

Building Partnerships for Food Justice, Sustainable Food Systems, & Health Equity at University of California, San Diego

2024



Call to Action

We seek to convene faculty, staff, students, and community practitioners to address nutrition insecurity, food justice, and sustainable food systems that promote health equity at UC San Diego. This effort is led by the Urban Studies and Planning Department (USP), Center for Community Health (CCH) at the Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute (ACTRI), the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health & Longevity Science (HWSPH), Student Sustainability Collective (SSC), and informed by multiple units and organizations across campus and health system. We propose the formation of a new interdisciplinary unit at UC San Diego to house food systems collaboration for research, education and curriculum building, mentorship and internship possibilities, community impact and partnerships, and institutional infrastructure and systems to benefit students, staff, faculty, and the San Diego region.

Background

Champions within USP, CCH, HWSPH, and SSC formed a partnership in 2023 after identifying a need to build collaboration and cohesion to tackle common themes of student nutrition insecurity, equitable and sustainable food systems, policies, and practices, food justice experiential learning opportunities for students, and community engagement with under-resourced populations off-campus in the San Diego region. We have identified champions across the campus and health system, and external partners to ground our perspective in community. We have conducted a review of food-focused units at academic institutions to inform administrative organizational structure and resource development. We have identified potential funding sources to seed development, securing initial partnership building funding from the [Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research](#).

Two informal interdisciplinary groups currently meet regularly to streamline communication, share resources, and co-build solutions to identified institutional gaps in the food landscape across UC San Diego. The Food Action Group, organized by University Centers, meets monthly and is comprised of students, staff, and faculty from University Centers, Housing/Dining/Hospitality, health system food service, USP, HWSPH, CCH, SSC, and UC Global Food Initiative Fellows. This group primarily focuses on sharing resources and organizing experiential student learning opportunities.

More recently, a second informal group emerged from HWSPH organized by Dr. Nancy Binkin and Dr. Richard Garfein, specifically to tackle the alarming rate of student food insecurity at UC San Diego. Student research from Dr. Binkin's undergraduate Public Health Honors Practicum found nearly 40% of BSPH students experience food insecurity ([Choi et al., 2023](#)), which is consistent with the 42% food insecurity rate across UC San Diego student populations ([UCUES, 2022](#)). The HWSPH-led group includes several of the same members of the Food Action Group and staff from the Basic Needs Hub, Financial Aid & Scholarships, and several members from Student Affairs. This group meets twice a month and has developed smaller workgroups intended to develop tangible short and long-term solutions to improving student food and nutrition security.

Join Us



Vision

We envision a new food ecosystem at UC San Diego which bridges gaps, streamlines communication and dissemination of research, tools, practices, policies, and procedures, and effectively serves our students and the greater San Diego community. We intend to employ an interdisciplinary approach to develop goals and craft solutions within these five core focus areas:

- Research
- Education and Curriculum Building
- Mentorship and Internship
- Community Impact and Partnerships
- Campus Infrastructure and Systems

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Initial Timeline

2024 - Ongoing	Fund Development
Apr - Jun 2024	Asset-Mapping with Internal Champions
Jun - Aug 2024	Community Input & Grounding
Aug - Sept 2024	Goal Setting & Organizational Strategy Development

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