

Institutionalizing a Sustainable Food System: A Case Study of the Real Food movement at the
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Honors Thesis
Interdisciplinary Studies

April 2016

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To my mom and dad

“Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere.”
- Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird*

It may be that when we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work,

and that when we no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

- Wendell Berry, *The Real Work*

“The thing about growing up with Fred and George,” said Ginny thoughtfully, “is that you sort of start thinking anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve.”
- J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld. Thank you for your guidance and your patience. Thank you for believing in me, and for repeatedly giving me the confidence to believe in myself. This thesis would be little more than a mess in my mind without you.

I would like to thank Jim Ferguson and Samantha Buckner-Terhune for their encouragement to enroll in EATS. Jim, your inexhaustible faith in and respect for your students is monumental. Thank you Sam for your knowing nods and your supportive feedback. I think EATS came at just the right time.

I would also like to thank my academic advisor, Deborah Graczyk. You are one of the best listeners I know. Thank you for your affirmation for who I am, your encouragement for who I want to be, and your all-knowingness of who I will become. I was lucky to stumble into your office.

Lastly, thank you to my friends and family. *Always.*

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This is a case study of the various players, politics, and student-led action that make up the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's food system. In order to place this case study in the context it needs, I reviewed the development of our industrial food supply and the historic alternative food movements that arose within American consumer culture. The resulting paper outlines the current nature of UNC's campus food service and student-led efforts to advance the purchasing of *real food* – food that is local and community based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane. Further analyses of the historic action address the layered and cyclical dynamics of student activism and the fragility of a relationship-based food system.

What follows is in many ways a very personal story too. My time at UNC was dominated by food – the study of it, the advocacy of sustainable, just food, and of course the consumption of it. At UNC, it became my mission to sustain and deepen the relationships between students and administrators. It was my passion to understand the politics of food, advocate for those disempowered along our food supply chain, and develop systems of accountability and transparency. In this paper, I point towards the significance of engaging with universities to create effective, systemic, and accessible change within our food system. Though I have not always been an activist, I have been a thinker and an eater, and those identities molded to form something worthwhile. I wrapped my identity around our campus food system, and in doing so, led a charge to stretch the meaning of Carolina.

1. AMERICA'S FOOD CULTURE & HISTORY

American agriculture is a complex and layered system. It is all at once, historically weighted and constantly evolving. Most historic analyses of American agriculture and food begin around the turn of the 20th century when America was experiencing increasing industrialization. Americans were flocking to cities for jobs and the hope that the American cities offered. By the 1920s the percentage of urban dwellers grew to surpass that of Americans living in rural communities (U.S. Census Bureau), as farming labor was replaced by advanced technology and machinery. In the aftermath of World War II, farms grew more efficient with chemical-intensive production, consolidated and specialized, single-crop farms and animal production facilities. During this time it was the job of farmers to feed the skyrocketing global population, and from the 1950s-1970s governmental policies and subsidies recognized and incentivized this action.

A ringleader in these policies was Earl Butz, who served first under President Dwight Eisenhower as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and later under President Richard Nixon as Secretary of Agriculture. Known for his famous mantra “get big or get out,” Butz urged the nation’s farmers to plant their commodity crops “from fencerow to fencerow” (Scholar 1973). His policies promoted production rather than conservation, and the financial stability of large agribusiness corporations rather than the small family farm.

Simultaneous with the governmental and policy support from Secretary Butz, agricultural researchers were developing high-yield, disease- and drought-resistant varieties of commodity crops. Norman Borlaugh, a biologist, humanitarian, and Nobel laureate, led this effort, specializing in wheat varieties grown in Mexico. His innovative experimentation was representative of a larger growth in research, development, and technology named the Green

Revolution. Beyond the development of high-yielding varieties of cereal grains, the Green Revolution included the advancement of irrigation and mechanical infrastructure, distribution of hybridized seeds, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. There was logic and motivation to these decisions and this research, but reflecting on them now it is clear there were many unintended impacts, such as the ecological degradation from depleted soils and consolidated waste lagoons, and the decline of rural communities as globalized markets became highly competitive.

In the 1970s, at the launch of “big-ag,” the alternative agricultural movement and scene became a reactionary space. Alternative agriculturalists were most interested in reducing toxic inputs and exploitive labor, instead turning to smaller scale operations and closed and natural agricultural loops. Its front-runners criticized industrial agriculture for the extensive use of toxic chemicals, the massive consolidation and resulting inhumane treatment of confined animal feeding operations (CAFO), the unseen vulnerabilities of monocultured farming systems, the decline of farming communities, and the unfair treatment of industry workers. Conventional agriculture brought technological innovations and efficiencies of production and distribution, but, over the last couple of decades, activists and academics questioned the costs of these efficiencies and worked to address the inequities of our food system.

Growing up on a farm in Kentucky, well-known environmental activist and writer, Wendell Berry worked tirelessly to defend agrarian values. He, and the many others who followed him, connected industrial farming with a loss of connectedness, to the land and to local economies. He believed: “Character and community – that is, culture in the broadest, richest sense – constitute, just as much as nature, the source of food. Neither nature nor people alone can produce human sustenance, but only the two together, culturally wedded” (Berry, 1977). He saw the Green Revolution and the various supporting policies as short sighted, considering the

efficiencies and gains of production and distribution as the top most priority. In The Unsettling of America, he wrote, “the most revealing sign of the ill health of industrial agriculture – its greed, its short-term ambitions – is its inclination to see trees as obstructions and to strip the land bare of them.” But, in order to compete with industrial agriculture’s scale and power, there needed to be a something equally promoted.

Organic food became the first to challenge industrial agriculture. The roots of organic agriculture were part of 1960s social movements that distrusted large-scale corporations and the corrupt politics that got mixed within them. The proponents wanted to know where their food came from and, on the extreme end, began investing in growing the food themselves. They felt a need “to reconfigure the [food system] to meet people’s food needs both for the present and for the future” (Allen 2010). This was the time of health food stores, counter-culture, and the do-it-yourself hippies.

By the late 1970s, the organic movement had gained even more ground. Activists’ discontent about the production, distribution, and transparency of the industrial agrifood system began taking things into their own hands. Since the 1980s, organic grew from a “marginal production fad to the largest growing sector within American agriculture,” (Barker, 2013). Organic expanded from niche markets in local health food store, grocery cooperatives, and regional farmers’ markets to the shelves of chain grocery stores and restaurant menus, so that by 1997 the industry had reached \$3.6 billion in sales (Dimitri & Oberholtzer, 2009). And, now nearly two decades later, sales exceed \$40 billion (Organic Trade Association, 2014). Across the country farmers were drawn to the price premium of organic, and increased their acreage and production so as to match the new consumer demand (Barker, 2013). Small organic farmers who had an interest in making the high end products accessible initially fueled this industry growth.

But with this increase, came a need for marketization and consolidation, and many practiced industrial farmers were also interested in “broadening the repertoire of industrial agriculture” (Bilger, 2004).

As organic grew, skeptics grew worried that as organic scaled up it began to dilute its purposes. This is well captured in a summary of Alice Waters’ critique of the industry in *The New Yorker* article, *Salad Days*: “[Industrial organic farms] may not use herbicides, pesticides, or chemical fertilizers, but they perpetuate all the other ills of conventional farming. Bagged salads, and the boxed salads that have become increasingly popular, are just another new source of packaging and waste. Their longer shelf life means only that trucks can carry them even farther away, burning fossil fuels and releasing greenhouse gases. True organic food ought to reconnect people to the land to make farming a local activity again. Industrial organic farms do the opposite. They force small farmers out of business, marginalize farmers’ markets, and make packaged food so convenient that consumers forget where it comes from” (Waters, 2004, p. 144).

Michael Pollan may be most famous for further criticizing the integrity of the organic industry. In the Omnivore’s Dilemma, Pollan tells the story of America’s food industry and how it has so radically changed America’s health, diet and country. He informs his readers what they are eating by examining all the steps it takes to find out from where a meal’s ingredients originate. He considers the commodification of organic food showing how accessible we have made it. He counters this observation by suggesting that “[the organic movement] has come a remarkably long way in the last thirty years, to the point where it now looks considerably less like a movement than a big business” (2006, p. 138). Pollan uses a consumer-centered vision, setting us up to consider the power of the commodity and marketplace versus the power of consumers.

As organic grew more powerful, more consolidated, and more packaged, consumers grew wary. Again, consumers looked for alternatives to challenge industrial agriculture and support an authentic community vision. Looking to expand the intrinsic values of organic, this new movement focuses on transparency of production and inspires regional economic vitality. Local considers a more holistic look at the food chain, from “farm to fork.” It does not insist that a label be proof of commitment to ecological sustainability, a value that was originally embodied by organic. Instead, getting to “know your farmer” and building trust is enough for consumers. Local offers an easy interpretation for consumers; it has a looseness that is unattached to industry. It is immediate, built on single action *and* connectedness of a community. Concepts like “foodshed” and “food miles,” and supporting philosophies like Slow Food, help consumers understand this movement.

Farmers’ markets have become the quintessential and assumed space to participate in one’s local economy. They are perceived as a way of protecting and improving urban space (Feenstra, 2002). Around 1994, when the USDA first started surveying farmers’ markets across the US, there were less than 2,000 markets. By 2006, the number of farmers’ markets had doubled to over 4,000. Ten years later in 2014, the number of farmers’ markets in the US rose to 8,284 (ERS, 2014). This continuous growth is evidence of consumer demand and suppliers’ interest. Close to UNC’s campus, the historic Carrboro Farmers’ Market provides one example of this. Its mission is to “sustain a vibrant and innovative market that supports our local farmers and artisans, while extending the benefits of local food to the greater community” (CFM, 2016).

Both the Organic and Local food movements promise a notion that individual’s actions to better their food system will sum to community’s collective change. Oran Hesterman, founder of

the Fair Food Network and author of Fair Food articulates these ideas well: “With most other large systems, we must rely primarily if not solely on our policy makers and industry leaders to act on our behalf... [but] with the food system we can have more impact. We can take responsibility for fixing it both through individual decisions *and* through collective action. As individuals we can make different choices about what we purchase and what we eat.” (2011).

The alternative agriculture movements motivate individuals to challenge the food system through practices of consumption. Shopping seasonally – whether at a farmers’ market or not – reduces agricultural inputs used to manipulate out-of-season crop growth (Garnett, 2011). Some varieties of crops are bred to be transported over long distances, which often lead to decreases in crop diversity. By purchasing products regionally consumers are also working against the large corporations that control our food system. Another way of challenging the food system on an individual level is by growing one’s own food. We can advocate for better food in school cafeterias and college dining programs. These approaches to consumption and production of food suggest that our food system is approachable and accessible. We can “fight with our fork” as the expression goes, allowing each meal to proclaim our political values and current economic position.

What Hesterman is referring to relates in part to a portrayal of systems operated from the “bottom up,” which promotes consumers as responsive and capable of refashioning or resisting the mass culture and consumption at the individual or community level. This contrasts a “top down” approach in which consumers are portrayed as “being relatively passive recipients of products and services concocted by self-interested providers” (Chin, 2001). Many things drive modern US culture, and consumption is one of them. It is, simultaneously a force and a space in which “people exercise considerable power and creativity” (Chin, 2001). Some suggest that if

consumers can recognize this, they may be compelled to affect institutional change and the values that are currently embedded within America's everyday life may begin to shift.

