

Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium

Founded by a coalition of higher education institutions, the **Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium** is a statewide organization established in 2013 dedicated to the creation of sustainable and robust regional and global food system through Vermont-based education, research, outreach, and direct connection to farm, forest, and value-added agricultural opportunities.

The Consortium will strengthen Vermont's place as a world-renowned center for food systems education, research, and outreach. Working together, members of the Consortium will increase student enrollment in food-systems-related disciplines in the state, strengthen the capacity of each partnering institution to meet its mission as it relates to food systems, and serve Vermont's expanding and entrepreneurial food system movement.

The Consortium will expand offerings in food systems education at and among the member institutions. This initiative will attract new students from around the world and expand educational and vocational opportunities for Vermont high school graduates as well as those interested in post-secondary education and lifelong learning. Ultimately the work of the Consortium will contribute to the development of a corps of extremely well-trained people who are committed to making lasting and meaningful change in our food system.

The Food System engages the cultural, economic, ecological, sociological, and nutritional, and health aspects of our food, including aspects ranging from farming to value-added production, transportation, energy usage, marketing, distribution, and consumption. The component elements of our food system are being addressed by members of this Consortium who understand the crucial importance of this work for Vermont and for communities throughout the region, the country, and the world.

The Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium

Statement of Purpose

The participating institutions of the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium will strengthen the reputation of Vermont as the recognized national educational leader in innovative food systems implementation by enhancing our collaboration and creating a premier destination for undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree students who wish to learn how to develop sustainable and robust food systems.

Green Mountain College, Sterling College, the University of Vermont, Vermont Law School, Vermont Technical College, and all of the institutions in the Vermont State College system, will work collaboratively to provide a unique and dynamic set of food systems educational opportunities to spur entrepreneurship and land-based economic development to strengthen Vermont's communities. Our collective educational resources will dramatically expand the innovative growth of the leadership, skill, and vision that the progress of the food system depends upon.

"Vermont is our campus." We will build on the heritage of leadership and innovation by Vermont farmers and entrepreneurs. We will connect educational opportunities to provide an unprecedented experience: connecting soil, science, health, commerce, food security, justice, and vital rural communities; where the land will be a classroom for our diverse array of research, instructional, and place-based experiences.

Students will find Vermont to be the most dynamic place to participate in the nation's food systems movement and to learn to prosper in this new economy.

As Vermont higher education partners, our collaboration will advance community-based agriculture and make Vermont a global center of food systems education.

Implementation Steps

- **Marketing Campaign for Vermont Food Systems Education**

The Consortium will develop a coordinated marketing campaign to tell the story of the diverse and creative educational opportunities available for studying food systems in Vermont and aggregated through the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium. This compelling story will describe the collective assets and offerings of Consortium member institutions, and highlight opportunities for participating in diverse courses, programs, and experiences offered by our institutions.

- **Develop Program Collaboration, Offerings and Learning-Focused Services**

The member institutions of the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium currently offer a diverse array of courses, research, internships, and experiential offerings. Together we will deepen our partnership in delivering Vermont-based educational opportunities. In 2013 to 2015 we will expand efforts in the areas highlighted below.

Course Sharing: Participating schools in the Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Coalition will work to build systems for course sharing among institutions through bilateral or multilateral agreements. Shared courses will allow students to register in one institution and participate in courses, research, internships, and direct experience at other partner institutions.

Degree Linkages: Participating schools in the Vermont Higher Education Food System Consortium will work to build admissions systems that provide strategic linkages to provide pathways for students to continue their education and expand the potential career paths available.

Internships & Experiences: Students at Consortium member institutions will have opportunities to enroll in an array of internships and food systems field experiences with shared offerings between partnering institutions that connect students with the innovative leadership of growing farm and value-added businesses.

Creative Faculty Collaboration: Participating schools will work to build systems that encourage and support faculty members as they create and collaborate on opportunities that raise the educational excellence of food systems programs in Vermont.

Student Exchanges/Course Sharing: Participating schools will investigate opportunities for semester or year-long exchanges that could connect over time to the potential for a Consortium-wide program, or joint major, in food systems education.

Vermont Food System Consortium Symposia: Consortium members will cooperatively develop annual symposia on food systems to highlight Vermont but also integrate information and stories that are global and that can attract national and international participants, students, and scholars to Vermont.

Consortium Structure

The Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium will have a collaborative governance structure composed of the presidents of each member institution or their recognized delegate. In 2013-14 this body will organize the Consortium and build the foundation for its future governance.

The board will inventory programs that can be included as Consortium-recognized offerings, and can consider research, coursework, and internship offerings from additional Vermont Higher Education institutions or the private sector for recognition.

The current Vermont Food Systems Higher Education Council serves as a transition board to design and organize the Consortium.

Consortium Institutional Members

Green Mountain College
Sterling College
The University of Vermont
Vermont Law School
Vermont Technical College
Vermont State College System
Middlebury College

Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Board & Advisors

Dan Smith, *Vermont State Colleges*
Phil Conroy, *Vermont Technical College*
Roger Allbee, *Retired Secretary of Agriculture*
Tim Spears, *Middlebury College*
Chuck Ross, *Secretary of Agriculture*
Doug Lantagne, *University of Vermont Extension*
Cynthia Belliveau, *University of Vermont Continuing Education*
Bill Throop, *Green Mountain College*
Marc Mihaly, *Vermont Law School*
Matthew Allen Derr, *Sterling College*
Bill Schubart, *Business Consultant*
Andrew Meyer, *Vermont Soy and Vermont Natural Coatings*

Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

