



Best Practices for Campus Food Systems

*A Guide to Creating Your Campus Real Food Policy
2011-2012 Edition*

The Real Food Campus Commitment spells out a base set of commitments and a process for executing them. One of the most crucial steps in this process is adopting a comprehensive *real food policy*. While the Commitment is necessarily uniform, the provisions adopted within different campus *real food policies* may vary greatly. This variety will allow schools to act on their unique values and culture, build upon existing initiatives, and utilize local strengths and community resources. The resulting *real food policy* will showcase each school's best assets, including new programs and standards that will raise the bar for all.

The “best practices” document below is meant to be a resource, not a prescription. While some schools scour the nation for examples of projects and policies to incorporate into their school’s real food activities, this guide is meant to be a short cut. It provides ready-made best practices available for adaptation and adoption.

The offerings herein are intentionally diverse—ranging from health to human rights. Real Food Challenge, consistent with our [“Real Food Principle,”](#) promotes the idea that embracing “real food” must include all parts of the food system, from seed to plate.

Consistent with the *Real Food Campus Commitment*, all *real food policies* will be made public on the school’s website and through the Real Food Challenge. This is an exciting opportunity to communicate priorities, practices, and progress over time.

The policy provisions in this document will be revised and updated periodically to reflect the latest developments in the field. In the future, case studies and citations will be added to provide further context and insight. To have your campus initiative or story included in the next edition of “Best Practices for Campus Food Systems,” please email commitment@realfoodchallenge.org.

Note: many of the following provisions are phrased “school will...” Please keep in mind that the responsible party may be different depending on the provision. Thus, “school will” may actually mean “food service providers will” or “students will” or “food systems working group members will.”

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FOOD SYSTEMS WORKING GROUP (FSWG)

Composition:

FGWG should include students, professors, dining administrators, food service workers, and other university administrators, where relevant (such as sustainability officers, vice presidents overseeing auxiliary services, aides or assistants to the president, or representatives of facilities management).

Student Leadership:

Students are expected to be the driving force behind the Food Systems Working Group, with crucial support from other stakeholders. Students will serve as one of two co-chairs for the group and paid student interns will staff the FSWG's programs and initiatives. Student input, in the form of student body polling and consultation with relevant student clubs, will be utilized as much as possible.

Charge:

The focus of the FSWG will include:

- Coordinate the implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment, including developing a *real food policy* and *multi-year food action plan* for the campus;
- Review annual Real Food Calculator assessments and report on annual progress;
- Promote cross-departmental and cross-division communication and collaboration;
- Support the development of educational programming, including field trips and campus events, workshops and lecture series, and academic curricula on relevant food systems topics (e.g. regional food chains, land use policy, and food's relationship with climate change)
- Facilitate partnerships within the local community, including between campus dining providers and local farmers.
- Conduct feasibility studies on the further develop institutional real food initiatives, where necessary

Activities:

The FSWG will convene at least twice a year and, at most, monthly to discuss ongoing projects and make decisions by consensus. WG Co-chairs will develop meeting agendas. Ad-hoc sub-groups and student interns will carry out work and necessary discussion between official meetings.

Community Collaboration:

The FSWG will include local community members and farmers in its process and will hold open meetings for community input during the development of school's real food policy provisions.

Funding:

The FSWG can be funded through student activities or student government allocation, through special allocation by university president or another administrative office, by a student-approved fee (e.g. \$3 per student per semester), or by a combination of the above.

THE REAL FOOD CALCULATOR

Using the Real Food Calculator:

Annual student-driven assessments of campus food purchasing will be undertaken using the Real Food Calculator.

Roles:

- **Student Researchers:** 1-4 student researchers 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 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.
- **Faculty Sponsor (optional):** Responsible for advising and supporting student researchers on an ongoing basis.

Timeline & Institutionalization:

Calculator Assessments must be performed annually. This process can be easily institutionalized by providing hourly compensation for student researchers (through the Food Systems Working Group) or providing academic credit through a faculty-sponsored internship, independent study, or annual food systems-related course.

Relationship with RFC:

Calculator assessments will be provided 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 throughout the process, and a full review of assessment results before they are published.

FOOD, PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY CHAIN

Defining Real Food:

- **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 those 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:

Consistent procurement targets and clear, incremental goals are critical to success.

- The school will establish an incremental goal of 2-5% more real food purchasing per year to ensure the achievement of long term purchasing targets.
- The school will set interim benchmarks: achieving XX percent real food by 2015; and YY percent real food by 2018.
- Real Food purchases are expected to eventually grow beyond 20% of the total food budget, with the ultimate goal of reaching 100% real food.

