

UBC Social, Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Reports

Creating A “Meet your Farmer Event” at UBC Food Service’s Place Vanier Residence Cafeteria

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LFS 450 Scenario 3:

Creating A “Meet your Farmer Event” at UBC Food Service’s Place Vanier Residence Cafeteria

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ABSTRACT

As part of LFS 450 two groups were assigned to plan and implement a “Meet Your Farmer” event in collaboration with both the UBC Farm and Place Vanier. The purpose of this event was to raise awareness of the UBC Farm, as well as provision of education to promote sustainable food choices. Planning details include contacting stakeholders for input, inviting potential participants, applying for funding, creating activities, determining and sourcing food offerings, booking the venue, and creating a outline for the overall event. A survey was developed to obtain feedback from attendees, and results indicate that the majority of attendees were aware of the UBC Farm prior to the event, and that they had a positive impression of the event. Recommendations include expanding the event to Totem Park in the future, working more closely with the farm to meet their expectations for the event, and having a more defined focus for future iterations of the event.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will detail the efforts made by our group to plan and implement an outreach/awareness-raising event for the UBC Farm at Place Vanier, a first-year dormitory at UBC. The layout of this paper will be as follows: first, an introduction to the problem we were assigned, as well as the context that gave rise to it. Then we describe the steps that were taken in planning the event, and how it was carried out. Next we share our findings and discuss their significance, and lastly we provide recommendations to key stakeholders involved with this undertaking.

CONTEXT AND PROBLEM DEFINITION

Climate change and global warming is a steadily growing concern and the need to reduce carbon footprints is ever increasing. There are many ways to reduce a person's carbon footprint such as recycling materials and utilizing alternate forms of transportation. Another method of combating climate change is to make more eco-friendly food consumption choices. Research has concluded that food, home energy, and transportation together contribute to the majority of a person's carbon footprint (Weber and Matthews, 2008).

The food that we consume has an impact on the planet through both its method of production and off-farm food system components that contribute to increases in green house gas emissions. One method that is used to quantify the environmental impacts of food is the assessment of "food miles", an estimate of how far a food item travels from its site of production to the final consumer (Weber and Mathews, 2008). Much of the food available in today's marketplace is imported, and the average food item travels

between 2,500 and 4000 km before reaching consumer plates, with increased use of transport such as airfreight and trucks (Halweil, 2003). Due to the tremendous impact that food consumption choices can have on the environment, there has been a growing movement Emphasize local foods in people's daily food choices.

Local food systems are not only more environmentally friendly by virtue of decreased transportation distances, it can also be more nutritious, as they is not as much time between harvest and consumption for nutrient loss to occur. It can also be economically viable for farmers and consumers, thereby enhancing the local economy (Feenstra, 2009).

In light of these environmental concerns, UBC Food Services (UBCFS) has implemented many changes to their menus, such as buying more produce from BC farmers and the UBC Farm, selling organic shade grown fair trade coffee, buying organic local apples, utilizing compostable packaging, and composting organic waste at all food outlets. At the Place Vanier Dining Hall alone, over 500 recipes have been prepared using local and seasonal ingredients (UBC Food Services, 2010). All of these changes have occurred through collaboration between the Center for Sustainable Food Systems (CSFS) at the UBC Farm and UBCFS. However, many students remain unaware of these changes and/or the issues that exist in the broader food system due to lack of education.

In an effort to increase awareness of the importance of choosing local food and supporting sustainable food production, the UBCFS and the UBC Farm would like to transform students at Place Vanier into "empowered eaters" who have the knowledge

and motivation needed to make food choices that reduce their own carbon footprint. In order to do so, the UBC Food Systems Project (UBCFSP) team was enlisted to design an appropriate project scenario for LFS 450. The objective of this scenario was to plan and implement a “Meet Your Farmer“ event at Place Vanier to help increase education, awareness, and support for the UBC Farm and local food systems among residents and staff.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN UBC FARM AND UBCFSP

The UBC Farm and the UBCFS have collaborated on a diversity of LFS 450 student projects over the past few years to increase campus food security. The following is a summary of projects that have been completed to date.

