market that takes place in the fall. It was started in 2008 and its focus is on creating community and promoting sustainability on campus. A growing interest in sustainability inspired the creation of this campus market. Project leaders enjoy lots of campus support from faculty (who represent consistent yearly support) and from other student groups. The head chef and staff of McGill Food and Dining (main campus food provider) has been heavily involved in supporting the project from its origin.

Market vendors have been able to develop a market base of customers who know where vendors will be every week and return to buy familiar product. Unfortunately the market only runs for two months so this vendor familiarity and consistency is hard to maintain. This is one of the reasons project leaders want to make the market a year-round event. This year there were six vendors who came to sell at the market. These vendors are key project partners because they must first have trust that the market will be profitable and sustainable. Only then will their product draw customers and make the initiative successful.

Market finances have been a concern for project leaders, as have problems with city permits for the market. Project leaders wish to ensure that they are not just running the initiative on various funding sources (such as grants and donations), but that they are making their own profit as well. There has been some difficulty in defining the market for the purpose of making sure it has an appropriate operating permit. The question of whether the market was for educational purposes or for profit had to be answered by project leaders. Following negotiations with administrative representatives, the market has been deemed to be an educational endeavor, so vendors and the university do not pay the taxes that would usually be associated with running a market on city property. This means certain limitations have been placed on the market restricting its size and content, so the number of vendors may not be increased and vendors may not sell artisanal goods.

Project leaders wish to make the market a defining feature of the street in the fall. They want to make it a place where people want to come and do their weekly groceries. They want to attract volunteers with a professionally run and organized initiative that becomes an integral part of campus life. General advertising about the market has helped attract volunteers and advertising the day of the market has helped increase market traffic. Teamwork and collaboration between the core market organizers and the vendors has helped keep the market going. Fostering a positive team dynamic means that team members will push each other to success and enjoy working with one another. This means being sure the right people are selected to be part of the project.

Student turnover and transition has for this initiative, like others, has been an ongoing challenge. Student project leaders made this challenge a priority and have created accessible documents (that are shared online) to be used by project coordinators. They are sure to update these documents and make notes of things as they arise. Being able to have a long-term vision of the project keeps it going and promotes consistency. This

consistency has an effect on the market's image, and on promotions and the overall success of the market.

University of Northern British Columbia

The *University Farmers' Market* runs from September to April and has anywhere from twelve to twenty vendors. Before starting the market project leaders worked with the Prince George Farmers' Market coordinator in order to learn how to start a market of their own. Student project leaders have also worked with faculty members and have found them to be instrumental in suggesting how to get students from a variety of departments involved in the market.

Building a customer base for the market and generating awareness has been challenging, especially since the market is located in a building that is not central to major university traffic. The market cannot be in competition with existing food services on campus so this has caused some limitations to the market. For example, they may only include one vendor who serves hot food. The market has yet to find what project leaders feel is a proper home as a permanent fixture on campus.

Establishing good relationships with university administration has been central to market operation, especially since there are logistical issues that need to be addressed. Being accessible to staff, to vendors, and to customers has meant making sure people know who project leaders are and how to contact them. Relationships are what has made this market successful to date, customers are what make the market sustainable and the relationships they have with vendors is extremely important. Inviting vendors to project meetings, and making these meetings open, is part of a goal of being inclusive and valuing the contributions of community partners because it gives everyone the opportunity to have a voice and a feeling of initiative ownership.

Strategic planning efforts have been necessary in the maintenance of this initiative. This has meant approaching the project overall as though it were a business. Project leaders want to make sure they are part of a new movement at UNBC that finds people thinking more about food and where it comes from. They want to change the student culture by sharing knowledge and teaching students how to use local food through workshops, social media, networking, and generally making and keeping connections with students. Increased awareness about food security on campus is not the only thing needed by this market, they need people to know where the market is, when it is, and why they should be supporting it.

