



# Taste the Change:

How to Go  
Organic  
on Campus

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE



As was famously evident in the '60s and '70s, students at colleges and universities are often at the forefront of American social and cultural revolutions. We tend to be the pioneers of activism, offering insights into what needs to be done and the passion necessary to effect social change. Therefore, it is only appropriate that in the new millennium, which is in many ways defined more by McDonalds than Old McDonald, we are defiantly speaking out against the current method of food production and attempting to move towards the consumption of more organic foods. The U.S. organic industry grew 21 percent overall to reach \$17.7 billion in consumer sales in 2006, according to the *Organic Trade Association's (OTA) 2007 Manufacturer Survey*. Organic foods and beverages continue to be one of the fastest growing segments in the overall \$598 billion food market. Few areas are witnessing this incredible transformation more visibly than in places of higher education.

For years, college and university cafeterias have been known to serve sub-par meals. Now, questions about pesticides and herbicides secretly infesting the dessert line and salad bars and narratives of unfairly paid workers come with each freshly brewed pot of coffee. If you are reading this, you are probably one of the many heroic individuals trying to shift this paradigm at your college or university. You may already be part of a campus initiative to get more organic food served in your dining halls and are just looking for some tips to get past a plateau. Or you may only be toying with the idea of beginning dining reform and are looking for some specific advice to transform your vision from a few scattered thoughts into a materialized plan. My hope is that you will take from this guide what you think will be most helpful to your school or campaign.

As a student, I know how difficult it is to feel that you are one of the only individuals at your school who care about the social, economic, environmental, and health-related implications of your food choices. However, if I have learned one thing from my internship at OTA, through the creation of OTA's student blog *Organic on the Green*, and from the wonderful conversations I have had with students all over the country, it is that you and I are not alone. It is an exciting time to be a student proponent of organic because the momentum of this movement is growing exponentially! There are thousands of us from around the country who are currently in the process of increasing not only the organic offerings at our schools but an understanding of the true definition and importance of the term organic. As students, we have a tremendous capacity to influence the way our society thinks about organic. We are the motivators and influencers of what we will see harvested, sold, and purchased in our lifetime. We are the primary customers at our dining halls, and our collective purchasing power gives us incredible leverage to get our voices heard. As Robert F. Kennedy once said, "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."

While organic food may seem like the best fit for your campus dining services scene, your passion and creative conscience are vital to its further success and development. Thank you for your dedication. May you use this guide to help lead your campus in the direction of your organic ideals and dreams.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Nina Merrill". The script is cursive and fluid.

Nina Merrill  
OTA Intern '08  
Colgate University '09

## What is the Organic Agriculture and Products Education Institute?



The mission of the Organic Agriculture and Products Education Institute (Organic Institute) is to educate about the attributes, benefits, and practices of organic agriculture and products today for better environmental and personal health tomorrow. To achieve its mission, the Organic Institute focuses on informing, educating, and training agriculturalists, processors, academics and other professionals, as well as students, consumers, and the general public, in order to increase the amount of farmland under organic production and the number of people choosing organic products.

The Organic Institute seeks to reach diverse audiences via specialized communications, technical assistance and curricula regarding organic agriculture and production, the organic agricultural and production economy, organic standards, and organic certification.

The Organic Institute is a non-profit organization founded by and affiliated with the Organic Trade Association (OTA). The Organic Institute and OTA are two organizations sharing a common vision that organic products will become a significant part of everyday life, enhancing people's lives and the environment.

## What is the Organic Trade Association?



The Organic Trade Association (OTA) is the membership-based business association for the organic industry in North America. OTA's mission is to promote and protect organic trade to benefit the environment, farmers, the public, and the economy. OTA represents businesses across the organic supply chain and addresses all things organic, including food, fiber/textiles, personal care products, and new sectors as they develop. A majority of OTA trade members are small businesses.

To encourage colleges and college students to share their efforts to bring more sustainable food choices to college campuses, OTA launched a blog entitled *Organic on the Green* in July 2008. The blog features essays from students working to make college dining more sustainable.