But there are limits to what this organizing strategy can accomplish, and movement leaders are beginning to acknowledge this. Julie Guthman (2007) identifies this as the “if they only knew” strategy, which underlies the dominant discourse advocating for consumer awareness. This strategy assumes that “an unveiling of the American food supply would necessarily trigger a desire for local, organic food and people would be willing to pay for it. Then, so the logic goes, the food system would be magically transformed into one that is ecologically sustainable and socially just” (Guthman, 2007). Guthman suggests that this is problematic not only because it creates discomfort, but “in the long run, [it] may reinforce broader exclusion” (Guthman, 2007, p. 389). I saw evidence of this while working at the Durham Farmers' Market. I saw this market, and many others like it, as a space created by and for affluent white people. While the market managers could incorporate an EBT/SNAP “double-bucks” program, incentivizing the participation of impoverished people, it did not take away from the fact that the majority of the returning shoppers were ones who felt comfortable within the space.

This query points towards the need for good food to be mainstream and readily available. “Engaging communities that have been historically excluded from the mainstream alternative foods movement is critical in the movement for food justice. Within food justice, it is simply not enough to examine the ethics of going slow to go local” (Mares & Peña, 2011, p. 201). In order to overcome systemic injustices, good food needs scale and an inclusivity strategy.

Organic worked to make good food accessible – from the elitist aisles of Whole Foods to the shelves of globally reaching Walmart – yet, was criticized for its industrialization. As the alternative food movements advanced to address this and the concern for inclusivity, a community food security movement evolved. Food security activists looked to alleviate the injustices imbedded within the distribution of food in our food system (Allen, 2010). Their resulting action focuses on food access and nutritional deficiencies. “Middleman” organizations cropped up to fill the gaps in the food chain too. Most often the work is done by nonprofits such as food pantries and shelters, but opportunity lies with food entrepreneurs too, as aggregators and distributors. This movement, complements the efforts of the organic and local food movements. Allen 2010 suggests, “because the issues they address are so important, [the collective movements] have attracted a broad range of participants and have become significant social movements.” All the same, there is little assurance that this work is making significant systemic change. In order to make systems-level change, new analysis is needed to look beyond individual and collective action towards larger suppliers and institutions.

Researchers have examined ways of incorporating local food procurement throughout the supply chain: in retail chain supermarkets (Colloredo-Mansfeld et al., 2014), at K-12 schools through Farm-to-School (FTS) programs (Allen & Guffman 2006; Kloppenburg & Hassanein 2006), and on city and regional planning agendas (Donald 2008). Larger, statewide reports examine how regional food economies are currently built and how they can be better adapted to support the procurement of local food (Pirog et al. 2011; Curtis 2010; more at Leopold Center 2010).

So, how is our system structured to move food through it? A large majority of our food supply is moved through supermarkets, which have developed networks of “infrastructure for

cheaply delivering huge volumes of food” (McMillan, 2012). So that, instead of communities being fed by a diverse web of suppliers and artisans, they are fed by a shrinking number of massive farms. The alternative way of obtaining food in our food system is through “non-traditional food retail,” which McMillan lays out in a spectrum: on one end we can make direct-market purchases with farmers and artisans, and, on the other, more industrial, end we can purchase food from convenience stores and supercenters. In her exploration of the industry of Walmart, McMillan sheds light on the market power that the company has. The fact that Walmart is selling to so many people allows it to “essentially tell suppliers how to make products” and to dictate the price it will be paying for them. In doing so, Walmart defies the laws of supply, demand, and competition. In recent years, even Whole Foods has adopted the grocery industry’s standard regional distribution system, a network that Walmart had famously developed.

Once alternative market channels for organic, local, and health food consolidate into industrial conglomerates, the market drives out public, civic, and communitarian concerns. McMillan astutely observes,

“Food is one of the only base human needs where the American government lets the private market dictate its delivery to our communities... When we build a new city, the public sector works to make sure various needs are met safely and affordably... but, for reasons that are just beginning to be publicly questioned, America has traditionally done nothing to make sure there is also food in that new city.” (McMillan, 2012, p. 12).

Large scale purchasing extends beyond supermarkets. Institutional buying power can be mobilized in several ways, including on a college campus. Food is an obvious need that

university administrators and designers have to consider when developing a space where students are expected to learn and thrive. Most often this need is so large – there is such high demand and in such concentrated times – that it makes logistical and financial sense to outsource this service to a food service provider. Universities are huge economic engines, with annual food budgets close to \$5 billion (NACUFS, 2013), and contracted food service or not, the system that is developed from the network of food suppliers and consumers is no small ordeal. They have significant social clout over regional communities and initiate the large-scale demand that the alternative food movements need. If universities leverage this power, prioritizing certain fair, humanely produced, ecologically sustainable, and regional foods, they could begin to shift the current agrifood system (Allen 2010; Lee 2008).

Differing opinions over the role and responsibilities of universities hamper this movement from gaining traction on campuses across the country. Should universities' decision-making processes be transparent and inclusive towards students? What is the responsibility of a public institution, to its students and greater state? These debates are in full swing, as triggered by increasing student action.

Student activism on university campuses has always been a space in which to challenge an authority and established system. Activism can be found on nearly every university campus, as inspired by the “youthful idealism and optimism of college students” (Chambers, 1994). In college, students engage in community-based service, advocate for their full rights, and demand to be included in institutional decision-making. While some academics (Altbach, 1989; Brax, 1981; Foster and Long, 1970; Horowitz, 1986) have viewed “[student activism] as disorderly, rowdy, misdirected actions of less serious minded youth who place little value on education,”

Chambers (1994) sees the “resurgence of college student activism... as a form of leadership development and a critical part of a student’s developmental process.”

Over time, there have been significant fluxes in levels of activism on college campuses. This is natural since social movements and interests are heavily swayed by current political and social events. At this point in time though, there is a keen student interest in engaging with university administration to remove injustices and improved transparency of administrative policy. Food activism, in particular, becomes a space to combine environmental activism and social justice. This activism addresses issues like the use of pesticides and fertilizers, animal welfare, worker rights, and food insecurity.

The Real Food Challenge (RFC), a student-led network and campaign, looks to leverage student and institutional power to shift our food system. The group was formed in 2006 from a national assortment of pioneering student organizations including: United Students for Fair Trade, Oxfam's CHANGE Leaders Program, the Student Farmworker Alliance, the Community Food Security Coalition, Equal Exchange, and Slow Food on Campus. RFC centers on *real food* – food that is local and community based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane – offering a holistic approach to reforming our food system. RFC has grown in scope since its founding and, with the support of various foundations, developed into a network of its own. By 2008, RFC was a network of 300 schools. Today, the organization is still student-led and student-run with a small executive committee of student volunteers and employed staff.

In 2011, RFC launched a campaign for universities to sign onto the *Real Food Campus Commitment* (“Organizational History,” FLO). This is an instrumental document that ensures a university commits to:

- Annually increasing procurement of real food through the establishment of a procurement goal of at least 20% real food by 2020;
- Creating a transparent reporting system most likely through the Real Food Calculator, a tool developed by student organizers to track & report institutional food purchases; and
- Establishing a Real Food Working Group, which works to develop a Campus Food Policy, Multi-Year Action Plan, and Annual Progress Reports (“Take Action”).

The University of Santa Cruz was one of the first schools to sign in February 2012, with the University of Vermont, Oberlin College, Warren Wilson, and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, following them the following year (“Commitment,” RFC). Today, the list includes over 70 schools, including the entire University of California system and California State University system. Commitment has come from small liberal arts colleges and larger public universities, but one gap grows wider still: the Southeast region. The involvement of a major public system in the southeast would demonstrate seasonal viability, encourage and reinforce regional suppliers, and, above all else, solidify RFC as a national movement not limited to niche institutions.

II. A CAMPUS FOOD SYSTEM

This case study documents student-led efforts to bring *real food* to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill between 2007-2016. Student activists within the student group, FLO Food, led the majority of this work. Over time, FLO students built partnerships with on-campus student organizations, Carolina Dining Services (CDS), UNC administration and staff, regional stakeholders, and the Real Food Challenge, a national network of student food activists.

The goal of outlining this work is to address the various complications of building a campus food system – the players and the politics – and the layered and cyclical dynamics of student activism.

THE MEANING OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a large, public research university. Established in 1789, it is one of the first public universities of the nation. It serves a population of nearly 30,000 students, a majority of whom are in-state. Because of these reasons, UNC is a flagship for the state. Every action UNC students take – from the basketball court to the research lab – carries special meaning, impacting the state and adding to the university’s legacy. When it comes to *real food* UNC offers a model for moving beyond the small liberal arts colleges and Ivy League that dominate the list of committed universities. By joining RFC, UNC can demonstrate the capacity of a large southern public university to prove its commitment to sustainability, innovation, and economic growth.

FOOD SERVICE AT UNC

UNC Chapel Hill is undoubtedly a complex and changeable food system. Demand is intricate with students spread across campus, and the broader community spread across town. The web of suppliers and on-campus workers is no less complicated. In the mid-20th century, UNC’s dining services was limited to a cafeteria-style dining hall, offering minimal services for students and faculty. Through the late 1960s and into the 1970s, students joined cafeteria workers who went on strike against “low pay, poor working conditions, and racist supervisors” (SAW, 2008). This initial activism set a precedent for dining halls at UNC to be a space to address and affect social change. In 1971, the university decided to privatize dining services as a

way to cut costs and increase efficiency. Privatization made activism ever more challenging and anti-union intimidation (among other things) much more customary.

The first company to whom UNC outsourced its dining service was the SAGA Corporation (Spencer, 2009). I speculate that other food service providers held contracts with UNC-CH during the 80s-90s, but very little documentation of these is made available. In 2001, a new contract was agreed upon between UNC and the food service provider, Aramark, which is still in force today.

As of fall 2015, the two residential dining halls serve about 10,000 meals per day and average about 4.5 million meals per year. In order for UNC to provide this large volume of meals, its dining service is exclusively operated by Carolina Dining Services (CDS), and is contractually managed (i.e. outsourced) to the Pennsylvania-based food service corporation, Aramark. The general manager (currently Scott Weir) determines food purchases and the head chef (currently Michael Gueiss) compiles daily menus.

The decision-making and oversight structure is multi-layered. Since it is a contract and supplemental service, Carolina Dining is housed under Auxiliary Services, and Aramark pays all of CDS' employees. It is a chain of command and, in its current state, students' involvement is limited to the Student Dining Board, a board of students who oversee menu and operational management. For full outline of the hierarchy tree and contract details see *Appendix B*.

As of 2015, CDS' food suppliers include: Albert's Organics, Bimbo Bakeries, USA, Carbon's Golden Malted, Firsthand Foods, Freshpoint, Inland Seafood, Maola Milk & Ice Cream, Pepsi, Sea2Table, Starbucks, & Sysco. The largest of these suppliers are Sysco, Freshpoint, and Pepsi, respectively.

Currently, the food itself is served in two dining halls, one on central campus and one on south campus. The central dining hall, Lenoir Hall, consists of seven main stations serving a variety of cuisines and accommodating numerous dietary preferences. Mainstreet Lenoir offers a number of local restaurant and commercial food chain dining options, which are also open during the lunch hours. Rams Head, the south campus residential dining hall, has extended hours specifically convenient to many of the south campus residents. Meal plans are not mandatory at UNC, and Carolina Dining Services works hard each year to make the pricing competitive. Higher quality products can (and will) be introduced into the menus, so long as students are willing to pay for them.