Faculty members who volunteer at the market play an important role as consumers and as models for students. Faculty involvement in the market is part of the project leaders' goal of not just creating a market, but also creating and fostering community. Promoting the market is part of this community building. In order to advertise the weekly market, volunteers walk through campus in costumes and engage students in conversation about local food and about what the market has to offer.

Project leaders stress the importance of having a ‘rolling’ set of project documents and establish policies so that new leaders will know what to do when they take over. This means familiarity with the project budget and knowing how to contact key people within administration. They also acknowledge that student engagement is always a challenge and that interns and experiential learning students are good people to have working on the project because they ensure that the market puts out a consistent message. Overall, project leaders’ approach to this initiative is to acknowledge that campus culture will not change overnight, but as long as outreach is consistent and they are patient but persistent, things will change eventually.

Summary and Lessons Learned

These case studies allow us to review campus initiatives broadly at a relatively high level while analyzing some data more closely. Reviewing each initiative with the other initiatives in mind encourages a closer look at the similarities and differences between projects. This review also promotes reflection on what we learned from each student project leader.

The student project leaders we interviewed were each involved in a unique campus food systems initiative. They were involved either in the creation and operation of either a campus garden or market. Each initiative formed different kinds of partnerships and had different ways of approaching project challenges, but they shared many similar goals. We learned more from these passionate leaders than we can include in this report, but now we offer some anecdotal excerpts from interviews which reflect *some* of what interviewees have taught us about starting and running campus food systems initiatives in Canadian universities.

We identified many common themes across campus food system initiatives, many related to community involvement and support. Community building and knowledge sharing about local food sourcing and urban agriculture were among all the initiatives’ top priorities.

Communication with both community partners and team members was noted to be of great importance across campus initiatives. In these discussions of communication, there was also an emphasis on building and maintaining good relationships with a number of key partners in these initiatives. Project leaders frequently on relationships with community partners and team members and how these relationships influence each aspect of initiative development. Project leaders from farmers’ market initiatives all reported on their relationship with vendors, the farmers who supply their market product.

One project leader stressed the importance of good relationships and communication, between vendors and market customers as well as project staff, saying:

“It’s like a symbiotic relationship I guess, you know, the vendors are happy, the customers are happy, both demographics grow and then the market continues to be a really successful initiative” (WS310124 – 25:35)

Also reflecting on relationships with vendors, and the importance of making an effort to communicate, another project leader from a farmer’s market commented:

“Its important to have meetings in person when you can talk to all the vendors I think...they don’t necessarily use email the same way that students do... so sometimes it takes a little more legwork to phone them or go to the downtown market on Saturday and talk to them there in person” (WS310124 – 23:07)

In addition to maintaining good relationships with market vendors, students who run weekly markets must also maintain good working relationships with other initiative partners, such as campus staff (parking, loading dock staff) and find out what their needs are, as one student leader explained:

“Finding out what would work for them and what wouldn’t work for them...we had to change our market hours to make sure that we closed early enough to be able to have the vendors leave off the loading docks before [campus staff] was supposed to leave for the day because to ask them to stay late every single Tuesday was just a little bit too much” (WS310113 – 22:59)

This highlights the need for appropriate **accommodation** for community partners, which was commonly cited in the interviews as key for the success of the initiatives. Those involved in campus farmers’ markets, for example, stressed the importance of being inclusive and aware of farmers’ needs.

As one student project leader from a garden initiative noted:

“Really understanding the other partners I think really helps...so what their needs are, what they look for and just being really accommodating” (WS310117 - 18:45)

Community building through education and knowledge sharing was widely recognized as being a driving force behind the success of campus food projects. Food related workshops seem to be a popular method of promoting campus initiatives while spreading knowledge about food growing and preparing.