Since 2007, OTA has also sought to connect with students via its internship program. This program, which strives to educate interns about both the organic industry and business and facilitate the development of skills relevant to interns' long-term educational and professional goals, is open to qualified students during the spring, summer, and fall semesters each year. To learn more about the exciting opportunities available through OTA or its affiliated educational non-profit, the Organic Institute, visit <http://www.ota.com/about/internships.html>.



## What is Organic?

Because “knowledge is power,” truly understanding the term organic as it applies to government rules and regulations is a vital component to the success of your college or university organic efforts. Organic is no longer an ambiguous term; in fact, there are quite specific rules which are used in its classification to ensure organic integrity and traceability. That means that when you succeed in getting more organic food on your campus, you will know that you are getting what you have been fighting for!

Setting the stage for U.S. national organic standards, the U.S. Congress adopted the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1990 as part of the 1990 Farm Bill. This action was followed by over a decade of public input and discussion, which resulted in a National Organic Program (NOP) final rule published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in December 2000 and implemented in October 2002.

According to the NOP, organic production is based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers. Organically produced foods also must be produced without the use of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, genetic engineering and other excluded practices, sewage sludge, or irradiation. Cloning animals or using their products is considered inconsistent with organic practices. Organic foods are minimally processed without the use of artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation to maintain the integrity of the food.



For more information about the definition of organic, see <http://www.ota.com/listbackground05.html>.

### **BENEFITS OF ORGANIC**

#### **GLOBAL WARMING AND CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

A growing body of research suggests that organic practices help to absorb carbon dioxide and combat global warming. For example, Rodale Institute research has shown that organic practices can remove about 7,000 pounds of carbon dioxide from the air each year and sequester it in an acre of farmland. Thus, Rodale estimates that if all 434 million acres of U.S. cropland were converted to organic practices, it would be the equivalent of eliminating 217 million cars—nearly 88 percent of all cars in the country today and more than a third of all the automobiles in the world.

#### **GENETIC ENGINEERING**

U.S. national organic standards and industry practices do not allow the use of genetic engineering in the production and processing of organic products. Therefore, organic agriculture gives consumers who wish to avoid genetically modified foods a choice in the marketplace. Although genetic engineering (GE) proponents claim GE crops will cut pesticide use, this is not necessarily true. On the other hand, organic agriculture does reduce such exposure because it avoids the use of toxic and persistent pesticides.

#### **ANTIBIOTICS IN AGRICULTURE**

Organic practices recognize and respect the powerful nature of antibiotics and therefore protect human health in the long term. They prohibit the use of hormones, antibiotics or other animal drugs in animal feed for the purpose of stimulating the growth or production of livestock. If an antibiotic is used to restore an animal to health, that animal cannot be used for organic production or be sold, labeled or represented as organic. Thus, organic practices avoid the abuse of antibiotics that could have profound consequences for treatment of disease in humans, including the serious dangers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.



## FERTILIZERS AND THE HEALTH OF AQUATIC SYSTEMS

Organic producers use composted manure and other natural materials, as well as crop rotation, to help improve soil fertility, rather than synthetic fertilizers that can result in an overabundance of nitrogen and phosphorous in the ground. As a result, organic practices help protect ground water supplies and avoid runoff of chemicals that can cause “dead zones” in larger bodies of water.

## HEALTH OF THE PLANET AND ITS INHABITANTS

Organic agriculture protects the health of people and the planet by reducing the overall exposure to toxic chemicals from synthetic pesticides that can end up in the ground, air, water and food supply, and that are associated with health consequences,

from asthma to cancer. Because organic agriculture doesn't use toxic and persistent pesticides, choosing organic products is an easy way to help protect yourself.

## NUTRITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Growing crops in healthy soils results in food products that offer healthy nutrients. There is mounting evidence that organically grown fruits, vegetables and grains may offer more of some nutrients, including vitamin C, iron, magnesium and phosphorus, and less exposure to nitrates and pesticide residues than their counterparts grown using synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

## PROTECTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Organic agriculture minimizes children's exposure to toxic and persistent pesticides in the soil in which they play, the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the foods they eat.

## SOIL HEALTH

Organic agriculture builds the health of the soil, providing the foundation for healthy crops and a livelihood for good stewards of the land. In order to be certified organic, crops must be grown on land free of prohibited substances for at least three years prior to harvest. National organic standards require producers to use organic agricultural methods and materials that cover soil fertility, the application of manure, crop rotation, and composting. National organic standards prohibit the use of municipal solid waste and sewage sludge as compost ingredients.