Purchasing Prioritization:

School 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. In all other cases, the school will work to prioritize Real Food options to the extent possible.

Direct Purchasing and Contract Growing:

School will give preferential status to direct purchasing relationship with local producers and will purchase directly from them whenever possible. School 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:

School will identify local extension educators and other agricultural professionals (of non-profit growers' organizations or other organizations) that can assist existing or interested growers with the tools they need to effectively meet institutional demand—including food safety, distribution, product aggregation, liability insurance etc. The school will serve as an active partner in this process.

Liability Insurance:

School, in tandem with local collaborators, will help individual farmers work together to develop a group approach for addressing food safety and product liability insurance requirements. Where possible, the institution will lower the amount of product liability insurance coverage required, (e.g. will require liability insurance no greater than \$1 million), so as to make this requirement feasible for small- to mid-scale local farmers.

Dietary Standards:

School will provide a wide selection of nutritious meals with a healthy balance of whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables. School will make available well-labeled meals that are:

- free of trans-fats
- free of high fructose corn syrup
- free of GMOs (i.e. organic)
- free of artificial growth hormones and sub-therapeutic antibiotics
- free of pesticides

Culturally Appropriate Foods:

School will provide a variety of culturally appropriate foods including those catering to particular religious needs (e.g. kosher, halal) as well as those that respect the ethnic food traditions of enrolled students (e.g. Korean, Mexican-American, Indian cuisines).

Seasonal Food Items:

School will alter menu cycles so as to feature local, seasonally available foods as a way to accustom cooks and eaters to cooking with the seasons.

Vegan/Vegetarian Options:

At every meal, school will provide at least 1 vegan entrée that includes a healthy balance of whole grains, lean protein, and fruits and vegetables. Vegan/Vegetarian entrées must vary from day to day and week to week.

Cost-Savings Measures:

School 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 food waste by initiating tray-less dining.

Infrastructure Needs:

School 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 school may act as a collaborator and market guarantor.

Annual Reports:

School will issue annual reports on real food progress which will be publicly available on school's and RFC's website. These reports will include the annual Real Food Calculator assessment in addition to information about other sustainability- and food-related initiatives.

Real Food Calculator:

School will conduct an annual assessment of food purchases using student researchers and the Real Food Calculator (see above section).

Vendor Lists:

School 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.

Internal Tracking Systems:

School will adopt an internal labeling and tracking system to identify products that meet real food criteria as they make their way from the loading docks, coolers and kitchens to the service lines and point of consumer selection and sale.

Food Labeling:

School 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 site of selection or sale.

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Staffing:

School will hire at least one full-time Food 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).

Student Interns:

School will create work-study or other paid positions for students to:

- 1) Serve as members of the Food Systems Working Group.
- 2) Work directly with food service administrators to perform annual audits using the Calculator, and follow up on real food action plans.
- 3) Manage other on-campus food and farming projects (on-campus farmer's market, student farm or garden, etc.)

Education Materials:

School will 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.

Educational Programs:

School will promote community education on food systems issues through mediums such as lecture series, panel discussions, workshops, and film screenings.

National Consortium:

When available, school will enter into and pay 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.

LABOR, IMMIGRATION & HUMAN RIGHTS

Living Wage:

School will ensure that all workers employed by food service operations, including those managed under contract, are paid a living wage (including the cost of healthcare) as appropriate to the local region. School, and associated contractors, will publicly disclose on an annual basis the compensation paid to employees, the average annual hours worked by employees, and the participation rate in health and retirement plans by employees.

Right to Free Association:

School and associated contractors will adopt a policy of neutrality with respect to attempts by employees to organize a union, refraining from any threats, coercion, or interference to promote or deter union representation. In addition, school and associate contractors will allow employees to decide the issue of union representation through a legal and democratic process of their own choosing.

Job Stability and Sustainability:

If school contracts with a food service provider, or replaces a current food service provider, all current employees will be rehired on the basis of seniority, and no employees retained will be discharged without cause. If fewer employees are required, the food service provider will maintain a preferential hiring list of those not retained, and will rehire by seniority.

Protection for Immigrants:

School and associated contractors 1) will not take action against an employee solely because the employee is subject to an immigration proceeding where the employee is otherwise permitted to work; 2) will reinstate an employee to the same position and seniority if that employee was terminated because of improper work authorization documents, but subsequently provides legal work authorization documents; 3) will not participate in any voluntary programs to verify the immigration status of its employees, such as E-Verify; and 4) will respect the right of employees to use the language of their choice when speaking amongst themselves during work hours provided that such conversations are conducted in a manner that is respectful of guests and other employees and is consistent with quality guest service.