Volunteer recruitment was a commonly referenced challenge faced by student project leaders, as was the desire to create **experiential learning** and **internship opportunities** with their initiative, in collaboration with the university. A garden project leader described a common challenge of volunteer recruitment for the project, explaining that:

“We have a small group of very passionate individuals...we’ve kind of hit a roadblock for how to attract new members and everyone just seems so busy and we’re hearing that from professors and students alike, that life is just so overwhelming for them, they can’t add anything to their plate” (WS310127 - 14:40)

Commenting on team dynamics as part of what makes successful initiative, one market leader touches on the importance of volunteer recruitment, stating that:

“Finding the right people to take on the project means so much, making sure that the team of people want to work together and that they push each other to do more is very important” (WS310109 – 31:26)

Many initiatives also tried to involve students from different departments, such as Vancouver Island University’s Community Garden, which involved carpentry students to help build a greenhouse and art students to paint in the garden during an event designed to promote the garden. The ability to spot opportunities for **collaboration** seemed to be a valuable attribute for project leaders in their strategic planning.

Reflecting on this common need for wide campus involvement and collaboration and offering advice to those interested in starting a similar initiative, one student leader from a farmer’s market said:

“Be as inclusive as possible...try to incorporate as many different resources that already exist on campus and building positive working relationships for them because it definitely can’t be one person’s pet project, it needs to be a huge buy-in from the entire community” (WS310113 – 38:20)

In reflecting on previous project challenges and the future success of a campus garden, one project leader suggested that:

“The school itself needs to get more involved...when you think about bureaucracy...if you have people that support you then your project is always going to have more of a priority...so to get more support from the top would be awesome” (WS310127 – 21:50)

Our interview with one student project leader from another of the campus gardens affirmed this suggestion. When asked about the longevity and success of their initiative, this student said:

“It’s so integrated into our department now...the department really uses it as a bit of a bragging tool” (WS310121 – 14:52)

This type of project acceptance and integration into campus and community life is what project leaders desire and what their initiatives need to thrive. It is also something that happens gradually, and although frustrating to motivated project

leaders, they seem to understand that it will take time and patience before their initiatives receive the kind of acknowledgement they merit.

Other common themes across initiatives were related to project logistics and continuity in project operation. Every student project leader we interviewed experienced institutional ‘red tape’ or what many referred to as ‘**bureaucratic barriers**’. Although these barriers were frustrating, students tended to see them as temporary hindrances that could be overcome rather than permanent roadblocks. For example, many interviewees reported project issues around **location** and **access** to their garden or market. Due to existing institutional policies and contractual obligations, some initiatives had been located in undesirable areas of campus and had trouble attracting attention or benefitting from naturally occurring foot traffic.

Financial challenges were experienced by most campus initiatives, although some to a greater degree than others. For example, *The Sky Garden* initiative at the University of Toronto was able to secure grant money that allowed them to hire students rather than rely mainly on volunteers. Interestingly, the student project leaders we interviewed from this initiative stated that they always seem to have a good number of volunteers and interest in their garden, even though they did not need to depend on them.

According to each student project leader, the importance of **marketing** and **promoting** their garden or market could not be underestimated. Talking about alternative marketing ideas for campus food initiatives, such as having a scarecrow wearing a farmer’s market T-Shirt on campus or having a big orange carrot costume for advertising the weekly market, one project leader said:

“I think that it really helps the university get away from this stuffy structured institutional framework by having the farmers’ market that can be a little bit more flexible and fun and colourful and do something a little bit out of the ordinary” (WS310124 – 31:53)

Student project leaders also emphasized the importance of regular in person **meetings with project stakeholders** and **strategic planning**. Many interviewees summarized this as the need to approach projects as though they were a business, rather than a primarily a passion project. Project leaders did not wish to deny the fact that these initiatives were fuelled by passion for alternative food systems, but their experience had taught them that without proper attention towards funding, balancing their budget, and maintaining detailed records, their projects would not be as successful as they could be.