## SPECIES DIVERSITY

Because organic practices help safeguard the environment and protect habitats, organic production conserves and promotes species diversity.

## THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Organic farming helps prevent topsoil erosion, improves soil fertility, protects groundwater, and conserves energy.



## THE USDA ORGANIC SEAL: THE SYMBOL OF TRUST



National organic standards offer U.S. consumers the assurance that all food products labeled as organic in the United States are governed by consistent standards. U.S. organic standards, as implemented in 2002, allow four different labeling options based on the percentage of organic ingredients in a product. These include three distinct categories, and a fourth option for products that contain organic ingredients but not at a high enough level to meet one of the three labeling categories:

- **100 percent organic.** Only products that have been exclusively produced using organic methods and contain only organic ingredients (excluding water and salt) are allowed to carry a label declaring “100 percent organic.”
- **Organic.** This signifies that at least 95 percent of the ingredients (by weight, excluding water and salt) in a processed product have been organically produced. The remaining contents can only be natural or synthetic ingredients not available in an organic form that are recommended by the National Organic Standards Board and allowed on the National List. For specific information on the National List, see [www.ota.com/listbackground05.html](http://www.ota.com/listbackground05.html). The product cannot use both organic and non-organic versions of any ingredient that is listed as organic. For instance, if a loaf of bread is made with organic wheat, all of the wheat in the bread must be organic.
- **Made with organic.** Products with 70 to 95 percent organic ingredients may display “Made with organic [with up to three specific organic ingredients or food groups listed]” on the front panel.
- All three categories prohibit the inclusion of any ingredients produced using genetic engineering, irradiation, or sewage sludge.
- Products with less than 70 percent organic ingredients can list the organic items only in the ingredient panel. There can be no mention of organic on the main panel.

To assist consumers, USDA has designed a seal that may be used only on products labeled as “100 percent organic” or “organic.” Use of the seal is voluntary, but is seen as a useful tool. Grocery stores are increasingly using the “USDA Organic” seal on point-of-purchase materials to help identify organic sections in the store. Non-food products that meet the requirements for using the “USDA Organic” seal can also use the seal.

Consumers choosing organic products have the assurance that by doing so they are supporting farmers committed to maintaining the long-term health of our environment.



## Where to Begin

Now that you understand the definition and importance of organic, you may be thinking “okay, now what?” This section will try to outline some tips that may help to give you a jump-start in putting all of this new knowledge to use!

### HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

Do your homework. Your goal should be to fully understand the ins and outs of organic on college campuses before you take your first official step. What have individuals done in the past to try to increase the understanding of organic at your school? Have steps been taken to encourage the purchase of organic products in your dining halls? If so, how have the students, administration, and dining services reacted? If no initiative has been taken with organic specifically, have people worked to create a more sustainable environment? What tactics have been especially successful? I guarantee that in this research you will come across at least one piece of useful information or advice that will change the course of your organic initiative.



### STARTING FROM SQUARE ONE

If you have already assembled a group of similarly minded individuals, congratulations! If not, seeking out members for your future organization is a great place to begin. Success comes in numbers, so try to identify as many people on your campus as possible whom you think might be interested in forming a campus club or group. Before you begin the time-consuming process of starting a group from scratch, make sure that there is not already another group, formal or informal, that is addressing the same issues you hope to tackle. It is quite possible that this type of club exists but has not had successful publicity campaigns and is consequently not particularly visible on campus. Speak with administrators, professors, etc., but if you are in fact a “lone reed,” plug on!

To start from scratch can be a bit daunting, so scope out other groups on your campus who have a social conscience or political focus. In other words, do not expect to find a club that considers organic or even sustainable food to be its first priority. Target organizations that have environmental concerns or at least a sense of social awareness (i.e. Fair Trade, Slow Food, and/or Amnesty International). The goal, in this case, could be to start out as a sub-sect of one of these clubs while building up your membership base and learning about the club culture at your school. Members of these clubs tend to be



individuals who yearn to learn more about social and environmental issues. They will most likely be eager to hear your perspective and will be open to the suggestions you have for campus reform.

