

# Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium Project Summary

January 2014

Vermont has emerged as the nation's epicenter of the local food movement and food systems development. According to the 2011 Action Plan of the Vermont Working Landscape Partnership, per capita, Vermont has more local organic farms, CSAs, and farmers' markets than any other state in the country. A creative new generation of networked farm and forest entrepreneurs is growing Vermont-based businesses that provide bio fuels, artisan cheese, specialty wood products, meats, organic seeds and produce, grains, beers and spirits, and other value added products. Vermont is uniquely positioned to provide national leadership in how to understand, grow and support our food systems beyond merely buying local.

**Vermont as the Premier Food Systems Education Destination:** In keeping with the growing interest in the cultural, economic, sociological, nutritional and ecological impact of our food, Vermont's educational institutions offer courses, undergraduate and graduate degrees, experiential learning opportunities and internships in Agriculture, Food Systems and other topics related to the vitality of Vermont's food culture, working landscape, and entrepreneurial economy. With growing national and international awareness of Vermont as the destination for innovative food systems learning, coupled with increasing interest by students in unique, self-designed programs, eight institutions – Green Mountain College, Middlebury College, Sterling College, Vermont Law School, University of Vermont, Community College of Vermont, Lyndon State College, and Vermont Technical College – have joined together to form the **Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium (VHEFSC)** to collectively and collaboratively advance food systems education.

**Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium – Vision:** The goal of the VHEFSC is to broaden awareness of our unique cross-institutional offerings of courses, services, and learning experiences to potential students throughout the US and the world so we may attract more students who will support the state's food system movement and help seed the next stage of entrepreneurial activity. Together, we will educate students who will advance the development of resilient food systems nationally and internationally, while strengthening Vermont's place as a world-renowned center for food systems education, research, and innovation. Members of the VHEFSC 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, expand collaboration in new program development and attract new leadership, skills and vision to the food movement. We will become a model for innovative food systems education, with Vermont serving as our living classroom.

**Implementation Steps:** Over the next three years, the VHEFSC will connect students to food systems educational opportunities in Vermont by:

- Expanding our course sharing among institutions, degree linkages, internship experiences, creative faculty collaboration, and student exchanges.
- Creating a cross-institutional food systems studies certificate program.
- Developing annual symposia of food systems to highlight Vermont but also integrate global stories and information that may attract national and international participants, students and scholars to Vermont.
- Developing a coordinated marketing campaign about the diverse and creative educational opportunities for studying food systems in Vermont offered by our institutions.

**Budgeting for the Campaign Ahead:** Each school has made a financial investment in developing the framework for Consortium program and marketing development. VCRD needs to raise \$14,000 from philanthropy over the next two months to provide facilitation, fund development, and to contract for market plan development. Through VCRD the Consortium will work to raise approximately \$900,000 for implementation of programmatic collaboration and Vermont marketing over the next three years (\$300,000 annually).

### **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*  
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