2009

Research scenarios included helping the UBC Farm improve on-farm landscape diversity, designing a Carbon Smart Food Guide, and producing signage for use at the Place Vanier Dining Hall that highlighted UBC Farm produce being used in the cafeteria.

2008

Scenarios in this year focused on creating a food provision program that would make it feasible for the UBC Farm to supply produce to various campus food outlets from year to year. The farm’s production capability and economic sustainability had to be balanced with vendor needs for dependability and acceptable pricing.

2007

Scenarios in this year addressed a variety of approaches to expand the role of the UBC Farm in the campus food system. Specific projects included expanding the UBC Farm Market, strengthening connections between the farm and MacMillan community via relationships with Agora and the AgUS, incorporating more farm produce into Bernoulli's Bagels in the SUB, and exploring more ways to incorporate farm produce in Totem Park and Place Vanier Dining Halls.

VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE UBC FOOD SYSTEM: GROUP REFLECTIONS

Overall, we agreed with the seven guiding principles that inform the vision statement for a sustainable UBC food system – on an ideal sustainable campus these principles would be the accepted norm and not the alternative way of thinking that they are often perceived to be. However, we felt that statement 3, “food is ethnically diverse, affordable, safe, and nutritious” could be contradictory to the spirit of this vision, as many ethnic foods incorporate ingredients which cannot be grown in Vancouver, let alone at UBC. Certainly ingredient substitution could be made, but would the food then be truly ethnic in terms of its authenticity? This led to the discussion regarding where ethnic food begins and ends. Is ethnic food the sum of its ingredients or about its flavor? How does one define ethnic food? We feel that there should perhaps be a qualifier in statement 3 that “food is as ethnically diverse *as possible...*” to acknowledge the fact that limitations on the kind of produce that can be grown in this geographic area will affect the degree of culinary diversity possible in a sustainable local food system.

There was some confusion regarding statement 4, “providers and educators promote awareness among consumers about cultivation, processing, ingredients and nutrition” in that we were not sure if “educators” was referring to instructors only, or being used in a more general sense to mean anyone interested/engaged in providing information about food. We thought that if the former meaning applied then the vision would be extremely slow in being realized as there are instructors in many disciplines who have little concern for the origins and composition of their food and would not find it important to educate themselves or others on these topics.

A few group members thought that statement 7 “providers and growers pay and receive fair prices” would conflict with the buying power of the student demographic. Organic and/or local foods are often more expensive than their conventional counterparts and some of us felt that it would be difficult for many students to afford the “fair” prices given their limited budgets. The counterargument was offered that many more students would be able to afford the higher-priced organic and/or local foods if they gave up other expenditures such as certain material goods or the occasional leisure activity. It was eventually agreed that willingness to pay fair prices was more dependent on an individual’s values than financial constraints.

METHODOLOGY

Getting Started

The process for creating our event started with a review of supplemental materials provided by the Teaching Team. There was another group assigned to this particular scenario (Group 11) and we decided collectively that it would be more efficient to collaborate as one larger group on the “Meet Your Farmer” event. We held several

meetings to formulate a collective vision for the event before moving forward with the planning process. Communication inter- and intra-groups was maintained through weekly meetings and the usage of Vista discussion boards.

Contacting Stakeholders and Potential Participants

As part of this project we were provided a list of stakeholders to contact as part of the planning process. Group members were designated as the contact for specific stakeholders and the staff of Vanier Residence. Others were asked to research and contact food-centric groups on campus that we would like to have at our event. All communication was done through e-mail.

Steve Golob, Place Vanier's Head Chef, was not listed as a stakeholder for our scenario; however, we decided to involve him as he was an expert on the menu items available at the Place Vanier Dining Hall that featured organic and local foods. He offered to design a small menu that would showcase his use of local and seasonal produce, to be served at the event.

Amy Frye, the Marketing Coordinator at UBC Farm, was our other stakeholder. We consulted with her for suggestions and asked her, along with Golob to make brief presentations at our event regarding the role of their respective organizations in fostering food security on campus.