Aim to develop a positive relationship with whichever group you select, as you could end up breaking off from this parent club, creating your own organization, and developing a coalition with both groups. If you have been conscious of nurturing an organic culture from the beginning, all of the clubs in “your” coalition could care deeply about increasing organic food on campus thanks to you!

## DEVELOPING A GROUP FRAMEWORK

Before writing out plans and strategies to help in the attainment of specific goals, begin by drafting a charter. Focus on the overarching vision of the group and what you hope to achieve in the long run. Then vote to instate the organization’s main leader, whose job will include approving or vetoing any written strategic plans.

As you begin to identify your organizational goals, consider developing a game plan. A game plan can be used to highlight the objectives of any longer term goal and elucidate specific details that will lead to its success. While I was interning at OTA, we used the acronym SMART in our game plans because we aim to have all objectives be “specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and trackable.” Formulating an initial game plan will be an invaluable tool in the development of your new organic organization because it will keep



you on track once your goals become more complicated. Keep in mind that for the first few drafts, it is vital for all founding members to feel that their voices are being heard and that the organization is starting off democratically.

## OBJECTIVES

Begin by delineating your objectives. You will want to edit this document periodically, but try to outline your goals as specifically as possible. Is your ultimate target to get out of your current dining contract and develop a contract with a more sustainable-minded service like Bon Appétit Management Company? Or would you rather begin to source your food independently? If you are happy with your current dining provider, are you hoping to switch to an organic version of a certain product? Do you wish to develop an organic garden? Will you try to convince one dining hall to switch over to mostly organic while the others remain conventional? Do you want your dining halls to become certified organic?

Outline your organization’s objectives as clearly as possible. This will be important in a few months’ time, when you refer back to your original plan to see how successful you have been and/or how you need to modify the document to adjust to new situations.

## TEAM/RESOURCES

It is equally important to delegate unique jobs to every person on your team. Jason Shepard, a student at Johnson and Wales, founded the club The Green Collaborative, which focuses on sustainability initiatives on campus. While this club is not solely concerned with organic, Shepard attributes its success to the fact that each person involved is able to pick one goal for which

they will be held accountable. In this way, members can propose specific subcommittees or goals that allow them to concentrate on their personal interests.

In your club, who will hold each position? Which people, outside of your organization, will be important in the attainment of your goals (i.e., leaders in dining services and/or professors and administrators)? Is there a student(s) from another school who has held a leadership position in a similar organization who will agree to serve as a volunteer advisor? You get the idea! Assign people to various jobs so everyone in the club knows what is expected of them. People will do a better job if they are passionate about their individual tasks, so try to create an environment where none of your members are doing jobs solely out of obligation.



One of the biggest issues for all student-run organizations at colleges and/or universities is the predictable turnover of membership due to graduating members. It is important that you try to mitigate any feeling of hierarchy based on age, because, if all goes as planned, the younger members will be the experienced participants in just a year or two. It is only natural, though, that students who have more experience will gravitate towards more significant roles. For various tasks, ask for teams of two, incorporating one junior or senior member with a freshman or sophomore.

### STAGES/TASKS

The importance of breaking down your overarching goals into specific stages cannot be underestimated. Identify a title and a brief description of each goal, delegate members to specific tasks, and decide upon a reasonable completion date for each. Lastly, it is extremely important to pinpoint “success factors” or measurable benchmarks for the completion of each stage (i.e., recruit 5-10 members for first meeting).

Consider the fact that the more you delineate the various stages of your plan, the easier it will be to follow. The stress and inherent demands of college life make it only natural that clubs and extracurricular activities will not always be a priority

during the semester. If you have a timeline and various dates “looming overhead,” you will tend to get more done as an individual and as an organization. Be conscious of setting realistic expectations to avoid getting into the habit of accepting the passage of deadlines without the completion of goals.

### CHALLENGES

In the beginning of any campaign, it is possible for heightened excitement to overshadow the fact that an unexpected bump in the road could occur and throw you off course. Therefore, it is extremely important to reflect upon what could theoretically go wrong in your new organization and to create a plan to minimize this possibility.

