

University of Vermont Real Food Challenge

Annual Report for the 2017-2018 Assessment Year

Prepared by members of the UVM Real Food Working Group (RFG)

Introduction & Purpose

This report outlines the University of Vermont's recent achievements in increasing Real Food on campus. Within, we discuss major developments and projects, product shifts, events, outreach and awareness efforts, including several collaborations with campus groups. This report also addresses current challenges the University of Vermont (UVM) faces in advancing Real Food opportunities and awareness on campus. The Procurement Data section includes Real Food Calculator findings and other UVM metrics.

Report Highlights

The 2017-2018 academic year saw continued progress for the Real Food Challenge at UVM as we embarked on fulfilling our renewed commitment to 25% Real Food purchases by 2020.

Our total Real Food purchases were bolstered by a number of campus-wide product shifts. Our third year of partnership with the Intervale Food Hub increased local purchases. UVM Dining's shift to humane liquid eggs dramatically increased Real egg numbers. Through our collaboration with Sodexo's VT First campaign, we began sourcing local culled dairy beef from Precision Valley Farms. Additionally, Real dairy saw an increase through the opening of the UVM Dairy Bar, located in the Davis Center, which uses UVM CREAM milk.

Additional opportunities for Real Food at UVM included: the opening of the Central Campus Residence Hall Dining facility; development in RFC communication and outreach strategies; the hosting of several public events; and, communication with campus groups and product vendors. Additionally, the RFG has begun to expand our statewide connections via development of an Advisory Council, which will allow increased participation from experts in diverse fields relevant to the concerns of Real Food at UVM.

Major Developments and Projects

Continued Progress in Campus Commitment

After achieving 22% Real Food in assessment year 2016-2017 and renewing the Campus Commitment from 20% to 25% publicly at the Percentage Party on April 17, 2017, Real Food has reached a total of 23.6% at UVM. These numbers will be used as current totals for publicity and promotional purposes such as in classroom presentations and while tabling through the 2018-2019 academic year.

Advisory Council

In the middle of Fall Semester 2017, we began to consider creating an advisory body as a means of expanding our network and including those beyond the immediate UVM community. The primary motivation was to enable the Working Group to consider perspectives of individuals with broad professional experiences relevant to our institutional food systems. We felt that this was especially important given our continued progress towards a renewed Real Food Challenge goal of 25% Real Food by 2020; given the current rate of progress, it is possible that we will meet this new goal before 2020. Therefore, we feel it is important to begin thinking about UVM's next steps in food purchasing strategies.

To begin the process of creating an advisory body, we invited all Working Group members who were interested to form a sub-committee. The sub-committee met to determine how we wished to structure the advisory body in terms of size, authority, purview, and term limits of members. The sub-committee presented their initial structural proposals to the full group, and then worked to incorporate feedback. All members agreed that the Advisory Council will have no formal authority or voting power and will be limited to providing perspective and feedback on specific projects and undertakings as determined by the Working Group. Following this process, the sub-committee, with the full support of the Working Group, compiled a list of possible individuals to invite as inaugural members. At this point, we have invited 7 members to serve on the inaugural Real Food Advisory Council, and we hope to hold our first meeting in early June.

Central Campus Dining Hall (CCDH)

At the beginning of the Fall Semester, a new dining hall opened on central campus. Not only does this dining hall serve more than 20,000 meals a week and seat 450 students at a time, but it is a strong representation of Real Food principles on campus. The open

kitchen format is designed to promote student engagement. This layout is coupled with digital screens that provide nutrition advice and tell the story of UVM's commitment to local food. CCDH has an Exploration Station, equipped with six individual cooking areas where students can make their own meals and get closer to what's on their plate. The dining hall options are diverse and always include multiple plant-based choices.

Also located in the dining hall is the Discovery Kitchen, which offers cooking classes to students twice a week. A hydroponic farm wall located in the back of the kitchen grows bok choy, basil, parsley, dill, and mustard greens to be used in cooking class. The topics of the classes vary by week and have included learning how to cook with ingredients from a local CSA box, how to make veggie burgers, and how to roll sushi. CCDH served 18% Real Food in its first year of operation.

Communications

This year a small sub-committee focused exclusively on communicating Real Food purchasing and the mission of the Working Group to the broader UVM community. The overarching goals of this group were to compile strategies for increasing the visibility of the Working Group on campus and reach a broader audience more efficiently. One important development in this vein was establishing some and revitalizing other social media accounts. Specifically, we set up Twitter and Instagram accounts and continued to maintain our Facebook presence. A sub-committee will continue to focus on leveraging these platforms to increase awareness of Real Food among the UVM community through 2018.

The communications sub-committee undertook two additional campaigns to convey Real Food messaging to the campus community. After months of communication and collaboration, the Working Group facilitated a Real Food display in the Davis Center's Cat Pause retail outlet. The display highlighted Real products that were available for purchase, as well as basic messaging around what a Real classification signifies.

The second campaign undertaken by the communications sub-committee focused on Residence Halls. Posters were displayed in Residence Halls to highlight the Real Food Challenge at UVM. Additionally, members of the sub-committee met with Resident Advisors to share information to be communicated with students.

In the Fall of 2017, a member of the communications sub-committee also presented achievements, goals, and ongoing projects of the Working Group to the UVM Board of Trustees. This presentation was done in collaboration with members of UVM Dining. Attending a meeting of the Board of Trustees is a testament to the Working Group's

ongoing commitment to pursuing effective communication of our work and mission to all members of the UVM community.