Even with all of these constraints, a significant amount of money flows within and out of the system, and the resulting purchases have incredible weight. The 10,000 meals served per day are made up of hundreds of products, each of which must be handled by employees who unload them from trucks, transfer them to kitchens, prepare and cook them, and serve them to students.

As our campus has grown so too has the demand for the provision of food. Throughout the years, UNC and dining administration have made an effort to ensure food is what students want: that it is affordable, accessible, and satisfies consumer choice. Under the realm of consumer choice has been a growing student interest in having local and sustainable food on our campus.

III. FLO FOOD

Since 2007, the student organization, FLO (Fair, Local, Organic) Food has worked to address the growing interest in regional and sustainable food system development. Over the years, the student group has worked with food service managers and university administration to

improve purchasing standards with existing suppliers and introduce new sustainable suppliers into the system.

PHASE I: FORMING FLO

FLO (Fair, Local, Organic) Food was founded in 2007. The student organization was formed by students who enrolled in an environmental justice class taught by Professor Flora Lu within UNC's Anthropology Department. The course focused on the impacts of industrial farming on communities in Eastern North Carolina, and led students to begin researching where UNC sourced its food. Early leaders of FLO included: Sally Lee, Jordan Treakle, and David Hamilton (see *Appendix C*, for full list of FLO food advocates). They were soon joined by more students, some of whom came from agricultural backgrounds and were surprised by the distancing students experienced with food, hoping instead to close this food and farming educational gap. As the group grew, so did their interest for shifting the university's dining services away from supporting industrialized operations.

Fair, local, and organic. These are the “three ideals whose intersection indicate systematic health of a food system,” according to FLO's mission statement (*“About FLO”*). This definition considers the fair production, regionality, and ecological sustainability of food. Imbedded in this definition is a concern for the workers and animals affected along the supply chain. Because FLO formed out of a class on environmental justice it became rooted in this advocacy work and educational outreach.

FLO quickly became a space to launch a clustering of activities, all of which were centered on raising consumer consciousness. The group's highly successful and reoccurring event was called “People, Power, and Pork,” which was first hosted in the spring of 2006. The

event opened with a free barbeque, drawing hundreds of students, community members, and statewide activists and organizers. The hog was from local pork producer, Eliza MacLean of Cane Creek Farm, and sponsored by the Triangle's Slow Food chapter. Following the delicious meal, FLO students led a discussion that included: workers from Smithfield's Tar Heel processing plant, community members that lived adjacent to the plant, Eliza MacLean herself, and Jennifer Curtis, who was working with NC Choices, a program based out of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (Philpott, 2007).

As students gathered, they began to recognize the economic power UNC has as an institution. The students were led to create an organization that could directly address this concern for the food served on campus. Yet, underlying FLO students' desire to shift our institution's impact was a sincere curiosity in our food system. Written in the bylaws was FLO's belief that they were not experts, that instead by building personal relationships they could "provide a forum and momentum for change" (*Constitution & Bylaws*, FLO). Recognizing this, FLO members began connecting with dining staff, faculty and community members, and regional farmers. FLO complemented this education by continuing food justice campaigns, like "People, Power, Pork" on UNC's campus.

In 2008, FLO began meeting with Carolina Dining Services. This initial meeting came out of the same environmental justice class that inspired FLO's formation. Students had reached out to CDS with the hopes of getting pasture-raised pork and beef into the dining halls, an alternative to the conventionally raised (Smithfield) pork that was being served. This meeting evolved into consistent biweekly meetings that, beyond FLO members, included the director of food and vending, the head chef, the Aramark district manager, and other key decision makers. During these meetings FLO found it most effective to target a single food product (the first being

sustainably-raised meats). Students would analyze CDS purchasing strategies, research sustainable alternatives, and develop an educational campaign around these single products. Examples of product campaigns that FLO initiated between 2008 and 2010 include: grass-fed beef, pasture raised pork, cage-free eggs, and poultry (Treakle, 2010). These campaigns gave FLO students insight into the complications and challenges in institutional procurement, purchasing, menuing and food preparation. This was new territory for CDS administrators as well. FLO hosted a variety of programs that mirrored their work with the dining service, including speaker series, campus farmers' markets, Green Theme Meals (GTM), and (later) connected with the national Real Food Challenge network.

One example of a relatively successful campaign was in fall 2008 when FLO members helped form a partnership between a local small-scale farmer and CDS. Cane Creek Farm is located in Snow Camp, NC, less than 50 miles from UNC. Students insisted that the farm was an "ideal" sustainable meat producer (*Calculator Report*, 2010). Acting as a liaison between Cane Creek and CDS, students managed negotiations that took over an entire semester. By January 2009, CDS made a verbal commitment to purchase 200 lbs of grass-fed beef each week. The beef cost \$4.25 per pound, close to triple the conventional price. Despite the high cost FLO students envisioned that by supporting regional suppliers of ecologically sound and humane meats, they could reinvest dollars into their community. By incorporating them into the regular menus, everyone with a meal plan could have the opportunity to both consume and learn about delicious, sustainable meats. However, challenges of working with Aramark became ever more clear as the transactions and deliveries stalled. It was not until March 2010 that Aramark began purchasing meat from Cane Creek. The delay was in Aramark's certification process, an added

stipulation, which meant that Cane Creek had to truck their grass-fed beef 120 miles north across the Virginia border to a different processor that was already Aramark certified.

This business relationship was a positive step CDS made towards procuring more sustainable food while also increasing the economic security of Cane Creek Farm. While the arrangements proved challenging for students, they were evidence of the impact that building strong relationships had on increasing *real food* vendors and their products. Additionally, the inconsistent communication by both parties was an indication of students' limited role in facilitating business contracts between the university and producers. Without an expert marketer for the producer and a University official trained in contract development, little progress that is fair to both parties can be made. CDS' repeated stalling in communication or purchasing did not help the situation either.

Other campaigns had a similar mix of lessons. Through increased pressures to supply *real food* in the dining halls, FLO students proved that a niche-market for sustainable food existed. At this time however, the general student population was not familiar enough with sustainability issues or was not yet willing to pay for the increase in cost at a price-per-meal basis.

Happening concurrently with these negotiations, FLO was engaged in other educational campaigns and outreach projects. Between 2008-2011, these projects included hosting semesterly campus farmers' markets, organizing regional trainings, and coordinating educational outreach events such as panel discussions and film screenings. By 2009, FLO had begun developing relationships with food activists and organizers at campuses across the US through the Real Food Challenge network. Since the first FLO meeting with CDS administrators, students advocated for the disclosure of documentation of food sourcing and suppliers, a main

ask of the national organization. Without institutional transparency students argued that food could not be considered *real*. Between 2007-2009 Aramark refused to work with students.

In Fall 2009, Aramark began working cooperatively with students, and in spring 2010, Aramark and CDS agreed to allow students to run the Real Food Calculator, a tool developed by RFC so as to accurately and consistently audit dining purchases. The first official audit took place in fall 2010 by two FLO members. These students earned credit for their research through a Sustainability Internship within the Curriculum for the Environment and Ecology. That December, the two interns presented their findings to CDS, faculty, and some of their peers. Using the representative month of September, the students determined that UNC sourced nearly 13% Real Food (see *Appendix E* to see the growth in real food over time).

Since 2007, FLO members had laid the groundwork for effective change on campus. Student leaders had formed a student organization, raised student consciousness, and developed relationships with dining administrators. In doing so, they gained credibility and set the later FLO members up for significant success.

PHASE II: GAINING GROUND

By fall 2011, FLO leaders were anxious to expand their reach and presence on campus. For over three years they had been building a relationship with CDS administration. They held consistent meetings with CDS, providing researched product alternatives. The team had also performed their second audit of CDS purchases using the Real Food Calculator.

Fall 2011 also marked the official launch of the national Real Food campaign. The articulated outcome of this campaign was to have universities “sign on” to the *Real Food Campus Commitment*. The University of California system was leading the campaign, with the

University of Vermont not far behind. FLO students were eager to join in the movement. The Real Food Challenge helped to place the on-campus efforts FLO had been leading as a part of a broader and national movement. It was validating and it helped the team focus their efforts as they began building student power.

That fall, FLO narrowed in on the specific campaign to get UNC to sign the Real Food Campus Commitment (FLO, 2011a), and arranged the components needed for the *Commitment* to be implemented. In many ways, FLO and UNC were already on target. Students had run the Calculator and were beginning to establish the recurring program that would become the Real Food Calculator Sustainability Internship. FLO members had the connections to begin building a Working Group. What the students lacked was a formal structure and the administration's signed commitment.

Rather than being confrontational, students agreed that using their relationship with dining to negotiate *real food* was their best option ("CDS Meeting," 2011). This complemented the framework upon which FLO was founded. Treacle outlined this facilitation tactic in his feasibility study, stating that:

Harnessing the purchasing power of institutions to support sustainable food economies has also always been perhaps FLO's most central goal. Successes in this campaign have relied on strong ties with the local agricultural community and developing a working relationship with campus administrators. Many student organizations attempting to create very legitimate institutional change have failed in the last five years at UNC because these groups started their campaign with a sit-in at the Chancellor's office. FLO has always taken a more moderate route, attempting first to gain the respect of administrators before campaigning for change. Clearly confrontational tactics always

have a place in activism and should be an option, but FLO's leadership has decided these tactics would not advance FLO's goals to date. FLO's moderate tactics require patience and a willingness to see gradual change, [and] I believe this the most successful long-term approach on UNC's campus (Treakle, 2010).

With this in mind FLO students spent fall 2011 seeking out campus stakeholders and building relationships with community members. They met with CDS to discuss the signing of the Campus Commitment. In their meeting, they provided details about what this commitment would entail, and gave justification for why UNC should take this next step. CDS' response was expectedly mixed. While they agreed they "definitely wanted to commit to striving towards 20% by 2020," they cited concerns for cost due to market inconsistencies and price premiums for sustainable foods (FLO, 2011b).

CDS also made it known that they had already been devoting an extra \$4,000 towards more sustainable food incrementally and that they could not continue doing that.¹ Additional concerns were a bit contradictory. CDS had issue with committing to something that they cannot follow through on and with the lack of enforcement should they not reach their goal. While FLO recognized these concerns, students refused to have this be the last say, and were instead encouraged to use these concrete concerns to build a campaign and escalate this request to former Chancellor Thorp.

Spring 2012 brought a lot of energy to FLO. Students began delivering gift baskets and letters of support to the Chancellor. Students wrote Letters to the Editor, networked with regional supporters, and gathered student allies. They received little response from the former Chancellor

¹ As of 2016, the investment in *real food* is close to \$1 million, half of which is "extra spending" that would normally go to reducing price, adding a service, long-term budget, building infrastructure, or specific premier meals.

himself, so they decided to have a culminating action called: Supper on South. The event was a community-potluck to perform a public display of support for the commitment. FLO led a petition and gathered more signatures and endorsements at the event. Little documentation exists about FLO's activities after Supper on South, but the archived meeting notes suggest that students met with former Chancellor Thorp in early March.

At the meeting students presented former Chancellor Thorp with a list of endorsements from student organizations and faculty. They gave justification for why UNC should sign the commitment and shared the collaborative accomplishments made by CDS and FLO. In the meeting, students were shocked at the reaction they received. It was clear from the start that Thorp had not read anything that the students had been delivering to him. Despite having worked for over four months to teach him about the Commitment, he treated the appointment with FLO students as an introductory meeting, and offered few means of supporting students.