Preparing for **student turnover** was something that each project leader noted as an annual challenge. This tied into a common need to direct attention towards **project continuity and longevity**, something that each interviewee named as integral to a successful initiative. For many initiatives this meant having an accessible set of project related documents that were easily referenced and passed on when project leadership

changed. Several interviewees stated that when an initiative was seen to be part of the culture on a campus, it was because it was recognizable and well marketed. Reflecting on this common need for wide campus involvement and offering advice to those interested in starting a similar initiative, one student leader from a farmer's market said:

“Be as inclusive as possible...try to incorporate as many different resources that already exist on campus and building positive working relationships for them because it definitely can't be one person's pet project, it needs to be a huge buy-in from the entire community” (WS310113 – 38:20)

Many students interviewed echoed this call for greater community involvement and also offered advice as to how to gain acceptance on campus. As one project leader asserted:

“You have to plan out, you have to have the right connections...it's a really big project...it needs organization...seriousness as well, just in order to get accepted by the university” (WS310119 - 22:44)

Project leaders had lots of advice regarding what has helped and what has hindered the progress and success of their campus initiatives. One project leader from this initiative was confident in his own and others' food systems initiatives and offered some encouragement to potential project leaders:

“It's hard for people not to be supportive of a good idea...so even if it requires some unusual permissions or anything like that I would say if it's a good idea then that should carry it...just keep going” (WS310121 - 20:30)

This kind of positive approach to campus projects was not uncommon among our study participants. The persistence, energy, and creativity involved in running these initiatives were reflected in each interview we conducted. Considering the success of one campus market and how to define initiative success, one project leader explained:

“It really depends on what your goal is...if you want to just be there and let people know that this is an option then that's great, but if you really want to promote local sustainable consumption then maybe some other things have to be done and that's just more education, more getting out there, getting in people's faces” (WS310114 – 35:00)

Each project narrative has allowed us to gain some insight into what it takes for students to start and run a campus food initiative on campus. Student project leaders recognize, as have we thanks to their stories, how important relationships with community and campus partners are throughout this process. Despite many challenges in gaining support to start and maintain garden and market initiatives, the students we talked to remain inspired, committed to having alternative food systems on campus, and eager to spread knowledge and educate people about sustainable growing and local food purchasing.

Appendix A – Interview Questions

Campus Food Systems Initiatives Interview Schedule

Hi is that []?

It's Louisa calling from Ryerson University.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this interview about your campus food systems project.

Based on some pilot testing I did recently, I think this interview should take around 30 minutes – do you have that time now?

I just want to let you know that this research has been reviewed and approved by Ryerson University's Research Ethics Board.

Our interview goal is to find out what the links are between the getting university student initiated campus food systems initiatives started, how to keep them going, and how community partnerships participate during this process.

We define 'campus food system initiatives' as projects that involve research, education, and activities focused on food supplying - including production, processing, distribution, retailing, preparation, and consumption.

The results from this research will be used to help students, faculty, and administrators at other universities who want to start similar student initiated food systems projects.

Did you have a chance to look over the consent form Caitlin emailed you?

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to participate?

I would like to tape record this interview to help me keep track of your answers. The tapes will be stored at Ryerson University in a locked storage place at the Centre for Studies in Food Security and no one but the research team will have access to them. Once the project is over, the tapes will be erased.

Is it okay with you if I tape record this interview?

If yes, say 'Ok great, you may hear a click as I turn on the tape recorder', turn on tape recorder and proceed to the first interview question.

If no, say 'Okay, I understand. I won't tape this interview, but I may need to ask you to slow down or repeat yourself while I take notes.' Proceed to the first interview question and take notes by hand.

First, I'd like to ask you some general questions about your project and how you got it started.

1. How would you describe [The UNBC Farmer's Market]?
Probe: Can you think of any other ways to describe your project?
2. How did this project start?
Probe: What else can you remember?

If interviewing a faculty member or administrator skip to question 7.