Freedom to Speak and Transparency:

To encourage transparency and accountability, school and associated contractors will not retaliate in any way against employees that disclose food safety or quality issues to students, the administration, or food service contractors.

Job Descriptions & Performance Standards:

The job descriptions of all dining service employees must include responsibilities that align with school's real food standards and goals. School must develop metrics to evaluate employee performance in meeting real food standards to be used during performance reviews.

Professional Development:

School will provide paid professional development days for staff to learn about real food and school's real food policies, recognizing that this knowledge will improve staff's performance and investment in their workplace. These professional development days could include, but are not limited to, workshops on food systems issues, cooking/preparation skills trainings, local farm visits, and forums on school's real food action plan.

Zero-tolerance Policy for Human Rights Abuses:

School will take a zero-tolerance policy stance with regards to all vendors and brands with reported human rights abuses—including agricultural slavery and child labor—or other violations of international labor law. When credible evidence of such abuses is presented to the School, the School will have 6 months to find an appropriate substitution, and begin a

good faith effort to eliminate the products in question, with the end goal of a 100% substitution.

CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY

Composting:

School will compost both pre- and post-consumer waste in all dining facilities.

Fry Oil:

School will collect and recycle all used fry oil by contracting with a third party company to convert the oil into biodiesel.

Farmer's Market:

School will host a farmers' market on campus at least once a month when seasonally appropriate and ensure that students can use their meal plans to purchase food.

Community Supported Agriculture:

School will provide opportunities for local farms to market and distribute "farm shares" to students, staff and faculty on campus.

Non-exclusivity:

School will not allow school's food service provider to claim exclusive right to all food service on campus. School will ensure that students can opt out of the food service meal plan and will allow dining cooperatives run by students or other third parties.

Greenhouses and Farms:

School will support the construction of a greenhouse and/or establishment of a farm on campus, which will be staffed by students and which will sell produce to the campus dining service.

Trayless Dining:

School will eliminate the use of trays in all-you-can-eat dining facilities as a means to reduce eater's food waste levels and reduce resources used in the form of dishwashing and cleaning.

RFP AND CONTRACT PROCESSES

Food Service Operator Selection:

- All future RFPs will include the requirement that contracted providers comply with the *Real Food Campus Commitment* and all associated policies included herein
- School will involve student leaders (FSWG members) in the RFP drafting and bid selection process. Where a formal selection committee is formed, 2 or more student seats will be designated.
- Preference will be given to price competitive bids that that best meet or exceed the standards of this *real food policy*.

Broad-line Distributor Selection:

Broad-line distributor contracts will be granted to the price-competitive entity that can best comply with the School's *real food policy*. Additionally, RFBs, contracts and other standards laid out for Broad-line distributors will include the following provisions:

- Distributor will be expected to meet an overall goal of XX% real food, measured in dollars, over the course of the year.
- Distributor will provide up-to-date lists of all "real food" vendors, including location and contact information.
- Distributor will explicitly label all items with farm-of-origin upon delivery
- Distributor will provide side-by-side comparisons of real food items and non-real food items at time of purchase.
- Distributor will provide clear invoicing that highlights the real food status of items purchased.
- School reserves the right to withdraw whole food categories (e.g. fresh produce, dairy) or specific items, at will, where Distributor is not meeting the real food needs.

Individual Vendor Selection:

Direct contracts with major food or beverage companies (e.g. Coke) will include the following provisions:

1. All vendors will consistently supply at least one product that meets real food criteria: healthy, local, fair, ecologically sound, and/or humane.
2. Preference in choosing vendors will be given to price competitive bids that offer the largest number of items meeting the greatest number of real food criteria.
3. All contracts will allow the school to rescind and redirect spending at will where real food procurement and transparency requirements are not being sufficiently met.

Other Contract Stipulations:

- Statement of Purpose: School may include general language about the goals and values of the real food program at the beginning of relevant contracts.
- National Volume Discounts & Rebates: School may add stipulations mandating that volume discounts and rebates accrued by food service operators must be regularly (1) documented, (2) communicated to school and (3) returned in full to the local dining operation's budget.
- Incentives & Penalties: School may include pre-determined monetary incentives and penalties as accountability measures for successful achievement or failure to meet real food goals laid out in the contract.
- Contract Termination: School may, in relevant contracts, reserve the right to terminate the contract if real food targets are not met over time.