"He basically stared us down," said Sarah Acuff, a former FLO member present at this meeting. At that moment students recognized that Thorp was avoiding informing himself about the campaign and other campus actions. He was negligent by choice. Students lost respect for him as a person and as a leader of the university. Unfortunately, this was how the first campaign faded. The students took a lot of action to escalate to this point. While they were prepared for "nos," "maybes," and even the hard questions, they were not prepared for negligence.

PHASE III: BUILDING & SUSTAINING FLO'S PARTNERSHIPS

In Fall 2012, I arrived on UNC's campus as a first-year. Within two weeks of school, I came across FLO through a listserv send-out advertising a potluck interest meeting. FLO was pretty clearly an interesting group. They were form fitting and project-based, which encouraged

curious first-years to dive in deep. Reflecting now, I recognize that the leaders in FLO seemed pretty worn out and a bit discouraged. They had just escalated a campaign that culminated in a “no” from former Chancellor Thorp. This left the team a bit unsure of where to go and what to do next.

Unlike other RFC teams around the nation, FLO was not founded to explicitly make *real food* a thing on campus. It is not named UNC Real Food Challenge, and therefore had its own identity to maintain. FLO was founded to educate UNC’s student body and work collaboratively with Carolina Dining Services, to have campaigns based in social justice and action *and* ones based in education. While these goals are complementary, FLO’s refocus was result of students’ responses to hearing administration refuse to take action and sign the *Commitment*. “Eventually we were satisfied enough with [our own] rate of progress that we decided we didn't need the RFC commitment,” said a former FLO member (Atkinson, 2016). Rather than demand administration’s involvement and capitalize on the large audience and network that RFC’s *Commitment* would bring, FLO redirected. Instead of re-enlivening the campaign in fall 2012, the *Real Food Campus Commitment* moved to the back burner and FLO became focused on educational outreach.

In fall 2012, FLO members helped increase the frequency and scope of the educational “Green Theme Meals,” which had been occurring on a monthly basis in the dining halls. FLO organized a part celebratory, part educational “Food Week” in October. And, coinciding with the outreach events, a small number of FLO members continued meeting with Carolina Dining Service executives.

While getting the *Commitment* itself signed was no longer a goal for which FLO was striving, the organization continued its dedication to running the *Calculator*. Fall 2012, student

interns (all of whom were also FLO members) ran the third consecutive semester audit of dining purchases. This semester's audit of representative months was the first to surpass 20%. It was unexpected to have reached the 20% goal set by the national Real Food Challenge campaign, and to have reached it so soon. In some ways it reinforced a notion that students did not need support of their administration to make positive change.

The *real food* percentage that was reached that year was due to dramatic increases in percentages of poultry, eggs, and coffee/tea (Atkinson et al, 2012). CDS began purchasing organic chicken, liquid eggs (which were certified humane by the American Humane Certification), and fair trade coffee. There were also general increases in *real food* purchases in each of the additional categories: dairy, produce, meat, and fish/seafood.

It is interesting that the fall 2012 percentage increased so much -- over double the previous fall's *real food* percentage (See *Appendix E*) -- when students had diverted most of their attention the semester between the audits to broadening their campaign. It is my hypothesis that this campaign actually enabled CDS to cross a threshold of purchasing. Students had advocated for a larger strategy and goal to be committed to by our higher administration. When UNC administration showed demur towards this goal, the ask fell upon CDS instead. From here on out, it is evidenced in CDS' actions that they made a personal commitment to this. Though I would not go so far as to say they were performing this work to spite administration (which was the motivation behind numerous FLO members' actions), their collaborative nature henceforth suggests a logical shift regarding the importance of this campaign.

Fall 2013 introduced a new team of students to the Real Food Calculator Internship. I was a part of this team, and a sophomore at the time. This semester was unlike the past three in that the national network of Real Food Challenge students and advisors had completed an online

Calculator program. Before, students would input all invoice data into an Excel spreadsheet and analyze the sheet for trends themselves. This new software was programmed to recall product details by their itemized codes. Additionally, the entire database of products could be organized in order of cost, *real food* category, product name, product type, product code, and vendor name. The intention of this attribute was to ease the input of data, as well as to streamline the computational analysis. This new program also supported users by producing many of the graphs and statistics.

Unfortunately, the program proved less effective than what was explained to us. There was no identification tag that distinguished line items uniquely. This was troubling since there are hundreds of line items, many of which are recurring purchases. The software's ability to recall product details by their itemized codes was also inconsistent, which slowed down a processing attribute that was guaranteed to researchers. We were often troubleshooting systematic errors, and it became clear that the program was still in its developmental stage. However, the goal for advancement and efficiency was evident, and we accepted our role and responsibility as researchers piloting this newly launched software program.

Despite the unforeseen setbacks of this new semester, the percentage of *real food* purchases grew to over 23% in fall 2013. Growth was observed in each of the categories, but especially in eggs, dairy, and fish/seafood. Fall 2013 also introduced a new *real food* vendor: Firsthand Foods. Firsthand Foods is a meat aggregator based in Durham that sources local, pasture-raised pork and beef.

Firsthand Foods co-founders and co-CEOs, Jennifer Curtis and Tina Prevatte, are UNC graduates. Curtis has a Masters Degree in Public Health and Prevatte received her MBA from Kenan Flagler. Their business model grew with support from the Center for Environmental

Farming Systems (CEFS), which is based at NC State University. (Jennifer Curtis also spoke at FLO's "People, Power, Pork" event hosted in 2006.) Curtis and Prevatte built the company with the sole intention of filling the gap in our supply chain, supporting farmers who practice sustainable meat production and buyers interested in sourcing sustainable meats. Firsthand employs a food hub model, acting as an aggregator, marketer, and distributor, a "middleman" of sorts between farmers and consumers. In this model, the business looks to supply sustainable meats to three primary buyers: wholesale, retail, and institutions.

Before Firsthand Foods, CDS was sourcing grass-fed beef from Virginia-based Grayson Natural Farms. Unfortunately, shortages in physical supply from Grayson Farms and the high cost of the beef led to CDS looking elsewhere for a reliable and affordable protein supplier (Myers, 2016).

In 2013, Firsthand Foods and Carolina Dining Services entered into a partnership. Pasture-raised pork was the first wholesale product that CDS purchased because it was lower in price-point than beef. Firsthand Foods was also able to stock up on their product volume, a necessary attribute that small, individual farmers lacked. Because the pork was sourced from farms all under 250 miles of UNC-CH and aggregated by a business that met the community-based qualifications, it was considered local and community-based according to the *Real Food Guide*. Additionally, it was certified as American Welfare Approved (AWA) by the American Welfare Association, which met the qualifications for the humane category under the *Real Food Guide*.

At this time, the main product from Firsthand Foods that CDS purchased was their breakfast sausage. Eventually the partnership would encourage CDS to expand their purchases to include beef and any cuts of meat Firsthand would stockpile. CDS learned quickly that there

were incredible benefits to working with a localized aggregator like Firsthand Foods. As a supplier they were reliable, considerate and personable, and had the capacity and interest in extending their presence on campus through class presentations and outreach events. As a buyer CDS offered planned and flexible menu planning, permitting Firsthand to stockpile products that they wouldn't be able to sell to their retail or restaurant buyers, and a large volume and practical utilization of a variety of cuts (Curtis, 2015).

The fall 2013 Real Food Calculator audit was the first to include purchases from Firsthand Foods. The pasture-raised pork qualified as *real* under two of the *Guide's* categories -- Local and Community-Based and Humane -- which meant that the product was considered Real Food A. (Products only meeting the standards of one category are considered Real Food B.) Purchasing foods that qualify in multiple categories shows a buyer's commitment to more holistic sustainability.

Towards the end of Fall 2013 it was decided that the internship would expand to include a spring semester audit. It had always been of interest to students to have a fuller assessment of yearly purchasing, especially since the fall audit had always happened in September, which we called a "harvest" month. Therefore, that fall semester marked the first heavy recruitment performed by interns. Students presented the internship to food-related classes and sent out the course description over listservs. Based on the archive of notes, initial audits had been more integrated into FLO's organizational goals and efforts. As time passed, the internship gained a history of its own with its own formalized structure. Its curriculum expanded as it began incorporating more scholarly engagement. In this expansion, it became less attached to FLO as an organization (see *Appendix C*).

In Spring 2014 a team of three students participated in the Calculator internship. Two of these students were involved with FLO, which provided the students with appropriate context of the internship's history and impact. This made a significant difference in the depth of research conducted and the consideration for the complexity of decision-making. The spring 2014 semester continued the positive trend in the percentage of *real food* purchased by the dining hall. At 26% Real Food, it was the highest percentage yet.

Of this percentage, over 9% was considered Real Food A, signifying it qualified under two different categories in the *Real Food Guide*. The percentage of Real Food A was nearly equivalent to fall 2011's total procurement of *real food* suggesting significant and expedited growth.

Additionally, the team discovered that at the time, "UNC [had] the second highest total real food percentage amongst RFC schools that have completed the calculator program," second only to Colorado College, a school serving about 2,500 students (Huber et al., 2014). This data was limited to the 13 institutions that had completed the calculator out of 142 signed on to the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment. This limited data is indicative of the unending challenges in creating a national procedure for auditing and recording university procurement, as well as justification for a potential resistance that universities have in signing the *Commitment*.

UNC's capacity to continue the tracking of food procurement is clearly unique. This year continued to reveal the commitment Carolina Dining Services executives, Scott Myers and Scott Weir, have to further this work and involve students in this process. It should not go unnoticed that Scott Myers especially, has been an instrumental force continuously addressing concerns related to food procurement.

Building on the last semester, students brought up challenges to working with *Real Food Challenge*. Specifically, students described a lack of a national community that fostered connection and communication. At the time, my views were very much the same as these interns. However, looking back it seems that UNC students are consistently viewing RFC as an entity that should accommodate students. In actuality, RFC is a body of students and student work. UNC students have repeatedly failed to recognize themselves as a part of the Real Food Challenge network. We forget that we are the community that defines the terms.

Fall 2014, I was the least involved in mentoring new interns. Instead I was involved with directing FLO, coordinating our Campus Farmers' Markets for the second semester, supporting the continuation of our bi-weekly meetings with CDS, and facilitating a new cross-campus student food coalition that was later absorbed by the campus Food Theme. I had recognized the previous semester that FLO was in need of some structural refocusing, and that our campus was in need of a centralized body that aligned the various food-related student organizations' efforts. Regarding FLO, I wrote in May 2014 that,

I see FLO right now as this central hub of food issues on campus, one that has a great and historical presence at UNC. We have shaped a lot of what has become the status quo in the dining halls (introducing and insisting on more local, sustainable food products). We have encouraged the growth of a research and academic study of food issues through the Sustainability Internship with CDS using the Real Food Calculator. And we've inspired the start up of a student-run food co-op, The Sonder Market (Hannapel, 2014).

That semester, while shifting our internal organizational efforts, I worked to connect with other student organizations too. Caitlin Seyfried, a member of the Campus Y-based group

SWEAT (Students Working for Environmental Action and Transformation), and I reached out to leaders of food-related student organizations on campus. Over the course of the fall semester she and I met to discuss how best to reach these students and how to form an effective coalition that met the needs of the collective organizations. Our impression, which was later confirmed by our peers, was that there was disconnect between different organization's efforts.

