

## Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research

**Partnership Building Grant 2024:** Building Partnerships for Sustainable Food Systems & Health Equity at UC San Diego

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### Summary of Progress

The [Yankelovich Partnership Building](#) grant allowed us to organize siloed groups working on food systems and health equity at UC San Diego's main and health system campuses. More specifically, we developed and hosted two interdisciplinary convening workshops to discuss the creation of a new Sustainable Food Systems and Health Equity unit at UC San Diego. We provide a summary of these two convening workshops and additional unanticipated outcomes below, followed by planned next steps.

### Convening Workshop 1: May 9, 2024



*Photo 1: Dean Cheryl Anderson of the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health & Longevity Science gives opening remarks to ground the importance of food and health equity.*

The purpose of the first workshop was to convene faculty, staff, and students to address nutrition insecurity, food justice, and sustainable food systems at UC San Diego. We led participants through an interactive activity and discussion-based agenda to: 1) Get to know each other and each other's work; and 2) discuss opportunities and challenges for meeting goals on food systems and health equity. We proposed the formation of a new interdisciplinary unit to house food systems collaboration in relationship to health equity 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. We hosted a total of **41 individuals** (students, staff, and faculty) from the following groups/departments:

## **Campus & Health Infrastructure, Systems, and Services**

1. Housing, Dining, and Hospitality
2. Integrated Procure-to-Pay Solutions (Food Contracts)
3. Utilities & Sustainability Office
4. Hub Basic Needs Center
5. Student Life Office
6. University Centers Sustainability
7. Landscape Services
8. Campus Facilities Management
9. Staff Association
10. Health Sustainability
11. Health Nutrition and Food Services

## **Student-Led Groups**

1. Student Sustainability Collective
2. Roger's Garden
3. Graduate and Professional Student Association
4. Food Recovery Network
5. Dollar Lunch Club
6. Triton Food Pantry

## **Academic Departments and Centers**

1. Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health
2. Urban Studies and Planning
3. Center for Community Health
4. Changemaker Institute
5. Bioregional Center
6. Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health

## **Outcomes of Convening 1 include:**

- [Network map](#) of the current ecosystem of our convening participants
- [Visual summary](#) of identified challenges and points of collaboration
- New system-wide listserv to share food systems and health opportunities and news for participants to continue communicating and to grow our network: [foodhealth-g@ucsd.edu](mailto:foodhealth-g@ucsd.edu)
- [Convening 1 agenda](#)
- [Convening 1 photos](#)
- [Partnership Call to Action Brief](#)

Importantly, in the lead up to preparing for our first convening workshop, our planning team also applied for and was awarded a [\\$100,000 research grant from UC Santa Cruz's Center for Economic Justice and Action](#), to address essential needs. The collaborative activities of this partnership group has contributed to this award and our ability to design and conduct a

thoughtful research study to better understand student food security and knowledge/use of food assistance campus resources at UC San Diego. We're continuing to partner with several members of the partnership group to inform the study design and support the implementation of evaluation and intervention activities. This award will also facilitate the [hiring of 3 student researcher positions](#) to support study activities, including student outreach and engagement to address food security on campus and additional data management staff capacity to the Basic Needs Center.

Lastly, the key student leader from the Student Sustainability Collective who served as our planning co-lead, also developed several supportive and complimentary deliverables to better organize and communicate food system opportunities available to UC San Diego students. This work was performed in tandem with our partnership building efforts. Our student co-lead reworked the [Food & Dining](#) section of UC San Diego's Sustainability website to reflect important updates and new resources for students, including paid internships and fellowships for food systems work. The updated web page also includes a [new list of courses at UC San Diego with topics on food systems](#) to help students identify coursework to support their interests, particularly because UC San Diego currently does not offer a major or minor program of study in food systems.