Many students have found that communicating with their school’s dining services is not as simple as they thought. For example, maybe the manager “talks the talk” but does not follow through with his or her guarantee to replace the conventional milk with organic milk and organic soymilk. How will you account for this possibility in your game plan? Your game plan will never be perfect, and you will most certainly always need to revise and rework your initial draft. However, the more preparation and careful planning you do, the more ready you will be to tackle the unexpected issues that come your way.



Some considerations to take into account are:

- Limitations inherent in your university's food service or vendor contract.
- Willingness of your school's current food service provider to change its purchasing policy—when will its current contract run out?
- Budgetary and financial constraints—will student dining plan fees increase to account for higher supply costs? Will you have to compromise to address economic issues?
- Relationships with organic vendors—will your current food service provider need to develop a relationship and draft another contract with an organic vendor? Are they willing to look into this possibility?



Please see the link to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's "A Guide to Developing a Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy" (see Resources) for more logistical information about food purchasing policy and guidelines.

### REVIEWING THE GAME PLAN

Expect to review the game plan at the beginning and end of each semester to allow for periodic adjustments. Throughout the semester, it is helpful to have the document available to all members of the club via a web site or in a designated location so people are always kept "in the know," as all of us like to be! If there are ever any changes made to the document, be sure to make all members aware. It is very easy for a few small, non-communicated changes to morph into a full battle of leadership misdirection and member resentment. Avoid this at all costs!

Go to <http://www.sfalliance.org/resources/Strategy%20chart%202006.pdf> for another format to help you develop your organizational strategy.

### FINDING SUPPORTERS

#### PROFESSORS

Try to find a professor or two (or three!) whom you think may be interested in organic agriculture and/or have experience in one of many related fields. Some good places to look are the Environmental Studies, Sociology, and Agriculture departments. You may also want to scope out the Business Department, as many new courses are being introduced which focus on sustainable business. Draft an e-mail or, better yet, meet with interested professors in person to discuss your goals and to see if they have any advice to offer. Try to develop a relationship with them before asking them to advise your club. It may

be helpful to develop the game plan prior to your meeting. This will signify that you are serious about the club and are an organized leader with a clear sense of direction. They may be more likely to donate a significant portion of their time and energy to your cause if they know you are taking your job seriously.

#### ADMINISTRATORS

Try to set up a meeting with an administrator whom you think would be supportive of the goal to make organic food more prevalent on your campus. See if any of your club's members have an especially positive relationship with their deans or general administrators. Many students who have had the most success attribute their accomplishments to the support of "green" administrators, so do not underestimate their importance to your organization.



## SPOTLIGHT ON: ANNIE MYERS (NEW YORK UNIVERSITY)



New York University has seven dining halls, which many of our 20,000 undergraduate students never use after the expiration of their freshman year meal plan. Until my sophomore spring, while concentrating my academics on Northeast agriculture and sustainable farming, I had no intention of getting involved with the food system at NYU. Having matriculated to the school with the hopes of avoiding a collegiate “bubble,” I saw working on school dining as a project that would cut me off from the bigger picture, even just our regional food system, which I felt demanded more immediate attention.

As any New Yorker might begrudgingly tell you, however, NYU is a sizeable part of a “bigger” picture. Not only is the University one of the largest employers in New York, as well as the owner of substantial urban property, but it happens to spend quite a substantial sum of money on food. We purchase over 340,000 pounds of food per

semester, worth about \$4 million. In 2006, a group of five Gallatin students researched and developed a Sustainability Assessment of NYU, in which they recognized (among other things) the immensity of that purchasing power. The assessment pointed out that Aramark, our food service provider, “unfortunately has the worst record among national food services when it comes to purchasing local food,” although Sid Wainer, the company that provided about 12% of NYU’s produce, does deal with many local farmers. Of course, any local food supply depends upon our Northeast growing season, but as the Sustainability Assessment highlighted, NYU could consistently prioritize organic, sustainably farmed products, and also take advantage of the seasonal abundance. New York, the assessors explained, “has more farms than any other state on the Eastern seaboard.” Their survey results explained that students would strongly support a dining hall dedicated to local and organic foods, and would even pay an additional \$0.75 to \$1/meal to eat there. We could see the local bounty in the 46 Greenmarkets and 50 CSA sites throughout the boroughs. We just didn’t have that food in our dining halls.