In an effort to foster more communication and collaboration, we invited each group to the FLO Food fall farmers' market. Ten different groups attended (See *Appendix F*). We paired organizations and assigned two each to a table. Though we had planned to hold the event in the pit, it actually took place in the Great Hall due to inclement weather. Despite the change in location, we received very positive feedback from the leaders of the food-related organizations. This feedback led us to organize ourselves into a student collective, which we named the UNC Food Coalition. We held a total of four meetings. The first was in late November. We heard from students and shared with them our speculation that there was a pan-campus food theme to follow the 2012-15 Campus Water Theme. We created a listserv and shared resources. But a major concern, that this group would inevitably be another meeting on everyone's agenda, was underlying many leaders' tones. With the confirmation of a Food Theme to begin that April, we met for a final meeting in February of 2015. It was decided that four students would be representatives on the Food Theme, so we decided that our efforts would be best directed to creating an application for these student representatives and disseminating it through our network and across campus. The Theme became official as the semester winded down, and the Food Coalition faded from students' minds and responsibilities.

The effort to form a student coalition is not unprecedented. There had been similar efforts to form an environmentally based "Round Tables" student collective. With students' range of

schedules and commitment-levels these undertakings are challenging to sustain. While the UNC Food Coalition was a short-lived initiative, we felt our accomplishments were worthwhile. We had connected food-related student leaders of food groups, increased awareness of activity and objectives between groups, and shared resources through the creation of a Food Coalition Google Drive. Lastly, our meetings had included the discussion of key objectives that we wanted to be seen through the implementation of a Campus Food Theme. This was especially helpful for me to hear, as I was one of the four students who was selected as a student representative. It is also clear that the formation and dissolution of the UNC Food Coalition contributed to the development and documentation of our campus food system.

PHASE IV: REACHING A THRESHOLD

The spring and fall 2015 semesters brought with them new challenges and accomplishments within the *real food* field of study. Each semester had cohorts of four students, the largest Calculator Intern teams thus far. It had become more manageable to recruit students. The fact that the internship had an enrollment capacity meant that even if 8-10 students expressed interest, some could drop out and there would still be enough to operate the internship in an effective manner. Plus, there was growing interest in food studies and research in sustainable food systems on campus as evidenced in the campus Food Theme's installation. Courses that supported the study of food systems were being offered on a regular basis and new innovative courses were being added each semester.

The growth of these internship teams meant students were even less likely to have worked with FLO Food and understand the historical context and the weight of decisions being made. This challenge was compensated by my dedication, as a past student intern, to mentoring

the new interns. I worked at the start of the semester to share the history of the internship, including key product shifts. I gave an outline of the institutional food service model, explaining the difference in the scale and scope of UNC's suppliers. Throughout the semester I met with the teams in-person and did my best to initiate virtual check-ins over email. However, the lack in formalized mentorship and direction of the internship became more and more apparent. Since fall 2013 (the year I participated) students' findings were repetitive and increasing the percentage of *real food* became more and more challenging.

Additionally, after surpassing 20% *real food*, the "low-hanging fruit" was assumed to be gone. "Low-hanging fruit" is a term used to signify the products that can be easily replaced with a comparably priced and readily available *real food* alternative. Two examples of UNC's low-hanging fruit include: seasonal produce from local farms sourced through Freshpoint, an existing supplier and division of the Sysco Corporation; and cost-neutral substitutions of milk from PET to Maola Milk & Ice Cream, which was confirmed to source milk from all local and cooperatively-owned dairies. Once the obvious substitutions were made, it became incredibly challenging for student interns to make cost-effective and realistic recommendations without sounding overly demanding. The secondary product shift tactic that interns were unknowingly running up against was that of "high hanging fruit," or the shifts of products that may not be readily available but have a large impact on the food economy. Many times, shifting "high hanging fruit" is an approach to develop deeper relationships with producers and community members while collaborating in building resilient food systems. Because it is more costly, this tactic is often employed through gradual investment. All the same, the shifts cost money and were challenging to implement since the dining service saw all *real food* spending as "extra spending" (Myers, 2016).

This price threshold was first mentioned in late 2011. At that time, the *real food* spending did not exceed \$4,000. It is clear that since then CDS and the Real Food Calculator Interns have worked to adjust spending to accommodate and creatively address the demand for *real food*. Nevertheless, CDS met a threshold as spending increased and the primary resourceful spending and substitutionary tactic could no longer be used.

Additionally, whereas the student interns could previously perform and complete research during a single semester, increasing real food purchases in the most recent years demanded a better grasp of (and potentially more connections within) the university food supply chain. Interns needed higher levels of thinking, and more time and resources to research the product shifts. This challenge suggested that the internship had outgrown itself. The demands we were placing on it were unfit for its current capacity. We needed a supplemental working group to guide the intern's research and recommendations.

Simultaneous to the procurement challenge, were underlying challenges regarding the balance in communication between CDS, RFC, and UNC advisors. It was unclear in some moments what the interns' responsibilities were and who was accountable to whom. In response to this, I led an effort to clearly outline and further develop the curriculum of the Internship (see *Appendix D*) for the fall 2015 semester audit. Gigi Lytton, a previous semester student intern, assisted me with this. The intent of this was to introduce a more comprehensive understanding of the food system and where university dining halls specifically fit within this system. The proposal was built upon developing three core skill-sets: systems thinking, data management and programming, as well as completing a personal research project. We shared this proposal with Amy Cooke, the faculty advisor, and Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld, the faculty mentor. They expressed interest, but little action was taken to move towards advancing the curriculum. Amy

and Rudi already lacked the time and proper accreditation to invest any deeper efforts into this project. Neither professor was receiving hours for their advisement. Instead, it was decided that (in an effort to pass along responsibility) Gigi would oversee the interns and support them in the development of their personal research projects (the only component of the proposal that truly stuck) and offer insight and assistance should any misunderstandings of products and vendors arise. She did her best to meet with the interns on a weekly basis, and answered questions over email as often as she could.

As usual the internship culminated in a presentation led by the team of interns during the week of finals. I supported the interns in organizing this presentation, and encouraged them to invite university staff and community partners including those from the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS). The presentation was probably the most well attended Real Food Calculator Presentation yet. Included in the audience were the usual Carolina Dining Services Staff: Scott Weir (General Manager), Ryan Moore (Food Service Director), Chip Mullins (Unit Controller), Scott Myers (Director of Food & Vending), and Mike Freeman (Director of Auxiliary Services). Joining these people were Cindy Shea (Director of the Sustainability Office), Robyn Stout (NC 10% Campaign, CEFS), Rebecca Dunning (NC Growing Together, CEFS), and Emma Hutchens (NC 10% Campaign, CEFS, RFC). Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld and Amy Cooke, the internship's faculty advisors, and a number of FLO members and past interns also attended.

At the presentation, the interns shared the main purpose of the internship, the percentage of *real food* (28%), the product purchases that explain this number, and the recommendations for future semesters. And yet, the work presented seemed unsubstantial. Many of the conclusions and recommendations seemed no different from what I remembered my team outlined *two years*

previously. There were very few recommendations for new products and suppliers. The interns implicitly attributed this to their time devoted to personal research projects, which they did not end up explaining in their presentation. It was disappointing. It spoke to the same possibility that we had outgrown this internship model.

During the winter holiday a couple of weeks later, it became clear that my disappointment for unsubstantial research was not coincidental. Reviewing the interns' presentation while doing research for this paper, I came across an incorrect recommendation of procedures, which was then interpreted as a vendor recommendation. This series of challenges is incredibly layered, and even analyzing it now, I am finding intricacies that will go unexplained.

During the interns' presentation, they addressed a frustration over the *Real Food Guide's* lack of flexibility. They stated, "while [RFC's approved] certifications are good, they are not the only measure of the sustainability of a food item. A lot of local farmers produce their food in ways that would be considered 'humane' but they are not given this distinction [because] they are too small to be able to acquire the certification" (Green et al., 2015). The students were basing this opinion on their experience researching a pork producer called Heritage Farms.

Heritage Farms is a medium scale farming operation based out of Seven Springs, North Carolina. The operation raises and produces a special breed of hogs called Cheshire Pork, which is sold domestically. This is one of many lines of products. According to the website their "farms utilize humane livestock handling" and are approved by Temple Grandin, a livestock industry consultant ("Why Cheshire Pork?"). The students gave the example of researching Heritage Farms Cheshire Pork as proof of the Guide's inflexible humane (and real food) standards.

In the time since the interns' "recommendation" and my discovery of this incorrect procedure, CDS had begun to lay the groundwork for establishing Heritage Farms as a new

vendor. Meanwhile, I received confirmation from Jennifer Curtis, the co-founder and co-CEO of Firsthand Foods, that CDS had dropped them as a supplier of sustainable meats.

Throughout this process, what students failed to understand is that the Real Food Guide is a complex document that includes *heavily vetted* standards. Not just any certifications are allowed on it. The fact that students advocated for the flexibility of these standards is challenging to hear. Their statement is concerning because it suggests a failed understanding of the complexity of the *Guide* and the Real Food Challenge's process in using the Calculator.

The second concern is the fact that this stated opinion regarding the *Guide's* inflexibility of humane standards was quickly misinterpreted as a recommendation by CDS. At the time, even I interpreted the mistake as a recommendation to introduce a new vendor. But, the fact that the "recommendation" was incomplete -- that there was very little researched justification for why this vendor should be considered -- is evidence of the fact that it was not actually a recommendation at all. While the interns clearly did not recognize the seriousness of their opinions and research, through further research of my own, it looked as though CDS jumped at the opportunity to identify a new, cheaper vendor. Since 2013, Firsthand Foods had been providing very high quality meats on a reliable basis, and had an extensive relationship with dining and our university faculty and community. They were growing as a business, with UNC as one of their largest buyers. But, undoubtedly, their meats were a higher price than others in the market. Come December 2015, I think CDS was already looking for a way to cut spending with sustainable meats.

Cutting spending can be done a number of different ways. In the case of Firsthand Foods, and many other products purchased by UNC, CDS used the competitive marketplace to justify the development of relationships with new suppliers. Establishing a competitive market is a

simple enough strategy, and *real food* should not, by any means, be excluded from this.

However, this strategy is concerning when suppliers are regularly replaced by cheaper vendors. The resulting action of this strategy is against many of the implied values of *real food*, that of a relationship-based food system. In order to get the *real food* percentage we have to pay the premium cost. While we may be developing streamlined food chains, there are no shortcuts in the *real food* system.

This failed process to shift vendors is indicative of the advancement the internship needed. It is evidence of the serious lack of strategy that our dining program has when it comes to advancing *real food* purchases. When it comes down to sustainable meats, what does it mean when we invest in Smithfield (the cheapest of the cheap) and Firsthand Foods (perhaps the best of the best)? What does it mean when we have to look beyond our state, to others across the country, in order to source certified humane or ecologically sound foods? How can we uphold the integrity of our standards? How can they be both rigorous and fair to our suppliers?

These are the hard questions, and the questions that I believe UNC has not taken the time to answer. The lack of strategy has and will continue to translate into repetitive conclusions made by student researchers, unintentionally abrupt drops in vendor relations, and a model of research and assessment that is reliant on too few stakeholders. The fact that one person (me) was reviewing the interns' project and doing so for her own academic benefit, revealed an incorrect dependency and inefficient structure of labor. The fact that I needed confirmation from a personal relationship that CDS had indeed dropped Firsthand Foods proved that our campus food system and decision-making bodies were non-transparent.

