

2017 Sustainability Challenge Grant
Gathering at the Table:
Cultivating Future Leaders in Sustainable, Community Food Systems
Final Report

Summary of the Project

Gathering at the Table is an innovative program created by the Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, The Food Connection and the Campus Kitchen at The University of Kentucky that brings together passionate student leaders, community food justice advocates, and eaters of all kinds to grow a sustainable, community food system. Through a combined strategy of hands-on culinary training, grassroots cooking demonstrations, local food recovery, and facilitated community dialogue, *Gathering at the Table* 'connects the dots' between sustainable food production, vibrant food economies, health and social justice to establish leaders of a thriving community food system.

Objectives

What you initially planned to accomplish and objectives achieved.

Project Goals:	Objectives Achieved:
<p>1. Build a network of student and community leaders who share an interest in food justice, food security, and sustainable regional food systems. (social)</p>	<p>Hosted hands-on dinners that engaged more than 100 individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 22: 36 participants, 40% students, 30% faculty and staff, and 30% community • September 12: 36 participants, 75% students 10% faculty 15% community • October 10: 17 participants, 75% students 10% faculty 15% community • November 14: 15 participants 85% students 10% faculty 5% community
<p>2. Increase knowledge about the importance of regional food systems as they relate to food security, health, and the environment. (ecological)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught 5 classes of Chef Training: Recruited 10 students who improved skills and knowledge as it relates to knife handling, reading and interpreting recipes, incorporating local and sustainable foods, teaching recipes, and understanding how food systems relate to food security, health and the environment. • Trained 18 student leaders from the Campus Kitchen at the University of Kentucky (CKUK) in cooking demonstrations, food

	<p>safety, culinary skills, and strategies for integrating local, sustainable foods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on cooking dinners (mentioned above) engaged more than 100 individuals in discussion and education related to building healthful, locally sourced meals on a budget.
<p>3. Empower the next generation of culinary citizens with the tools and knowledge necessary to feed themselves, their families, and their communities. (economic, social)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed 2 student fellows who led the marketing and promotion of the hands-on dinners in addition to assisting with program delivery. • 5 student leaders conducted 2 food demonstrations at Fresh Stop Markets on August 2, 2017 and October 3, 2017. • Hands-on dinner participants learned culinary skills, received resources for incorporating local, seasonal food on a budget, and discussed accessibility, justice issues, sustainability, and economy along the food chain. • On October 17, 2017, program leaders presented information about the project at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in San Antonio engaging an audience of 40 people. The presentation was well-received and networking connections were established.
<p>4. Establish a self-supporting curriculum and program. (social)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloted and critically evaluated the hands-on dinner curriculum in the Fall to be utilized by the Campus Kitchen at the University of Kentucky in the Spring. The teaching methods, structure, recipe selection, recruitment, and location were assessed. • Dinners will continue on (tentatively) March 6, March 28, and April 10th. The pay as you can registration fees cover the costs of paying local farmers for their produce and other recovery efforts provide pantry, freezer, and perishable foods.

5. Promote a cooperative, local agro-food economy. (economic)	Engaged 100 students from a variety of disciplines, organizations, backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and ideas in productive dialogue about building thriving community food systems. The pay-as-you-can model generated nearly \$300 that was used to pay farmers for their produce.
6. Decrease food waste in Lexington. (ecological)	For this specific program, we recovered or purchased nearly 750 pounds of fresh produce from local farms and paid local farmers and producers \$965.64. Dinner participants took excess food home to prevent post-consumer food waste.

Methods

To cohesively reach our goals and build on existing assets, we combined the Food Justice Dinners and Chef Training Series into a simplified, two-hour curriculum that incorporated cooking together and eating together. The structure for the hands-on dinners built on the positive response we experienced in the first Chef Ambassador training and the Food Connection’s Year of South Asia cooking series. As opposed to passive reception of a prepared meal, our new approach emphasized simultaneous skill and community building among those experiencing food insecurity with those working to foster food justice. Side by side, participants learned skills that highlighted budget-friendly, healthful, local, and sustainable meals while also introducing participants to food access resources and support networks.