Barb McMahon, the project director for Sprouting Chefs, heard about our event through Golob, and asked to be part of our event as a presenter.

Sprouts, Agora, and the Land and Food Systems Orchard Garden (LFSOG) were asked to participate in our event as they were all student-run organizations that promoted food security. Sprouts declined involvement while the other two agreed (a full list of participants can be seen in Appendix B). Participating groups were asked to provide any display and promotional materials they felt would be appropriate.

Funding

In order to obtain funds to pay for the expenses we would incur, we researched several sources of funding that were available to UBC students. We explored funding possibilities from the Student Environment Center (SEC), Walter Gage Memorial Fund, and Innovative Projects Fund, and found that we were only eligible to apply for funding from the SEC. An application for \$400 was submitted and we eventually received an award of \$100.

In order to decrease our food costs we sought donations from several places, including Happy Planet, Discover Organics, and Whole Foods. We were successful with Whole Foods, who donated a wheel of Avalon cheese and some Raincoast Crisps due to Sprouting Chef's participation in our event. Unfortunately, our funding application to SEC was not approved until a week before our event, and Golob needed a budget to plan out his menu ahead of time, all students involved in the scenario agreed to personally sponsor the event.

Promotions

We were limited in our promotional options by policies in place at Place Vanier. We developed a letter-sized poster (see Appendix B) advertising the event, which had to be

handed over to Place Vanier staff for actual placement. We wanted to send an e-mail to all of the Resident Advisors in Place Vanier asking them to promote our event to their residents, but our request for a list of emails was denied for confidentiality reasons. The day before the event, two group members dressed in vegetable costumes set up a small booth near the entrance of Place Vanier and promoted the event to students who approached them. Last but not least, all group members advertised the event through word-of-mouth to friends and fellow students.

The project outline specified the development of a small information pamphlet to hand out to students who are interested in getting more involved at the UBC Farm, but as the farm already had a similar resource in existence it was decided that the pamphlet would be omitted. A card listing contact information for Agora, the LFSOG and Sprouting Chefs was made instead (see Appendix C)

The Event

Our goal was to create a fun, interactive, informal but ultimately educational event that would highlight some of the sustainability efforts being practiced by UBC Food Services (UBCFS) and the UBC Farm. An event template was created for the UBC Farm to facilitate ease of duplicating this event in the future.

This event was held on March 24, 2010 from 5pm-7pm in the Shrum Lounge located in the Place Vanier commons space. There was a lavish spread of food available. The first half of the event gave students the opportunity to mingle, interact with representatives from the aforementioned groups, and help themselves to food. A projector screen and seating was set up in one section of the lounge, and the second half of the event

featured a series of three 15-minute presentations by Amy Frye (UBC Farm), Steve Golob (Vanier cafeteria), and Barbara McMahon (Sprouting Chefs). After the presentations were over there was another 15-20 minutes for everyone to mingle before the event officially came to an end.

Evaluation

A brief survey was developed to evaluate the success of our event in achieving our objectives (see Appendix D). We set up a table near the entrance/exit and encouraged everyone who came to our event to complete a survey, whether they stayed for the whole event, or just came for parts of it. We also e-mailed Frye and Golob after the event to solicit their feedback and impressions.

FINDINGS

Results

Survey responses: A total of 46 completed surveys were submitted by event attendees (see Appendix E). According to survey results, the majority of respondents (91%) had been aware of the UBC Farm prior to attending to our event. Several of our survey questions asked respondents to rank their answer from 1 to 5 with 1 being least and 5 being most. Ranks of 1 and 2 were considered negative, 3 was neutral, and ranks of 4 and 5 were considered positive. Overall the responses were positively skewed, as all of the questions with ranked responses had a response mean above 3 (see Appendix F).

- 87% of respondents felt that the event provided a good idea of the farm's mandate and values.
- 87% of respondents also felt that the event helped increase their interest in the farm.

