SEED Wayne is Launched

SEED Wayne’s mission is to build sustainable food systems on WSU’s campus and in Detroit communities. Numerous campus and community partners have signed on as partners to help realize this mission.

SEED Wayne opened its doors in May 2008, following much background work by Kami Pothukuchi, Associate Professor of Urban Planning, to assemble WSU’s application to the Ford College Community Challenge, a competitive grant program.

SEED Wayne embraces core campus functions in teaching, research, operations, and engagement. Indeed, a service-learning project in “Cities and Food,” a course taught by Pothukuchi, was central to its inception (see page 2, Teaching).

On campus, activities will include vegetable and herb gardens, sourcing WSU cafeterias locally, monthly summer farmers markets, rescue and redistribution of edible excess foods, and food waste composting.

Campus partners include Student Environmental Action Leaders (SEAL), Wayne State Students of Urban Planning (WSSUP), Dean of Students, Community Engagement@Wayne, Honors College, and other academic units. Assistant Vice President for Business Affairs and Auxiliary Operations, Nabelah Ghareeb, is closely involved in the program.

We are also grateful for support from WSU’s Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff, Andrea Roumell Dickson, and Vice President for Research, Hilary Ratner. The latter has committed a seed grant of $3,000 to implement and evaluate a pilot garden and marketing strategy.

SEED Wayne’s main community partner is the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, with its program, the Earthworks Garden. We will implement season-extension techniques in urban agriculture, youth nutrition and entrepreneur-ship education activities, and engage soup kitchen guests in food policy workshops.

Other community partners include The Henry Ford (Food Service and Catering Operations), Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), Greening of Detroit, Forgotten Harvest, City Connect Detroit, and Detroit Economic Growth Corporation. They will assist with specific SEED Wayne activities such as local sourcing, campus gardens and food policy development.

WSU team tours Capuchin Soup Kitchen & Earthworks

On May 29, a team of six campus members made a field visit to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, SEED Wayne’s key community partner. Visitors included Nabelah Ghareeb, WSU AVP for Business Affairs; Kami Pothukuchi and Marlynne Powell, urban planning faculty and student respectively; Monita Mungo, Community Engagement@Wayne; and Karl Skokos and Giulio Fattore of AVI Foodsystems, Inc., WSU’s primary food service vendor and SEED Wayne partner.

We learned about operations at the soup kitchen, Earthworks Garden (EG), and the ‘Growing Healthy Kids’ program.

Earthworks Garden produces fresh vegetables, berries, and greens annually on about 1.5 acres of city land on Detroit’s Eastside. Most of this harvest goes into soup kitchen meals; the rest is sold at Eastern Market.

Earthworks is a partner in the Garden Resource Program Collaborative, a group that provides resources, training, and technical assistance to Detroit’s many backyard and neighborhood gardeners. EG also engages youth in hands-on activities related to gardening, cooking, and nutrition education.
Teaching: Cities and Food

In Winter 2008, “Cities and Food,” an urban planning course was designed as a service-learning course; it offered projects developed in collaboration with a number of community-based organizations engaged in food assistance, urban agriculture, local food sourcing, and food policy development.

Student projects included a “How-to Guide” for a Farm-to-Cafeteria initiative for Wayne State University (Nina Butler); a survey of Detroit bus riders to understand issues they faced in grocery shopping by bus (Jennifer Boivin and Palkie Matharu); lessons learned in recruiting food businesses as donors of food for redistribution by Forgotten Harvest (Naomi Ruth and Ashley Fredrick); and preparation of materials to replicate Earthworks Garden activities (Jeffrey Jones and Kwabena Ananda). Butler’s report and selected others are available at: www.clas.wayne.edu/gup/seedwayne.htm

Nabelah Ghareeb, WSU’s associate vice president for business affairs, and AVI Foodservice Inc. manager Karl Skokos embraced Butler’s proposal enthusiastically and agreed to explore ways to source cafeteria operations more locally.