To recruit participants for the classes, tailored promotion occurred at the beginning of the fall semester for the entire class series. Primary methods included email communications through college and department lists, social media, speaking to classes in the College of Agriculture, Food and the Environment, Campus Kitchen volunteer opportunities, flyers, and word-of-mouth. When asking participants how they learned about the dinners, majority of them said they learned about them through a friend or while volunteering with CKUK. Since targeting recruitment occurred at the beginning of the semester, we experienced a decline in participation at the end of the semester.

The 2-hour curriculum included the following class outline:

- Introduction (20 minutes)
 - Welcome participants. Provide an overview including length and content.
 - Introduce volunteer instructors.
 - Encourage discussion and sharing.

- Cooking and Food Safety (60 minutes)
- Eating Together, Informed Education and Dialogue (40 minutes)

Each class incorporated education, informed dialogue, and guests around central themes:

Class Date	Theme	Goal	Dinner Guests
March	Food sovereignty and justice	Increase knowledge about the importance of regional food systems as they relate to food justice.	Dr. Rosalind Harris, Ms. Anna Townsend
September	Stock your kitchen with healthful foods	Increase knowledge about the importance of regional food systems as they relate to health.	Vanessa Oliver, RDN, LD Shannon Winke, RDN, LD Lauren McKnight-Ford, RDN, LD
October	Eat in season	Increase knowledge about the importance of regional food systems as they relate to the environment.	Invited local farmers
November	Stretch your food dollar	Increase knowledge about the importance of regional food systems as they relate to food security.	Samantha LaMar and Erica Daly, Big Blue Pantry

After each hands-on dinner, we evaluated and altered the curriculum in order to develop a self-supporting model. All participants completed an evaluation that asked about their confidence in the kitchen, knife handling skills, ability to use recipes, and motivation to cook with local foods and in an environmentally conscious way (see outcomes below).

Outcomes

Students impacted:

- Facilitated engagement with 70 students at the hands-on dinners.
- Mentored 2 student fellows, including one graduate and one undergraduate student.
- Trained 28 students as experts in providing cooking demonstrations incorporating food safety, culinary skills, and strategies for integrating local, sustainable foods.

Community partners:

- Fresh Stop Market - Bi-weekly fresh food markets that "pop-up" at local churches, community centers, and housing authorities in fresh food insecure neighborhoods. Community members purchase shares of 10-12 varieties of seasonal produce in advance so that farmers don't face the same degree of risk as they would with a standard farmers' market. Our trained student leaders offered cooking demonstrations at these markets, which paired local, seasonal food with budget-friendly recipes.
- GleanKY - Gathers and redistributes excess fresh fruits and vegetables to nourish Kentucky's hungry. We utilized recovered produce from local farmers for our dinners. This produce would have otherwise gone to waste.
- Lexington Farmers' Market – Student leaders purchase produce through farmers at the market to supply local, seasonal foods and support a local agro-food economy.

Community participants:

- Engaged 20 community members at our hands-on dinners.
- Empowered approximately 25 community members during our cooking demonstrations with the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to build healthful, locally sourced meals.

Use of campus as living laboratory – How was this achieved, where, who was involved?

The Chef Trainings and hands-on dinners occurred at the Food Connection at the 90. In this culinary lab, students, community members, and Faculty gathered around a table to engage in informed dialogue about healthful cooking, food justice, and the environment. As a result of these *Gathering at the Table Dinners*, participants:

100%	Feel more confident in the kitchen.	100%	Understand how to cook in an environmentally conscious way.
96%	Are more confident in knife handling skills and ability to use recipes.	96%	Connected with others interested in food systems, food security, and food justice.
100%	Better understand issues of student food access and resources available.	100%	Increased understanding about how food systems relates to the environment and health.
90%	Motivated to purchase and cook using local foods.	91%	Understand how to build a healthy, local plate on a budget.

Participants shared:

- “I enjoyed the positive, upbeat learning environment and being in community with those interested in food systems.”
- “It was fun trying new foods.”
- “Cooking and eating with other people while talking about local food was the highlight of the class.”
- “I had no idea that was how you carved a chicken. I can’t wait to try this at home!”

New collaborations – What entities are involved; did you identify grant opportunities you will be or may be going for in the future?