Over the years, while the internship itself has gained a formal structure, an informal complementary working group has formed. Each semester it "meets" at the Real Food Calculator

Interns' final presentation. Members of the group include the internship's faculty mentor and advisor, current student interns, CDS executive staff. But, without formalization, the working group cannot develop long-term strategy. Without continuity and commitment in student researchers and leaders, the working group cannot expand past the capacity of the internship. And the working group has such a larger capacity than the internship. It has a capacity to direct the initial research performed by students, evaluate that research, and then provide dining administrators with actionable advice. Students signed on for a semester's commitment perform the current research, but sustainable dining decision-making needs a much longer commitment. This work needs to be officially recognized. While it cannot lose its relationship-based nature, this work needs to be institutionalized in order for us to continue making *real* strides.

IV. SYNTHESIS AND REFLECTIONS

In providing a case study of the longstanding advancement of *real food* on campus I hoped to illustrate a number of ideas. These include: the often-reoccurring themes seen in student campaigns, a financial threshold that is repeatedly questioned by students, and the fluctuating emphasis in a relationship-based and structurally supported food system.

Both *real food* campaigns on UNC's campus escalated during spring semesters. This makes sense as student organizations commonly build their base and gather allies in the fall. Come spring, students are often triggered by an event or concern based on campus or nationwide. In 2012, the fact that RFC had, for the first time, formalized a national campaign and universities were signing on, inspired UNC students to join the effort. At the heart of this campaign is an articulated commitment to real food – an institutionalized goal and strategy for how a *campus* food system would be developed in the long-term. Though the campaign faded

and FLO students directed their efforts away from the *Campus Commitment* itself, they were still advancing *real food*. At that point, they were satisfied “with the rate of progress” and knew that they could still make effective change (Atkinson, 2016).

Comparatively, the failed process of shifting vendors and resulting drop in Firsthand Foods initiated the campaign in 2016. Underlying this was a breakdown of communication and lack of direction. Students leading the second campaign worked hard to maintain the tone of the first, however this unfortunate proceeding and the precedent that students had created in 2012 by abandoning their campaign influenced the tone of the new campaign. The 2016 campaign held the weight of a missed opportunity four years previous. We were cognizant that this campaign could be perceived as a rallying cry against the drop of Firsthand Foods; it was not our intention to make this drop politically charged. Yet, we needed Firsthand Foods as a spark to revitalize the previous *real food* campaign. Between 2012 and 2016, students and staff had not let up their efforts. However, this personal dedication was not matched by a growth of infrastructure, curriculum, or by a public commitment. Mounting on this energy was my increasing awareness of student power and *real food* campaigns growing on large, public universities across the southeast. These included the University of South Carolina (USC), University of Georgia (UGA), and University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK).

This vendor shift proceeding also represented the financial threshold that CDS had reached. The threshold disrupted current strategies for which students negotiated back in 2008. The internship is an example of an existing strategy that uses a tactful and systematic method to shift purchasing since the entirety of the process involves auditing purchasing retroactively and making recommendations for future semesters. Current strategies, like the internship, were adopted because they work within the organizational framework employed by CDS. But

reaching a purchasing plateau meant that strategies needed to advance to support higher level and greater impact product shifts (see Appendix A: *high hanging fruit*).

In its current capacity the internship can only offer recommendations and research. While we must sustain this tactful and systematic process of incorporating *real food* into CDS' purchases, without properly addressing this capacity and financial threshold, and making a concerted effort to advance supporting infrastructure, we will be unable to make significant progress. We are in need of a judicious plan that advances the systematic process.

Acknowledging that one person can do only so much, I developed a tangible plan to help translate some of these thoughts into action. I drafted a Food Systems Working Group Policy (see *Appendix G*) covering the charge, composition, and activities of the Food Systems Working Group, how the Real Food Calculator will be used, definitions of Real Food, and guidelines for procurement decisions. This document could inform the creation of a Real Food Multi-year Action Plan (which would outline plans for meeting UNC's commitment to Real Food) and a Real Food Decision Matrix (which would inform specific procurement decisions). Typically, a formalized working group would develop this plan, but putting a draft on the table was an effort to initiate this work.

Over the years, the types of product shifts we have made are practical, cost-neutral substitutions or gradual incremental product shifts. But these shifts are limited. They are guided by singular recommendations rather than a strategic plan. They create moments of change that are at risk of being reversed.

Lastly, as noted in the case study, much of the work done to develop our campus food system and advance *real food* purchases is based in relationships. FLO members work hard to develop relationships with dining service administrators; students build relationships with

community members and regional farmers; and faculty and students are continuously exchanging information and research. We are in a web of relationships, and this should not be forgotten. This is what supports our campus food system, and any food system really. It personalizes the movement. And yet, this cannot be the only factor that sustains our food system. Like the singular product recommendations, these relationships produce pockets of change rather than systemic transformation, and they risk being lost over time.

While the personal commitment should be praised and the work accomplished should be acknowledged, without a formalized commitment this work is reversible. At any point our contracted food service provider could close their doors. This fact proves the working relationships are fragile and there is a limit to our food system being based primarily on relationships. The work needs to be formalized into policy and procedures, expectations and standards. Not only would this commitment secure future work, it will accredit students, faculty, dining staff, and our university for the incredible work that has already been accomplished.

We need a higher profile for the internship and the supporting curriculum, to rework connections, and formalize the decision-making process that builds our campus food system. We do not want to lose the relationship-based nature of our campus system, but as these relationships are developed, structural and financial support must also be furthered. Just as the minute details of our food supply chain accommodate the demands of customers, the entirety of our campus food system must respond to the inevitable growth. In this way, universities can act as partners in the transformation of regional food systems.

Upon reaching this point – in this paper, in this semester, in this movement here at UNC – a final question that repeatedly arises in my mind is whether we are compromising the values of the movement to work collaboratively with entities as large as universities. When we arrive at

a university to advance sustainable food – making it accessible and moving it to a much broader scale – are we able to maintain the integrity of this movement? Just as organic grew to a scale that skeptics questioned, should we question our work with universities and large food service corporations like Aramark? Are we selling out by working alongside our administration? Are we preventing short-term harm, which potentially grows into gradual change, or is it enabling the system and contributing to further harm?

I have come to the conclusion that it does not have to be a sell-out. Instead, I see it as a middle ground, a compromise – a grey space, rather than the black and white of a sell-out. I think it is a step in the right direction. It is not the only step by any means, but it is a step. Furthermore, by broadening the movement to a university, we reach a collection of people so far from the isolated consumer (and his or her consumer consciousness) who is so often used as the prototypical change maker in our media today. On a college campus we are able to reach a mass of people that is always growing and changing. This rapid growth and turnover breeds not only scale – a much-needed attribute of alternative food movements – but also impactful and accelerated change.

All the same this work – the heavy negotiations and collaborative action happening with our university administration – could lead to a false assumption of success. In other words, it could sell out if we do not take certain precautions. Perhaps, most important, is our task to always ask questions and be heavily engaged in the conversation and the critique. This work should generate reaction and conflict. It should feel uncomfortable and new. This is change after all. It is not supposed to look like what we are used to seeing.

In order for this engagement to happen in a productive and safe space, we must develop a system of checks and balances that allows members of diverse stakeholder groups to come

forward and speak out. This structure should promote compromises, and leverage commitment and passion, rather than allowing people to deflect responsibilities and a sense of accountability. I believe that the more we invest in the complexity, the more we can become aware of the magnitude of the work. And, in doing so, we can carve out much more meaning from this space.

A real food system can be a reality, but UNC will not be able to do this without considerable participation and collective action, particularly in the areas of human and institutional capacity building. It is not one or the other; no amount of financial investment will bring about such a transformative change unless it is locally led by an inspired community and driven by an unequivocal support and commitment from administrative leaders and policy makers. I believe the university is ready to make this lasting change – it is the *real work*.

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VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A: *Glossary*

Aramark: The Pennsylvania-based food service corporation that works with institutions all across the US. The ten-year contract between UNC and Aramark was agreed upon in April 2001. Come spring 2007 this contract was extended from its original termination date of August 2011 to August 2021.

CDS: Carolina Dining Services, UNC's food service provider. As of fall 2015, the two residential dining halls serve about 10,000 meals per day and average about 4.5 million meals per year.

High hanging fruit: The secondary product shift tactic that researchers use to make product shifts. These products may not be readily available but have a large impact on the food economy. Because it is more costly, this tactic is often undergone through gradual investment, and involves developing deep relationships with producers and community members while collaborating in building resilient food systems.

Lenoir (Dining Hall): One of two residential dining halls operated by CDS. Lenoir is the central dining hall, and offers of seven main stations serving a variety of cuisines and accommodating numerous dietary preferences.

Low hanging fruit: A term used to signify any food products that can be easily replaced with a comparably priced and readily available *real food* alternative. This occurs most conveniently when shifts can be made through established vendors.

Rams Head (Dining Hall): One of two residential dining halls operated by CDS. Rams is the south campus residential dining hall, and has extended hours specifically convenient to many of the south campus residents.

Real Food: Food that supports producers, communities, consumers, and the earth. For assessment purposes, the *Real Food Guide* qualifies real food under four categories: ecologically sound, fair, humane, and local & community-based.

Real Food Challenge: A national campaign network that looks to shift at least \$1 billion (or 20%) of university food purchasing towards supporting *real food*. The organization looks to build student power and capitalize on the economic power of universities.

Appendix B: UNC Dining Service Hierarchy Tree

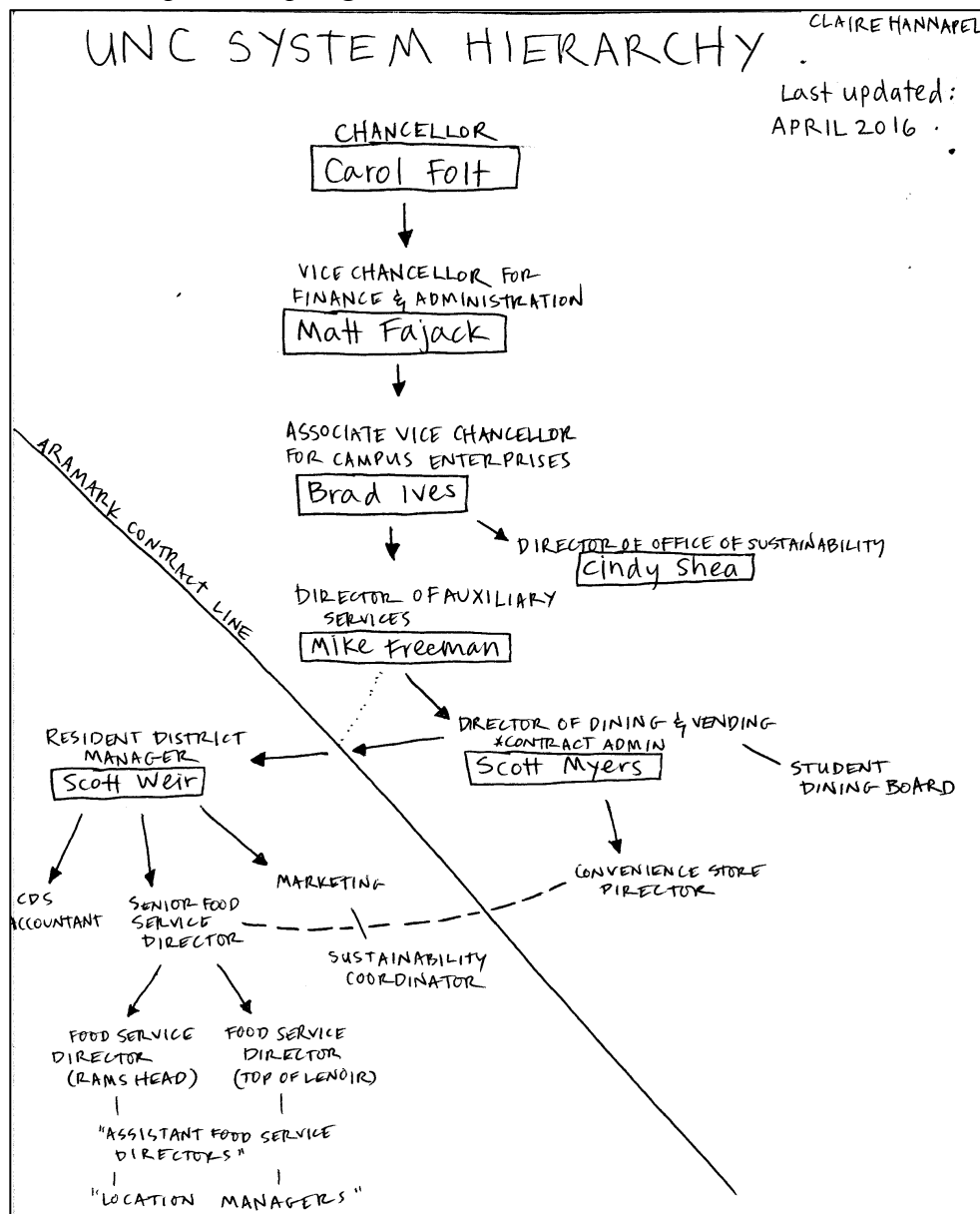
Summary:

