

# UCSC Campus Garden Assessment



## Fall

### Extensive research on the history, function, needs, and visions of each individual garden site

- Reviewed existing print and online literature on college gardens
- Conducted short interviews with relevant stakeholders by reaching out to core members of each individual garden
- Participated in key meetings to situate the research and assessment within the context of the place, policy, and people

## Winter

### Prepared and Conducted Focus Groups with Garden Stakeholders

- Designed focus group interviews and survey questions specific to each existing and potential experiential learning sites across the UCSC campus.
- Conducted multiple focus group interviews with participation from a diverse group of stakeholders (Provosts, College Administration Officers, Student Gov't, and Student Gardeners)
  - Facilitated questions and focus group process
  - Compiled interview results to glean themes and insights

## Spring

### Developed, Completed and Presented the Final Campus Garden Assessment.

- Shared the publication online with garden stakeholders, student fee measure representatives, the Sustainability Office, and Campus Sustainability Plan Food Section stakeholders.
- Designed and hosted a presentation and feedback event for garden affiliated stakeholders and focus group attendees
- Submitted updates for the Garden Section of the Campus Food & Garden Guide and prepared a poster presentation on this PSI project

## Project Goals

My goal for this year is to foster the creation of a needs-based assessment for the existing and potential experiential garden based learning sites at UCSC as well as foster informed stakeholder relationships through a participatory action based research.

The assessment will provide an in-depth analysis of each college garden with a section on the history and current structure of the garden as well as short term (this year), midterm (two to five years), and long term exploration of needs and visions (beyond five years) for each site. The analysis will also entail looking at how students, staff, and faculty at different colleges share common ground and also have differing perspectives on the use and development of garden sites.

By developing a process that focuses on each individual garden and proposed site, the publication and presentation outcomes will inform student fund fee measure representatives, implementing stakeholders of the Food Section of the 2013-2016 Campus Sustainability Plan, and future interns and volunteers at these sites who are driven to understand what actions need to be taken to further sustain, support and expand their respective gardens.



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**Mentors:** Damian Parr- CASFS, Tim Galarneau – Food Systems Working Group, & Shauna Casey – Sustainability Office

This project, through the Provost's Sustainability Internship, focuses on contributing to the efforts of the Campus Sustainability Plan – Food Section commitment to provide resources and opportunities for the campus community to learn about sustainable agriculture and food systems and to reach the goal of an experiential garden site at each pair of sister colleges.



## Findings/Results

Regardless of their individual differences, UCSC college gardens are unified in their vision to create a space for student education, growth, and community at their college.

### Strengths:

- Each Garden site exists as an individual space on campus with unique structures, histories, goals, and desires.
- Every stakeholder takes pride in working with that specific garden space and expresses a rightful ownership and responsibility of that space.

### Challenges:

- Each Garden space needs resources in form of student engagement/leadership, technical support, or monetary funds.
- There is a constant struggle with the fluctuation of student interest and management of the gardens.
- It is difficult to establish sustainable management practices at specific garden sites as both students and staff/faculty experience high turn-over rates
- Gaps in garden leadership and management (student leaders graduate within 3-4 year)
  - Lack of supervisors during the two month summer break; without summer management, vegetables and fruit aren't harvested, gardens can become unproductive, and may even become fallow.

### Recommended Actions:

- Acknowledge and respect the individuality and uniqueness of each of the college garden space and respect the time and energy the stakeholders at each college have invested in their garden space.
  - Maintain clear communication with campus architects and planners and build a partnership where ideas can be shared and understood between all students, faculty, staff, and administration at UCSC
    - Acknowledge students' thirst for growth, experiential learning, and community, while also acknowledging the staff, faculty, and administration's desire for structure, organization, and communication
- In the near future, there are potential sources of assistance for the college gardens. CASFS may be interested in providing technical knowledge/horticultural training and experiential learning facilitation training. There may also a new student measure which will specifically provide funds, technical support, and a wider-range of opportunities for students to get involved in the gardens. With cooperation and collaboration with all essential stakeholders on campus, students and administrators can together elevate these unique spaces to their potential, and provide a special space for growth, enrichment, education, and community.