Events & Outreach Activities

Fall 2017

As our first outreach event in Fall 2017, we tabled at the annual Activities Fest in order to present the RFWG and Real Food efforts on campus to welcome new and returning UVM students.

Later in the fall, we co-hosted an “Eat the Invaders” dinner at the Harris Millis Dining Hall. For this event, we partnered with UVM Dining; the class, ‘Invasion Ecology and Management’, Boston-based seafood provider, Red’s Best, and Gund Institute Researcher, Joe Roman, to curate a menu of invasive species-based dishes. At the event, the aforementioned stakeholders set up informational tables and engaged diners in conversation about invasive species as a tool in the future of sustainable eating.

Also, in the fall, RFWG outreach members met with Advocat member, Kendra Lennon, to discuss tour guide scripts about RFC on campus. We provided updated statistics and other current information to be used during tours for prospective students.

Spring 2018

Starting in January of 2018, we reached out to UVM professors of courses relevant to the themes of the RFWG. In some instances, the RFC on campus is a part of existing lesson plans and we saw the opportunity for involvement during those class days. Our goals were to provide information and materials and foster conversation with, and gain feedback from, students who are learning about our food system. We reached out to thirteen different professors and presented in two classes: CDAE 195 Environmental Impacts of Consumerism, taught by Rob Williams, and NFS 043 Farm-to-Table, taught by Karen Nordstrom.

Relationships & Partnerships

Product Shifts

UVM Dairy- CREAM

The UVM Dairy Bar reopened on August 28, 2017 after the original dairy bar closed in 1995. Among many factors, this was an opportunity to showcase UVM's commitment to local purchasing and Sodexo's Vermont First program. The ice cream served is made from local milk from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' CREAM program located down the street from campus on Spear St. CREAM sends their milk to the St. Albans' cooperative located in St. Albans, VT, and then to Wilcox Dairy, run by UVM alumni. The ice cream is made using original equipment from the first UVM Dairy Bar, and products are served in the Davis Center and in select dining halls.

Eggs

Despite buying Real hard shell eggs, liquefied eggs presented a challenge for Real purchasing in years past. This was remedied with the switch to Abbotsford Farm, a vendor that is American Humane Certified, for liquefied eggs. This boosted the Real Food percentage for eggs from 33% to 90%. This product will continue to be purchased first whenever available.

Intervale Food Hub

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dairy farmers. This product shift started in November 2017 and due to the large amount of ground beef used on campus is likely to be a successful partnership in the years to come.

Challenges

Lack of Subcontractor Data

This academic year, the Nutrition and Food Science class, 'Sustainable Food Purchasing' (NFS 295), was no longer offered through UVM due to low student enrollment. This class had been taught by Sylvia Geiger, a longtime RFWG faculty representative. In previous years, students in NFS 295 worked in collaboration with the RFWG to audit our subcontractor data to determine each vendor's Real Food percentages, work that the RFC calculator intern does not have the capacity to complete alone. Without this class's supplemental work and the funds to hire a second calculator intern, the RFWG was not able to include subcontractor data in our calculations for the 2017-2018 school year. The result of this gap in data reporting is that while we can confidently report on UVM Dining's purchases, we can no longer make statements about total Real Food served on campus.

Labeling

While the RFWG has supported continuous improvement for percentage Real Food purchased, continued education and awareness about the effort is important for sustaining student engagement and pressure towards continued improvement. Improving labeling of Real Food at the point of sale in dining halls would help advertise current efforts, promote awareness about Real Food, and potentially support students in

Looking Ahead

As we close in on fulfilling our commitment to 25% Real Food served by 2020 we are considering major product shifts that require collaboration with external partners to support market development, as is the case in the context of humane purchases. This process could entail working with producers to qualify a product through certification, helping producers scale up production to supply UVM's demand, and working with other sizeable institutions to solidify purchasing commitments. We foresee drawing upon grant funding and/or the influence of the Advisory Council to enable research and implementation of larger-scale shifts.

Finally, we are beginning the process of critically reassessing the National Real Food Challenge Standards as an ongoing guiding force in our work to make changes specific to our campus and regional food systems. It is our long-term aspiration to consider creating our own set of standards, as a supplement to the RFC Standards, in order to more closely reflect the place-specific interests and judgements of the RFWG and UVM Dining. Overall, the Working Group is entering a more mature phase that we hope will be marked by self-driven progress and priorities. Vital to this maturation is the ongoing support from the UVM administration and community, as well as the continued support and cooperation of UVM Dining.

Appendix 1: 2017-2018 RFWG Members

Students

Katie Horner (Graduate Student Co-Chair)
Bridget Dorsey (Student Co-Chair, Spring 2018)
Taran Wise (Student Co-Chair, Fall 2017)
Olivia Peña
Gina Clithero
Lauren Berkley
Alyssa Mamuszka
Sophia Giovanetti
Jess Giordano
Emma Heffner
Emily Irwin
Elena Palermo
Rachel Bowanko
Betsy McGavisk
Emma Greenawalt (Calculator Intern)
Emily Barbour (Graduate Dining Fellow)

Administration/Staff

Alison Nihart (Food Systems Initiative; Staff Advisor)
Gioia Thompson (Office of Sustainability)
Terry Bradshaw (Catamount Educational Farm, Plant and Soil Science)

Dining

Emily Portman (Sustainability Manager)
Annie Rowell (UVM Dining VT First Coordinator)
Armand Lundie (Executive Chef at University Marche)

Faculty

Sylvia Geiger (Nutrition and Food Sciences)
Meredith Niles (Nutrition and Food Sciences, Food Systems)
Vic Izzo (Plant and Soil Science)