Scott Myers oversees the relationship with CDS as Director of Food and Vending. He reports to Mike Freeman who is the Director of Auxiliary Services. Mike Freeman reports to Brad Ives, the current Associate Vice Chancellor of Campus Enterprises. Brad Ives' boss is Matt Fajack, the Vice Chancellor of Finance & Administration, who reports directly to the Chancellor.

Aramark Contract Details:

The ten-year contract between UNC and Aramark was agreed upon in April 2001. In spring 2007, this contract was extended from its original termination date of August 2011 to August 2021. UNC also has a contract with Pepsi Bottling Ventures, first committed in August 2004 as a five-year contract. We are now in the 11th year of the contract with Pepsi, with little communication of these contract extensions. When it comes to purchases, Aramark handles all of the negotiations.

Hierarchy Tree: Last updated: Spring 2016



Appendix C: *FLO (Fair, Local, Organic) and campus food advocates*

When FLO first formed it purposely did not have a clear hierarchy and there were many people taking on different roles. Even still, there were prominent leaders within the organization that sustained the group over time.

Key: **Bolded names** are students who were the main leaders of FLO, *italicized names* are students who ran the RF Calculator, and (*) means that the student audited in the Spring. If there is a space between the initial list under the year and the name of the student, then that student was only involved in FLO through the RF Calculator. Lastly, if students are in parenthesis then they are only involved in the RF Campaign.

YEAR	FLO Students/RF Interns	YEAR (CONT.)	FLO Students/RF Interns
2007-08	Sally Lee David Hamilton Jordan Treacle Anna Krome-Lukens (graduate student) Bryan Davis Alena Steen Emily Madera Tony Peele	2012-13	Suzanne Fleishman Sara Skelton Sarah Acuff <i>Rachel Atkinson</i> <i>Glenn Lippig</i> <i>Blair Crumpler</i> Claire Hannapel Marisa Scavo Nina Comiskey
2008-09	Jordan Treacle Melissa Tinling Anna Krome-Lukens David Hamilton (RFO) Tony Peele Alena Steen Bryce Koukopoulos Patrick Boleman Adam Sherwood	2013-14	Rachel Atkinson Claire Hannapel Marisa Scavo <i>Anne E Corrigan</i> Alexandra Willcox <i>Ali Huber*</i> <i>Jill Tillet*</i> <i>Jessie Robinson*</i>
2009-10	Jordan Treacle (RFO) Melissa Tinling Anna Krome-Lukens Tony Peele Alena Steen Bryce Koukopoulos Patrick Boleman Adam Sherwood Emily Madera Laura Stroud	2014-15	Rachel Atkinson Claire Hannapel Ali Huber <i>Gigi Lytton*</i> Sara Salinas <i>Lily Rolader</i> <i>Elva Bennett</i> <i>Callie Bader</i> <i>Emma Aspell*</i> <i>Emily Rose*</i> <i>Katie Nuccio*</i>
2010-11	Melissa Tingling (RFO) <i>Suzanne Fleishman</i> <i>Sara Skelton</i> Anna Krome Lukens Nina Bryce Marisa Berry Danielle Balderas Sarah Acuff	2015-16	Claire Hannapel Ali Huber Sara Salinas Robin Lowe-Skillern Alexandra Wilcox <i>Samara Green</i> <i>Caila Prendergast</i> <i>Matt Lee</i> <i>Katelyn Liu</i> <i>CJ Choi*</i> (Mary Glen Hatcher) (Maya Weinberg)
2011-12	Suzanne Fleishman Sarah Acuff Sara Skelton <i>Danielle Balderas</i> <i>Marisa Berry</i> <i>Meredith Magjuka</i> Rachel Atkinson Nina Bryce Glenn Lippig Blair Crumpler		

Appendix D: Real Food Calculator Internship Proposed Curriculum Development

Proposed Curriculum Fall 2015: Real Food Calculator Internship *Claire Hannapel & Gigi Lytton*

As two students having experienced the RF Calculator first hand (Claire enrolled fall 2013, Gigi, spring 2015), we want to propose an updated curriculum for the fall 2015 course.

This new proposal is built on developing three core skill-sets:

1. Systems thinking
2. Data management and programming
3. Personal research project

SYSTEMS THINKING

We would like to introduce a more comprehensive understanding of the food system and where university dining halls specifically fit within this system. This “unit” would include a mini-lecture developed by us (currently being developed but see attached), a scheduled orientation with the Real Food Calculator Working Group, and a potential discussion with Carolina Dining Services/Aramark.

DATA MANAGEMENT SKILLS

In past semesters this was the main technical skill that students developed during the internship. During one internship, students process over 4-weeks worth of invoices, inputting them into an online database. Once input is complete students export this information and are able to compute various percentages, locate trends and create presentable charts and graphs displaying this data.

We feel that mentors (i.e. experienced, past interns) are needed to introduce specific data management skills for complete, quicker understanding and competency. We would like to cover in a short, workshop session how to:

- Format data to allow efficient exporting from Calculator
- Analyze trends, and teach “useful practices” for displaying data
- Share resources from RFC and past interns (i.e. [template from RFC website](#))

Additional Mentors:

- Katie Nuccio (RFCalc, Sp 2015)

RESEARCH PROJECT

We suggest that students should invest in a personal research project, diving more deeply into a specific product that CDS does (or does not) source. New interns could review research from past interns and address more fully what the product market and advancement may be, as well as what may hinder Carolina Dining Services from sourcing it at UNC.

Ideally, the papers would focus on one product and include a short background on CDS’s history and current purchasing strategy, address the importance of sourcing this product sustainably, and offer alternative purchasing options. The assignment would culminate in a short research paper (3-5 pages), which will provide great backing in the intern team’s final paper. We would serve as mentors during this research project, in-person during the initial stages and by way of email throughout.

Appendix E: Charts & Tables

Table 1: *Progress of CDS Real Food Percentages by Semester From Fall 2010 to Fall 2015*

Semester	Real Food Percentage
Fall 2010	13%
Fall 2011	10%
Fall 2012	20%
Fall 2013	23%
Spring 2014	26%
Fall 2014	21%
Spring 2015	29%
Fall 2015	28%

Appendix F: Event Posters

UNC Food Coalition, *Food For All Event*: 11/6/14



UNC Food Systems Working Group Policy

Drafted 3/1/16

Introduction and overview

Students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are currently campaigning for the Real Food Campus Commitment to be signed by Chancellor Carol Folt, thus committing UNC-CH to the purchase of at least 20% “Real Food” by the year 2020. This UNC Real Food Policy will be adopted by the UNC Food Systems Working Group and is designed to further the inclusion of *real food* into regular purchasing, and to guide implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment once signed at UNC-CH.

UNC-CH has shown its commitment to the advancement of our on-campus food system through the increase of local, humane, fair trade, and ecologically sound food products over time. The significant progress that has been made purchasing *real food* has been achieved through longstanding relationships between students, faculty and staff. These individuals’ commitments are consistent with UNC’s pan-campus academic Food Theme: Food For All, which aims to support and expand research, education, and outreach regarding food systems and culture at UNC.

UNC’s on-campus food system has the opportunity to be a model for what a healthy and sustainable food system can look like. As such, the activities of the Food Systems Working Group will directly contribute to students and the broader community.

This document covers the charge, composition, and activities of the Food Systems Working Group, how the Real Food Calculator will be used, definitions of Real food, and guidelines for procurement decisions. This document will inform the creation of a Real Food Multi-year Action Plan (which will outline plans for meeting our commitment to Real Food) and a Real Food Decision Matrix (which will inform specific procurement decisions).

This is a working document to be revised as necessary by the Food Systems Working Group.**

The Food Systems Working Group adopted this Working Group Policy on [insert date]. This policy is available on the UNC-CH website at [insert URL].

***much of the language used in this document is based on a food policy drafted by students at another university who has signed the campaign.*

1. Mission and governance

Charge: The Food Systems Working Group is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment. Specifically, the FSWG will:

- Develop a *real food policy* and *multi-year food action plan* for the campus;
- Advise Carolina Dining Services on real food purchasing decisions;
- Review annual Real Food Calculator assessments and annual progress report;
- Facilitate partnerships within the local community, including between campus dining providers

- and local farmers;
- Conduct and/or delegate outreach to increase student awareness and knowledge of the Real Food Challenge;
- Promote cross-departmental and cross-division communication and collaboration;
- Meet bi-annually (in the fall and spring) with the Student Dining Board regarding on-campus food infrastructure and meal plans as they relate to real food;
- Conduct feasibility studies to further develop institutional real food initiatives, where necessary.

Composition: The Food Systems Working Group (FSWG) shall include UNC-CH students, faculty, staff, administration, and representatives from Carolina Dining Services (CDS). Ideally a staff or faculty advisor will provide leadership and guidance to the student chair(s). To fill vacancies, potential FSWG members shall be identified and recruited every spring or on an as-needed basis. All members must approve any expansion of the FSWG.