3. What motivated you to start this project?
Probe: Did you have any other motivations?
4. What/who helped you to start this project?
Probe: Was there anything/anyone else who helped you?
5. How did faculty help you start this project?
Probes: Can you give me another example?
6. How did campus administration help you start this project?
Probe: Can you give me another example?
7. What other campus groups/organizations have you worked with on this project?
Probe: Are there any others?
8. What (if any) off-campus community partnerships did you establish during the initial stages of this project?
Probe: Are there any others?
9. What kinds of challenges did you face while starting this project?
Probe: Can you give me a specific example of a challenge that you faced?

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about the operation of your project.

10. What steps did you take in the 'getting started' stage of your project that helped you keep it going?
Probe: What else can you remember about what helped you keep the project going?
11. Where do you see the project heading in the future?
Probe: Can you tell me where you see the project in 5 years?
12. How have off-campus community partners helped to keep your project going?
Probe: Can you remember any other ways they helped you?
13. What is your role in keeping your community partners involved?
Probe: Is there anything else you can tell me about your relationship with community partners?

14. In your opinion, what will make this [the market] long lasting?

Probe: What else do you think will make the project long lasting?

15. What advice would you give students interested in starting a similar project at their university?

Probe: What other suggestions would you make?

16. How do you deal with issues of student turnover (finding replacements for student 'project leaders' who graduate)?

Probe: What other ways have you dealt with these issues?

17. What barriers do you face in running or expanding the project?

Probe: Can you give me a specific example of a barrier you have faced?

18. Do you have anything to add that you would like us to know about the market?

Thank you so much for talking with me. I really appreciate you taking the time to share your experiences and I hope they will inspire other students, faculty, and administrators who want to start similar student initiated food systems projects.

Appendix B – Recruitment Email

Dear [*student's name*],

My name is Caitlin Colson and I am the Student Food Network Coordinator at Meal Exchange, a non-profit organization that works with students on food initiatives across the country. I am involved with a research study about student initiated campus food systems in Canadian universities. This is a jointly-led study by Ryerson University and Meal Exchange. We would like to hear your views and ask you some questions over the phone. This would take about 30-45 minutes of your time.

If you are willing to spare this time, we would be asking you about your [*campus specific initiative*], specifically how it started, how you keep it going, and how community partnerships participate in the process.

This project is being conducted by myself and Dr. Mustafa Koc (Principal Investigator, Professor, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University). A Research Assistant from Ryerson University (Louisa Hawkins) will be conducting all telephone interviews.

Your participation will be kept confidential. A copy of the Informed Consent Form will be sent to you prior to the scheduled interview date. This form can be reviewed by you and your consent will be confirmed over the phone with the interviewer.

Please let me know if you are interested in taking part in this study. If you have any questions or would like additional information about the interview or research study, please don't hesitate to e-mail.

Regards,

Caitlin Colson

Student Food Network Coordinator
Meal Exchange
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 365
Toronto, ON
M5V 3A8
Email: caitlin@mealexchange.com

Appendix C – Consent Form



Consent Information for Participants

Campus Food Systems Initiatives

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators:

Dr. Mustafa Koc, Principal Investigator, Professor, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3

Caitlin Colson, Co-Investigator, Student Food Network Coordinator, Meal Exchange 401
Richmond Street West, Suite 365, Toronto, ON, M5V 3A8

This is a jointly-led study by Ryerson University and Meal Exchange. This project is funded by a partnership grant by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and is part of the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) project.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to find out what the links are between getting university student initiated campus food systems initiatives started, how to keep them going, and how community partnerships participate during this process.

Description of the Study:

You have been asked to participate in one telephone interview that will discuss your experiences with campus food systems initiatives. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and will be scheduled to suit your availability. The interview will be audio recorded if you provide consent for audio recording. The interview questions are designed to explore what the links are between the getting university student initiated campus food systems initiatives started, how to keep them going, and how community partnerships participate during this process. The interview will address, but will not be limited to discussing, the following questions:

- How did this project start?
- How have off-campus community partners helped to keep your project going?
- What advice would you give students interested in starting a similar project at their university?