- 54% of respondents expressed interest in at least one of the volunteer opportunities that was featured at the event.
- 63% felt the information they learned would actually influence their food choices.
- Word-of-mouth among peers and the act of passing by Shrum Lounge during the event were mainly responsible for attracting people to the event.
- 20% offered opinions on what other types of information they would have liked to see at this event. Suggestions included: UBC Farm history, other means of accessing food from the farm, nutrition information/recipes, community food initiatives, and food security.

Stakeholder feedback: Both Frye and Golob were satisfied with this initial iteration of the event, and pointed areas that could be improved for the future. Frye felt that the focus of the event should have been more specific to campus organizations, and that more comprehensive and modifiable display materials should be developed for future iterations (A. Frye, personal communications, April 7, 2010). Golob felt that it would have helped emphasize the educational nature of the event to have more displays/booths and that better signage was needed to direct people to Shrum Lounge, which is an enclosed room. He also recommended finalizing plans as far ahead as possible, including having a firm budget for food early on (S. Golob, personal communications, April 12, 2010).

Discussion

Although we are very pleased by the positive nature of survey responses, we feel that there was some sample bias in our favor. The week we held our event happened to be Sustainability Week at Place Vanier, and many of the attendees were members of the sustainability committee or friends of said members, people who would have prior knowledge of the messages we were trying to convey and likely be in support of local food movements. Additionally, we believe that the fact we had a rather lavish food

spread at our event likely predisposed respondents to be more positive in their evaluations. This provides a bit of a conundrum as we value the ability of food to foster community, but would like it not to be so much a focus for attendees.

Despite not being certain of the validity of our survey results, we feel that we *were* able to achieve the object of event as a fun, interactive and informal venue for the UBC Farm to engage in outreach efforts. The overall attendance of 45-55 people exceeded our expectations, and we observed many interactions between students and the organization representatives that were present. We also received questions from students who were curious about the impetus behind the event. Many people were present at all three presentations, and students were seen interacting with speakers after the presentations were over.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since this was the first time this event has been organized, there are several aspects that could be improved for the future.

To the LSF 450 Teaching Team

- The importance of funding should be emphasized in projects that involve event planning, as it is virtually impossible to hold an outreach event of this nature without incurring any expenses. We suggest the Teaching Team either have funding ideas set up for students or have a source of funding for use.
- Develop a project that focuses on designing outreach materials for the UBC Farm. For our project the farm did not want us to create displays because they were in the process of re-evaluating the messages they wanted to convey in their outreach materials, and because we would not have had enough time to create the best product given our other responsibilities with this project.

To Future Organizers of the “Meet Your Farmer” event

- Include Totem Residence in this event to increase the number of students that can potentially be reached.
- Communicate with Steve Golob regarding menu specifics if planning on having him cater again, as funding will greatly impact what is feasible/affordable.
- The event location this year was an enclosed space which was conducive to the presentations by the stakeholders, but required more effort and commitment for passers-by to attend. Consider booking a location that is more openly accessible. The Common Place is recommended to attract more Vanier residents.
- More collaboration with the Sustainability Committee at Place Vanier could help with promotional efforts for the event.
- A focused theme for the event is necessary. We had one presentation that was out of place given the content of the other two presentations, and this was commented on by a stakeholder.
- Do a more thorough consultation with the UBC Farm to ensure that the product that meets their expectations.
- Research similar instances of similar outreach events by other organizations to gain an idea of what could/should be included as part of the event.

To the UBC Farm

- Some form of this event should be held in September when the weather is nice and the farm is producing food. September is when the 1st year students are making friends, learning about volunteer activities and developing interests.
- Increase communications with and education of Resident Advisors on campus to enable them to promote the farm to their residents. Example actions: inform Resident Advisors of volunteering opportunities, the Saturday markets, and fun events at the farm.

To the UBC Food Services at Vanier Cafeteria

- The UBC Sustainable Purchasing Guide, produced by the Sustainability Office & Supply Management should also include the residents' food options, including Place Vanier cafeteria.
- Educate incoming students at Place Vanier in September about food environmentally friendly food choices offered at Place Vanier Dining Hall.