The composition of the FSWG shall include representation from the following stakeholder categories:

- Student appointments (for continuity) to be filled by representatives (see next bullet):
 - 1 student who has run the Calculator in the past
 - 1 student who is currently running Calculator
 - 2 sophomores
 - 2 juniors
 - 2 seniors
 - At least half of students must have meal plans
- Student Representatives (9) from a mix of relevant student groups, such as:
 - FLO (Fair, Local, Organic) Food
 - The Sonder Market
 - Nutrition Coalition
 - Student Dining Board
 - Carolina Cupboard
 - HOPE Gardens
 - CDS Interns
 - Eco-Reps
 - SGA (Student Government Association)
 - Other clubs with a mission consistent with the Real Food Challenge
 - Student members-at-large
- Administration/Staff (3)
 - Director of Auxiliary Services
 - Director of Food & Vending
 - Office of Sustainability
 - University Relations
 - Provost, or designee
- Carolina Dining Services (3)
 - General Manager
 - Sustainability Coordinator
 - Executive Chef
- Faculty (3)

- Interested faculty from any discipline (recommended: Nutrition, Curriculum for the Environment & Ecology, Economics)

Student leadership: Students are expected to be the driving force behind the FSWG, with crucial support from other stakeholders. One student will serve as chair for the group. Student input, in the form of student body polling and consultation with relevant student clubs, will be utilized through research methods classes. The student chair(s) will be elected annually at the first meeting of the school year (likely in September) using the following process:

- Students self-nominate or are nominated by another FSWG member
- All student nominees provide a short statement (written or verbal) on why they want to serve in the position
- FSWG members vote by silent ballot using the voting procedure outlined below
- If more than one student is nominated, the elected chair has the option to share the position with the nominee with the next highest number of votes, though this decision and negotiation should be made outside of a FSWG meeting to avoid putting the recently elected chair on the spot

The student chair is responsible for:

- Managing the administration of the group, including
 - Generating meeting agendas,
 - Facilitating meetings, and
 - Managing budget,
- Liaising with the RFC national leadership,
- Generally keeping a high-level view of FSWG work, and
- Delegating responsibilities to other FSWG members.

Faculty or staff advisor: The faculty or staff advisor will be elected or designated annually (in the Spring) using the following process:

- Individuals self-nominate or are nominated by another FSWG member
- All nominees provide a short statement (written or verbal) on why they want to serve in the position
- FSWG members vote by silent ballot using the voting procedure outlined below

The faculty or staff advisor is responsible for supporting the student leadership on their areas of responsibility (see above), including providing guidance related to the organization of monthly meetings, agenda preparation, meeting facilitation, campaign organization, travel logistics, budget management, and the management of ongoing FSWG projects. The faculty or staff advisor should be an active advocate on behalf of the FSWG with other campus entities, including UNC-CH administration, CDS, the pan-campus Food Theme, and the Real Food Calculator Internship. In the absence of strong student leadership, the faculty or staff advisor should actively engage with current student members and/or seek new student members.

Activities: The FSWG will convene bi-monthly to discuss ongoing projects. FSWG Co-Chairs will develop meeting agendas, facilitate meetings, and take and distribute meeting notes. Ad-hoc subgroups

meet and carry out work between official meetings. Subgroups include, but are not limited to, policy, outreach, and research.

Accountability: The FSWG will report to the Provost through the Food Theme/Food Office. The University Chancellor is ultimately responsible for ensuring that UNC-CH meets the Real Food Campus Commitment of 20% real food by the year 2020, with the FSWG serving in an advisory role.

Voting Procedure (advisory votes):

All recommendations for major purchasing changes that will have a significant impact on the current foodscape must be brought to the committee for a formal vote. At least 5 students and two representatives from each of the other stakeholder groups must be present to meet quorum.

- There will be two rounds of voting, “yes” and “no”
- Second round must pass with 2/3 majority of “yes” votes
- Those with “no” votes in the first round must voice their concern/reason for their “no” vote
- Second round of voting is final vote and must pass with 2/3 support

Community Collaboration: The FSWG will include local community members, distributors, producers and/or farmers in its process and will hold open meetings for community input during the development of UNC-CH’s real food policy provisions.

Funding: The FSWG will be funded through Student Life or Student Government Association, through special allocation by the office of the president or another administrative office, by a student-approved fee (e.g. \$1 per student per semester), or by a combination of the above.

2. Real Food Calculator

Annual assessments of campus food purchasing will be undertaken using the Real Food Calculator. At this time, CDS purchases are the focus of the calculator assessment. In the future, the assessment could include others, for example Henderson’s, Cat’s Paws, University Bookstore, and other Davis Center vendors.

Roles:

- Student Calculator Interns: Three students will be primarily responsible for the completion of the Calculator assessment. This includes designing the scope and depth of the calculator assessment in dialogue with Real Food Challenge, liaising with the Food Systems Working Group, food service staff, and others. It includes outreach to vendors and distributors and ultimately, the publishing of a final report with real food percentages and other data. Dining services will provide support for 1 intern and UNC-CH will provide support for 2 interns. Students may receive academic credit (through course, independent study, internship, or service learning), an hourly wage, or stipends for their work.
- Dining Sustainability Coordinator: University Dining Services will provide support for a Sustainability Coordinator to oversee the calculator process and provide training and support the student calculator interns conducting the calculator assessment.
- Dining Director: Responsible for providing access to all necessary invoices, purchasing data and vendor contact information. Dining Directors are also expected to provide periodic feedback and support to the student researchers.
- Food Systems Working Group: Responsible for reviewing and publicly publishing results of the annual calculator assessment.

Scope of accounting: Food purchases tracked in the Real Food Calculator shall be for food purchased by Carolina Dining Services for food purchased and sold on campus.

Timeline: Calculator assessments will be performed bi-annually.

Relationship with Real Food Challenge national campaign: Relevant staff and student researchers will utilize regular technical assistance and support from Real Food Challenge staff and organizers. This includes training sessions, connection to student researchers and dining directors at other colleges and universities, and a full review of assessment results before they are published.

3. Food, Procurement, & Supply Chain

Definitions:

- Real Food: “Real food” will be used as a holistic term to describe products that are healthy as well as local, fair, ecologically sound, and/or humane. Local and fair refer to *who* produced the food, and ecologically sound and humane refer to *how* the food was produced. (see Real Food Calculator Guide for more)
- Real Food A vs. Real Food B: Those food items that can be verifiably identified as one of the four core real food criteria above is given a “Real Food B” designation (e.g. Food that is grown by a local family farm but sprayed with pesticides or a processed food item from a foreign company that is certified organic – good but not the best option). “Real Food A” is defined by food items that meet two or more of the real food criteria (e.g. coffee that is ecologically produced *and* fairly traded, or meat that that is humanely *and* locally raised/processed – this is the ideal).

Incremental Progress: The Food Systems Working Group will develop and monitor incremental procurement targets to ensure success.

- An incremental goal of 1-2% more real food purchasing per year to ensure the achievement of long term purchasing targets.
- Interim benchmarks will be set: __% percent real food by 20__.
- Real Food purchases are expected to eventually grow beyond 20% of the total food budget, with new goals to be set after 2020.

Purchasing Prioritization: UNC-CH will use the Real Food Calculator Guide and work with distributors to identify Real Food A and B among its purchasing options, and will automatically give preferential status to Real Food A or B products where price-competitive (as determined by CDS). Beyond that, the FSWG will create a decision matrix based on values and priorities, such as prioritizing one criterion over another or one product over another.

Direct Purchasing and Contract Growing: CDS will develop direct purchasing relationships with local producers and distributors. In some cases, CDS will work to establish contract-growing agreements in which the price and quantity of the product that will be purchased are arranged with the local producer before the season starts.

Local Collaboration and Liaisons: UNC-CH will continue its relations with NC 10% Campaign and NC

Growing Together (programs within the Center for Environmental Farming Systems) who have developed networks of interested growers. CEFS can help provide these growers with the tools they need to effectively meet institutional demand—including food safety, distribution, product aggregation, liability insurance, etc.

Seasonal Food Items: UNC-CH will gradually alter menu cycles so as to feature local, seasonally available foods as a way to accustom cooks and eaters to cooking with the seasons.

Commitment to labeling: CDS is committed to nutritional and origin labeling. Origin labeling is completed at the unit level as feasible. Potential goal to develop a UNC Real Food label as well.

Variety: CDS aims to provide a range of healthy options, including vegan and vegetarian options, culturally appropriate foods.

Cost-Savings Measures: The University will pursue creative cost-savings measures in order to devote greater funds towards real food priorities. Cost-saving measure may include, but are not limited to:

1. Switching from brand-name to generic brand items whenever possible (e.g. breakfast cereals),
2. Reducing portion sizes or utilizing portion-control service techniques (especially with meat), and
3. Reducing FOH and BOH food waste with customized offerings (e.g. hamburger not automatically served with bun) and continued education.

Infrastructure Needs: UNC-CH and CDS will help develop and/or finance necessary infrastructure to facilitate the increased procurement of real food items. This may include both in-house changes (including new processing, cooking equipment) as well as supply chain improvements (new local meat processing facilities, new distribution systems), for which the university may act as a collaborator and market guarantor.

Vendor Lists: CDS will work with distributors to determine the sources of all food purchases and make up-to-date lists of farms and producers publicly available on the school's website and by request, to the extent possible.

Internal Tracking Systems: CDS will continue the internal auditing of food purchased. CDS can further this effort through effective communication and transparent marketing so that products identified as *real food* can make their way from the loading docks, coolers and kitchens to the service lines and point of consumer selection and sale.

Food Labeling: CDS will label all food items with nutritional information, an ingredients list, location of origin (farm/producer, town, state), and real food status (local, fair trade, etc.), where feasible, at the site of the food's selection or sale.

4. Student and Community Involvement

Staffing: CDS will provide funding to at least one full-time Dining Sustainability Coordinator to help coordinate real food initiatives internal to the food service operations (including finding appropriate vendors, helping with RFPs, staff training) as well as external activities (supporting student group activities, awareness-raising events, academic programming). However, assistance with the Real Food

Challenge will not be the staff person's only responsibility.

Education Materials: CDS will continue to make available in its dining halls, and other points of sale, educational materials about real food and the school's real food policies, including, but not limited to, table tents, pamphlets, posters, and informational labels on food. Materials should feature UNC-CH, Real Food Challenge, and/or FLO Food branding, and may include branding related to Aramark if appropriate. This will emphasize the fact that the UNC-CH community is driving the changes.

Educational Programs: FSWG will continue to collaborate with the Food Theme and other entities on campus that promote community education on food systems issues through mediums such as lecture series, panel discussions, workshops, and film screenings.

National Consortium: When available, UNC-CH anticipates entering into and paying dues to an association of Real Food Campus Commitment signatories to receive support and recognition for their work and to promote the larger cause of local, fair, ecologically sound, and humane food.

Research: The FSWG will interface with undergrads, graduate students, faculty, staff, service learning, and internships programs to meet the research needs for our campus food system.

5. Dining Services

Professional Development: UNC-CH Dining Services will provide opportunities for paid professional development time for staff to deepen their knowledge of the Real Food Challenge. This will support greater on-campus awareness as dining services staff interact directly with students on a daily basis. Professional development activities could include, but are not limited to, workshops on food systems issues, cooking/preparation skills trainings, local farm visits, and forums on UNC-CH's real food action plan.

Dining Services Contract Process: The FSWG will develop recommendations for the RFP committee and will seek representation in any resulting contract negotiation process. During this process, FSWG members employed by Aramark are expected to recuse themselves from RFP and contract discussions to avoid potential conflict of interest issues.

6. Campus Sustainability

The Real Food Commitment is consistent with other sustainability initiatives at UNC-CH, including other sustainability commitments managed by the Office of Sustainability. UNC-CH has signed onto the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) and will be reporting annually on many indicators, including those related to food.

The Food Systems Working Group will also connect with other campus planning processes that relate to food, including buildings and facilities updates, climate action goals, campus planning, and utility planning. This group should help identify major ways in which sustainable food initiatives can be integrated into these processes.