### Convening Workshop 2: August, 20, 2024



*Photo 2: MPH student leader Noura Diwouta Loth facilitating a small group discussion on collaborative priorities.*

The second convening workshop sought to generate and initiate a process to build consensus for priority areas of the proposed new interdisciplinary unit on sustainable food systems and health equity. Additionally, we aimed to identify university strengths and resources we can organize and leverage to write a proposal to fund and build the new unit. We led **31 individuals**, including students, staff, and faculty, through a small group discussion-based agenda intended

to co-design a shared vision of what we can accomplish together through the proposed new unit. In addition to the above departments and groups from the first convening, **new additions** to the partnership in attendance at the second convening included:

### **Campus & Health Infrastructure, Systems, and Services**

1. UC San Diego Collective Impact

### **Academic Departments and Centers**

1. History
2. Biology

### **Outcomes of Convening 2 include:**

1. Identification of the following priority areas to begin building a framework for the new unit: **Climate Action, Food and Nutrition Security, Food Procurement, Food Justice**
2. Identification of internal resources to leverage:
  - a. Convergence interdisciplinary research (Core Institute)
  - b. Supercomputer Center and School of Engineering for data management expertise
  - c. UCOP Reiss Fellowship
  - d. HDH
  - e. SOPH
  - f. CCH
  - g. USP
  - h. Changemaker Institute- College Corps
  - i. Student Sustainability Collective
  - j. UCSD Advancement
  - k. Alumni network
3. Identification of external resources to explore:
  - a. Corporate foundations
  - b. Local philanthropy: San Diego Foundation, Berry Good Foundation, California Endowment, Alliance Healthcare Foundation, Dr. Bronner's Foundation
  - c. State agencies: California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Planning and Research
  - d. Federal agencies: National Institute of Health, US Dept of Agriculture
  - e. Research grants: Center for Economic Justice and Action, UC Climate Action Initiative
4. [Convening 2 agenda](#)
5. [Convening 2 photos](#)

During the planning phases of our second convening, a subgroup of partnership participants worked together to better streamline the administration of the [UCOP Reiss Fellowship](#). This funding comes from UCOP and funds student fellows in climate resilience, sustainable food

systems, and agriculture at all 10 UC campuses, UC health systems, UCOP local office, and UC ANR. For the first time, UCSD leaders across USP, CCH, Health, HDH, and Utilities & Sustainability worked cohesively together to write fellowship descriptions, post applications in one place on the [UCSD Sustainability website](#), manage recruitment and selection, and are continuing to work together as a mentor/supervisor cohort to best support our respective fellows during the year-long fellowship. Through this streamlined process, we were also able to leverage UC Reiss Fellowship funds to host a new Reiss Engagement Fellow who will receive \$5,000 for the fellowship to work with our planning team to advance our plan to build the proposed new interdisciplinary sustainable food systems and health equity unit. We will also receive \$2,000 in programming funds from UCOP for this effort.



*CCH Co-lead Elle Mari, with UC Reiss Fellows October 17th, 2024*

Additionally, our CCH planning co-lead organized a key food systems professional development opportunity for the Reiss Fellows by arranging for their participation in a youth summit at the [San Diego Food System Alliance's Annual Gathering](#). 10 UCSD fellows were provided transportation to/from the event in Escondido and each received a \$100 stipend for participation and post-conference evaluation. The aim of this effort is to work collaboratively with food systems stakeholders in our region to help cultivate impactful opportunities for young people, including shaping career pathways available to our UC San Diego students. Our UC Reiss Engagement fellow will continue investigating the strengths, needs, and opportunities for food system learning amongst our student population via an upcoming student listening session/focus group. We hope this concerted student engagement may also inform the groundwork to propose a food systems minor available across departments to undergraduate UC San Diego students, building off of a [student-led survey conducted earlier in 2024](#) to gauge student interest in food systems coursework and other opportunities.

## **Next Steps**

We aim to host a third workshop convening in the **Winter or Early Spring of 2025**, this time with the addition of local community-based partners involved in food systems and health equity work, to ground our identified priority areas of **Climate Action, Food and Nutrition Security, Food Procurement, and Food Justice**. We want to hear the perspectives of community leaders to better understand how our efforts on campus can better serve and collaborate with their goals for our San Diego-Baja California region as a whole. We also want to ensure our proposed new unit does not duplicate the efforts of any community organizations or academic institutions in our region, but instead work in harmony to advance the goals prioritized by our community stakeholders.

Lastly, we aim to draft a concept proposal of a new Sustainable Food Systems & Health Equity unit, to pitch internally at UC San Diego and externally to identified foundations. We envision a new collaborative space akin to the [UC Berkeley Food Institute](#), however we will incorporate and emphasize the relationship between food and health, leaning on the strengths and expertise of our university as an exceptional leader in health sciences.



*Photo 3: Urban Studies & Planning Professor Amy Lerner, Environmental Systems & Student Sustainability Collective Leader Julianne Luong, Center for Community Health Staff Member Elle Mari, and School of Public Health & Longevity Science Professor Richard Garfein.*