“Cities and Food” is organized around the following premises:

1. Food systems are integrally linked to other systems in health, economy, land, environment, and cultural networks.
2. Community is important to understanding and improving food systems.

Research: Food Stamp Distribution Change

In April, the governor signed into law a change the distribution of food stamps from once-a-month to twice-a-month. It will affect recipients who get $100 or more a month in benefits, or nearly four out of five recipients.

Unfortunately, lawmakers did not consult food stamp recipients before enacting the law. The new law is the result of lobbying by the state’s grocers, who face real problems which deserve thoughtful solutions. In many neighborhoods, food stamps are a big part of stores’ revenues. Because benefits are distributed early in the month, such stores face a boom-and-bust monthly business cycle. Other states address this problem by staggering single payments to households over most of the month.

To examine the views of food stamp recipients on the law, Kami Pothukuchi conducted five focus groups in Detroit. Affected seniors and mothers of young children from diverse ethnic groups participated.

Affected seniors, as a group, tend to prefer once-a-month disbursement; mothers of young children are more divided . Those opposed to the change worry most about not being able to take advantage of sales, and increased transportation-related costs and burdens. Supporters, on the other hand, feel that budgeting for groceries two weeks at a time will be easier, as will shorter periods of want every two weeks relative to longer periods once a month.

All participants would like to see benefit levels increased. At about $1 per person per meal, food stamp benefits are simply not enough to put food on the table—a task increasingly challenged by recent food and gas price hikes and rising unemployment given the region’s economic downturn.

The Department of Human Services, the agency responsible for implementing the law, now awaits federal clearance before the law can take effect.
Campus Operations—Food Rescue

Food rescue (or recovery) is a term used to describe the collection of excess (edible) foods from a grocery store, cafeteria kitchen, or a catered event, usually for redistribution to participants of local food assistance programs.

To meet food safety requirements, stringent restrictions apply to the foods that are eligible for rescue and redistribution. Nevertheless, by some estimates, some 96 billion pounds of perfectly edible foods go to landfills, each year, nationally. At the same time, nearly 13 million people in the United States (nearly 12 percent of the population) are at risk of hunger.

Businesses that participate in food rescue receive tax benefits, save

money on waste disposal, and help boost employee morale as a result of their community contributions.

University and community cafeterias are a prime source of such excess edible foods. Wayne State University has a formal partnership with a major food rescue organization in the area, Forgotten Harvest. The organization is also a partner in the SEED Wayne coalition. However, to date, donations of excess edible foods to them from university-based vendors have been very limited.

SEED Wayne will launch a campaign this Fall to educate on– and near-campus food vendors about the opportunities available for food rescue and redistribution in Detroit, and help set up mechanisms to increase the amount of excess foods rescued.

We invite interested food vendor representatives on and near campus to write us on how they may participate.

Food rescue (or recovery) is a term used to describe the collection of excess (edible) foods from a grocery store, cafeteria kitchen, or a catered event, usually for redistribution to participants of local food assistance programs.

To meet food safety requirements, stringent restrictions apply to the foods that are eligible for rescue and redistribution. Nevertheless, by some estimates, some 96 billion pounds of perfectly edible foods go to landfills, each year, nationally. At the same time, nearly 13 million people in the United States (nearly 12 percent of the population) are at risk of hunger.

Businesses that participate in food rescue receive tax benefits, save

money on waste disposal, and help boost employee morale as a result of their community contributions.

University and community cafeterias are a prime source of such excess edible foods. Wayne State University has a formal partnership with a major food rescue organization in the area, Forgotten Harvest. The organization is also a partner in the SEED Wayne coalition. However, to date, donations of excess edible foods to them from university-based vendors have been very limited.

SEED Wayne will launch a campaign this Fall to educate on– and near-campus food vendors about the opportunities available for food rescue and redistribution in Detroit, and help set up mechanisms to increase the amount of excess foods rescued.

We invite interested food vendor representatives on and near campus to write us on how they may participate.