In addition to building on existing relationships, a close collaboration was developed between the Food Connection, the Campus Kitchen at the University of Kentucky (CKUK), and Big Blue Pantry (BBP), the on-campus food pantry who serves those experiencing food insecurity. In order to better reach those experiencing hunger, recruitment for the Spring dinners will primarily focus on clients of Big Blue Pantry. Additional grants we are exploring include Farm to Fork, offered by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, and a proposal through the national Campus Kitchens Project.

Student leaders with CKUK, BBP, and SSTOP Hunger are also interested in creating a Fresh Stop Market on UK’s campus to increase fresh food access for food insecure students while also adding another opportunity for faculty and staff to participate in and grow the local agro-economy. We are still seeking funding opportunities.

Relationships were developed with the Cooperative Extension Nutrition Education Program professionals who are looking for resources for educating their clients about budget-friendly methods to eat healthy and incorporate more vegetables.

Published or planned scholarly products – Please provide documentation: abstracts (meeting name, place, title, presenters/authors), websites, blogs, manuscripts, etc.

Published

Whitehouse, T., Brislen, L., Hege, A., VanMeter, C., Stahl, D., Littlefield, N., McGuire, S., (October, 2017). *Gathering at the Table: An Innovative Approach to Sustainable Food Systems and Food Justice Programming*. Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (ASHE) Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Abstract: Gathering at the Table is an innovative program created by The Food Connection and Campus Kitchen at The University of Kentucky that brings together passionate student leaders, community food justice advocates, and eaters of all kinds to grow a sustainable, community food system. In this session, we will share the lessons we have learned while engaging a diversity of on- and off- campus community members in experiential learning and informed dialogue on key issues in the sustainability and social justice of our local food

system. Through a combined strategy of hands on culinary training, grassroots cooking demonstrations, food recovery, pay as you can dinners, and facilitated community dialogue, Gathering at the Table 'connects the dots' between sustainable food production, vibrant food economies, and social justice to establish leaders of a thriving community food system.

Planned

Kentucky Hunger Dialogue and The Campus Kitchens Project Boot Camp, Fall 2018

Reflection

Include insights on your individual projects, things you might have changed, next steps and feedback on your experience with the Sustainability Challenge Grant Program

In reflecting on the program, recruitment for the dinners were successful during the first half of the fall semester but participation dropped for the latter half of the series. Participants at all events shared the same level of enthusiasm in feedback. We will focus on tailored recruitment by narrowing our focus from the student-body to reach primary voices on-campus who are experiencing challenges in food justice, access and security. Recruitment will occur in partnership with Big Blue Pantry and utilizing the results of the UK Food Access Survey. The Campus Kitchen at the University of Kentucky will utilize the curriculum to continue building upon the success of the hands-on *Gathering at the Table Dinners*.

Budget Analysis

Expenditures	Planned	Actual
Direct Consumables	\$7,069.70	\$5,164.12
Travel	\$540.00	\$2,430.86*
Fellowships and Salaries	\$15,146.00	\$15,146.00
Total	\$22,755.70	\$22,740.98

*An increase in travel expenditures was due to the leadership being invited to present at the AASHE Conference in September, 2017 and share with individuals from across the nation about *Gathering at the Table*.

This project was sponsored by significant matching contributions of staff time and expertise by The Food Connection and the Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition. This project also benefited from the volunteer contributions of the leaders of Fresh Stop Markets and the Campus Kitchen at the University of Kentucky. Additionally, the project made extensive use of the facilities and equipment of The Food Connection Learning Kitchen.

Matching Funds	
Amanda Hege, RDN, LD; 10% FTE	\$ 4,955
Chef Tanya Whitehouse; 8% FTE	\$ 5,044
Lilian Brislen, Executive Director; 5% FTE	\$ 4,750
Facility use 10 classes (\$45 per hr., 4 hrs. each)	\$ 1,800
Facility use 6 dinners (\$45 per hr., 4 hrs. each)	\$ 1,080
	\$ 17,629

Visuals

Please include 2-5 captioned images directly related to the program



Chef Tanya leads students in a cooking demonstration



Students review a recipe and prepare to cook



Fresh, locally sourced ingredients that will be used in the meal



A student plating the final product, a local Mediterranean tuna salad



Students making fresh pasta to be used in the meal.

Additional photos can be accessed online:
<https://goo.gl/photos/xQtVrD49qxstgeFG6>