- All menu items using ingredients from the UBC Farm should be marked with an appropriate logo to increase awareness of the farm's contributions to the cafeteria.

CONCLUSION

Overall, our group was very pleased with the progress and outcome of this event. We found that coordinating every aspect of the planning and implementation process with Group 11 really aided in streamlining the workload and ensuring that all students involved with this scenario had the opportunity to share ideas with and receive input from the whole group. Several factors were crucial to our success, and should be included in future iterations of the event. They are: (some) free food using local products, engaging speakers, attractive displays, and an informal atmosphere. This was the first iteration of this event, and many topics and formats that were not explored this time around can and should be considered in the future.

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UBC Food Services. (2010). *About UBC Food Services*. Retrieved April 10, 2010, from <http://www.food.ubc.ca/about/index.html>

APPENDIX A

Stakeholders & Contacts

From UBC Farm:

- Andrew Rushmere, Academic Coordinator
- Amy Frye, Marketing Coordinator

From Place Vanier:

- Kate Ferguson , Assistant Director for Residence Life
- Steve Golob, Resident Head Chef

Participants from other organizations:

- Barb McMahon, Sprouting Chefs
- Jay Baker-French, Land and Food Systems Orchard Garden
- Laura Hsu, Agora

LFS 450 PRESENTS

MEET YOUR FARMER

MARCH 24TH 5PM
AT VANIER COMMONS

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO FIND OUT
WHERE SOME OF YOUR FOOD COMES FROM!**

**LEARN ABOUT LOCAL AND ORGANIC PRODUCE,
SUSTAINABILITY AND MUCH MORE**

**JOIN US FOR
FREE FOOD
FUN AND GAMES**



ubcfarm
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA


Sprouting Chefs

STEVE GOLOB VANIER RESIDENT CHEF

FOR MORE INFO: MEETYOURFARMER@GMAIL.COM

Volunteer Opportunities

UBC Farm

For a list of volunteer positions and more info, visit:
<http://www.landfood.ubc.ca/ubcfarm/volunteer.php>
Contact Info: Visit the Website!



Sprouting Chefs

More information:
<http://www.sproutingchefs.com/ContactUs.aspx>
Contact Info: info@sproutingchefs.com



Agora

Visit Agora's Blog for more info:
<http://blogs.landfood.ubc.ca/agora/>
Contact Info: Agora.eats@gmail.com



LFS Orchard Garden

Contact Info: lfsgarden@gmail.com

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Sprouting Chefs

More information:
<http://www.sproutingchefs.com/ContactUs.aspx>
Contact Info: info@sproutingchefs.com



Agora

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More information:
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Contact Info: info@sproutingchefs.com



Agora

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Contact Info: Agora.eats@gmail.com



LFS Orchard Garden

Contact Info: lfsgarden@gmail.com

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Contact Info: info@sproutingchefs.com



Agora

Visit Agora's Blog for more info:
<http://blogs.landfood.ubc.ca/agora/>
Contact Info: Agora.eats@gmail.com



LFS Orchard Garden

Contact Info: lfsgarden@gmail.com

APPENDIX D

“Meet Your Farmer” at Place Vanier: Feedback Survey

1. Were you aware of the UBC Farm prior to attending this event?

(Please circle answer)

Yes

No

2. Did this event gave you a good idea of what the UBC Farm does and the values it promotes?

(Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = a lot)

1

2

3

4

5

3. Did this event increase your interest in the UBC Farm?

(Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = a lot)

1

2

3

4

5

4. Are you interested in following-up on any of the volunteering opportunities presented?

(Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = a lot)

1

2

3

4

5

5. To what degree do you think the information presented at this event will influence your food choices?

(Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = no influence at all, and 5 = a lot of influence)

1

2

3

4

5

6. How enjoyable did you find this event?

(Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = a lot)

1

2

3

4

5

7. What other types of information would you have liked to see at this event?

8. How did you find out about this event?

(Please circle all that apply)

RA

Poster

Word of mouth

Happened to pass by during event

Other *(please specify)*:

9. Do you have any suggestions for how this event could be improved for next year?

APPENDIX F