Food rescue (or recovery) is a term used to describe the collection of excess (edible) foods from a grocery store, cafeteria kitchen, or a catered event, usually for redistribution to participants of local food assistance programs.

To meet food safety requirements, stringent restrictions apply to the foods that are eligible for rescue and redistribution. Nevertheless, by some estimates, some 96 billion pounds of perfectly edible foods go to landfills, each year, nationally. At the same time, nearly 13 million people in the United States (nearly 12 percent of the population) are at risk of hunger.

Businesses that participate in food rescue receive tax benefits, save

money on waste disposal, and help boost employee morale as a result of their community contributions.

University and community cafeterias are a prime source of such excess edible foods. Wayne State University has a formal partnership with a major food rescue organization in the area, Forgotten Harvest. The organization is also a partner in the SEED Wayne coalition. However, to date, donations of excess edible foods to them from university-based vendors have been very limited.

SEED Wayne will launch a campaign this Fall to educate on– and near-campus food vendors about the opportunities available for food rescue and redistribution in Detroit, and help set up mechanisms to increase the amount of excess foods rescued.

We invite interested food vendor representatives on and near campus to write us on how they may participate.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.

On June 5, Susan Schmidt, director of food service and catering operations at The Henry Ford, and Nick Seccia, executive chef, joined several SEED Wayne partners from WSU for lunch. The Henry Ford is a key collaborator in SEED Wayne’s effort to increase local sourcing in WSU cafeterias.

They discussed their experiences with sourcing their food service operations locally, and shared lessons learnt over the four years of this—now successful—experiment.

Schmidt is also co-chair of the leadership team for Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP), an organization engaged in connecting local farmers to institutional buyers. FSEP, also a partner in SEED Wayne, will help connect AVI Foodsystems, WSU’s main food service provider, to local farmers.

Challenges to local sourcing in university cafeterias, according to food service directors, include possible higher costs of locally sourced ingredients, difficulties farmers face in consistently meeting quality and quantity requirements, and the logistics of distribution and delivery. Although difficult, these challenges have been successfully overcome by many universities with local sourcing programs.

Successful farm-to-cafeteria programs have committed university and food service leadership, an engaged student community that values locally sourced food, and a regional coalition that assists with distribution logistics by involving many buyers, farmers, and suppliers. These ingredients steadily are coming together on Wayne State’s campus.
Planning is in full swing to develop a vegetable and herb garden on campus this summer. We need your help to make it happen!

The WSU Warrior Demonstration Garden is located in the space between the Warrior Grille and the Undergraduate Library. The site is large enough to accommodate several 4 foot wide beds, sunny enough to interest passersby, and has a water connection nearby. It is also close to the Warrior Grille, where entrees integrating garden products will be prepared, and to the residence hall where many students, who, we hope will be active garden participants, make their home.

We anticipate that student groups from across campus will volunteer in the garden and participate in decisions about the harvests. Depending on the types and amounts of food harvested, students may decide to donate, sell, or consume the harvest, or all of the above.

Giulio Fattore, executive chef at AVI Foodsystems, Inc., WSU’s main food vendor, is an avid gardener who looks forward to participating in the Warrior Demonstration Garden. Students may expect tasty entrees that incorporate herbs and vegetables from the garden’s harvests in coming semesters.

We need your help! First, please spread the word. How about sharing news about the garden with five others you know?

Second, we need your help in putting the garden together: cutting lumber and treating with linseed oil, constructing beds, laying beds on site, moving dirt and compost, planting, and tending the garden.

Garden work days are planned for Friday, June 27 and Saturday, June 28.

Fri, June 27: Community Arts Woodshop, 10 AM to 4:00 PM
Sat, June 28: Laying beds, moving dirt, Warrior Demonstration Garden site, 10 AM to 2 PM

If you would like to volunteer, or learn how else you can help, please contact: Lonnisha Thomas at at5940@wayne.edu, or ask for her at 577-2701.