Risks or Discomforts:

It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering interview questions that ask about challenges you have faced during the implementation and operation of your campus food system initiative. You do not have to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you begin to feel uncomfortable at any time, you may discontinue your participation, either temporarily or permanently. If you choose to withdraw from participation, the data collected until that time will not be used in the study.

Benefits of the Study:

This study will provide insight into the implementation and operation of campus food systems initiatives at Canadian universities. By drawing upon the successes and challenges of individual experiences we will be able to identify key links between getting these types of student initiated projects started, how to keep them going, and how community partnerships participate during this process. These reported connections can be used as a resource for those at universities (or similar institutions) who would like to start their own campus food system initiatives. There are no guaranteed individual benefits for the participants involved in this study.

Confidentiality:

All information will be kept confidential. Any information disseminated throughout the research process will avoid the use of names, and any quotations in publications will be non-attributable. It is the general nature of experience, not personal details about participants that is the focus of research. Principal Investigator Dr. Mustafa Koc and Co-investigator Caitlin Colson of Meal Exchange will have access to raw data. Data will be stored in Dr. Koc's office at Ryerson University for two years and will then be destroyed.

Incentives to Participate:

Participants will not be paid to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University and Meal Exchange. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed. At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study:

If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, please contact:

Dr. Mustafa Koc, Principal Investigator, Professor, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3 (e-mail mkoc@ryerson.ca)

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Toni Fletcher, Research Ethics Board Coordinator
c/o the Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University, 350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042 email: toni.fletcher@ryerson.ca

Appendix D – Study Information Sheet



Information Sheet Campus Food Systems Initiatives Study

We are a research team from Ryerson University and Meal Exchange, and we would like you to take part in our Campus Food Systems Initiatives study. You have been identified by a student as a key resource person for food-related projects on your campus. We would like to hear your views and ask you some questions over the phone about the student initiated campus food system you are involved with. This phone interview would take about 30-45 minutes of your time.

The purpose of this study is to find out what the links are between getting university student initiated campus food systems initiatives started, how to keep them going, and how community partnerships participate during this process.

If you are willing to be interviewed, we would be asking you about your campus initiative, specifically how it started, how you keep it going, and how community partnerships participate in the process.

Interview questions will address, but will not be limited to discussing, the following questions:

- How did this project start?
- How have off-campus community partners helped to keep your project going?
- What advice would you give students interested in starting a similar project at their university?

Dr. Mustafa Koc (Principal Investigator, Professor, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University) and Caitlin Colson (Co-Investigator, Student Food Network Coordinator, Meal Exchange) are leading this project jointly.

Please contact Caitlin Colson if you are interested in taking part in this study, by phone or in-person. If you have any questions or would like additional information about the interview or research study, please don't hesitate to e-mail.

Caitlin Colson
Student Food Network Coordinator, Meal Exchange
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 365; Toronto, ON M5V 3A8
Email: caitlin@mealexchange.com

Appendix E – Proposed Recruitment Changes

1. Instead of only contacting students previously known to Caitlin Colson (Student Food Network Coordinator and Meal Exchange), we propose to contact students, faculty, and administrative project representatives from campus food system initiatives on campus who have publicly available contact information. We will still be using the same recruitment email, consent form, and project information sheet. It is our intent to increase the number of people we can contact directly so that we are not completely reliant on one person (our initial student participant) from each campus to pass on the project information sheet. This method has not been successful and we have only been able to interview 5 of our intended 25-30 participants to date.

2. We also propose to increase the number of universities we will recruit from. Of the 6 previously identified campuses with alternative food system initiatives of interest (Ryerson University, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Toronto, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, and McGill University) we were unsuccessful in recruiting anyone from the University of Alberta. We were also unsuccessful in recruiting anyone from our alternative recruitment source, the University of British Columbia. In light of these recruitment challenges we propose to contact students/faculty/administrators involved in campus food gardens at the University of Manitoba, Vancouver Island University (Nanaimo campus or Cowichan campus), and Dalhousie University. Caitlin Colson has also had contact with representatives from these campus projects in the past.