In 2006, the only identifiable “sustainable” products at NYU were local apples (a percentage of the total apples). Through the efforts of student clubs, the Sustainability Task Force, and the increasingly open-minded Aramark, we now have 100% Fair Trade coffee. Our fish is bought from Wild Edibles. For the last academic year, one dining hall, Hayden, was devoted to providing as much local, organic, and/or Fair Trade food as possible. About 32% of the food purchased for Hayden fell into one or more of these categories. These changes came after considerable time at the drawing board: defining organic, defining local, prioritizing values, considering whether to set large goals or small, to resist collaboration with Aramark, or to set about working together. Increased inter-school collaboration between students, particularly among



## SPOTLIGHT ON: ANNIE MYERS (Continued)



participants in the Real Food Summit last fall, has facilitated this work immensely.

The Food and Purchasing (F&P) Subcommittee of the Sustainability Task Force requested purchasing data from Dining Services this spring, and the data received (pounds purchased, dollars spent, Hayden vs. other dining hall comparisons) are now being evaluated. The F&P Committee also developed sustainable catering criteria, and Aramark is now offering an organic catering option.

Clearly, we have a ways to go before inciting a full-scale agrarian

revolution at NYU. We have gardens, but no farms, local apples, but plenty of bananas, and when it comes down to it, we young farmers and farm-appreciators of the school could simply eat elsewhere. But instead we are working towards change, recognizing that our style must be rather like the tortoise: slow but steady. The steady is the most important thing to maintain, a quality rare in rotating student populations, but I trust that local, organic foods will steadily increase in our dining halls, and our pace of change may even quicken in the coming years. Ever since the Real Food Summit last Fall, since the chairing of the Food and Purchasing Subcommittee by a freshman this Spring, since the launching of this web site this week...it has been clear to me that students working on changing their institutional food systems are no longer alone. We have begun to help each other! We're recognizing a big picture. We're reaching far outside our own academic spheres. And we show no signs of retreat.



## Interacting with Dining Services

According to Elisabeth Farrell, the Program Coordinator for the Culture and Sustainability, Food and Society Initiatives at the University of New Hampshire, one of the most important factors in any sustainable food initiative is to “encourage



an ongoing dialogue/partnership between students and dining services. Students bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the table, but they often do not realize the various factors and constraints that impact decision-making. A better understanding of these things can help both students and staff to set realistic goals to advance their efforts.” Begin your campaign by sitting down and having an honest discussion with your food service manager. Without understanding the logistics of the cafeteria and the financial realities of what you are hoping to achieve, you will be unlikely to get very far.

Many people in dining services will be much more supportive of your goals than you might think. Some, such as Mike Stagnaro, the Executive Chef at Colgate University, remarked that he tried to introduce organic yogurt to a dining facility on campus a few years ago because of his own personal investment in organic. However, there was simply no student interest at the time. He explained that he would be thrilled to sit down with any student or group interested in introducing organic food into the dining halls. Many times, dining staff need student backing to make headway with sustainable initiatives.

The situation at every college and university is different, so it is difficult to say what specific steps you will need to take to see more organic items on the menu. For this reason, it is vital that you develop a positive relationship with the manager of your school’s dining service. Set up a meeting to sit down and talk with him/her. Find out about your school’s dining contract, the length of the contract, and any clauses that you should be aware of. It is extremely important to remember that this should be an honest and friendly conversation. Try to reassure the manager, in both tone and content, that your goal is to work together to achieve a beneficial outcome for all parties involved. Go into the meeting with the understanding that you will be talking to a businessman or woman and that while sustainable initiatives may be important to him or her, finances are probably a top priority. As students, it is easy for us to get caught up in the ideology of the organic benefit and thus overlook the financial and logistical realities of what we are asking. As such, you need to remember that when trying to increase organic food options in your dining hall, you may have to compromise.

Know the definition of organic and related terms as fully as possible. One of the main issues students face when trying to get organic to be served in the cafeteria is that the dining service manager may have great intentions to increase organic options, but not truly understand the term organic (see the reference section at the end of the guide for more organic educational materials). Educate him or her so that this does not occur. This means educating yourself first.

Before your meeting, research organic initiatives at schools of a similar size. Speak to student leaders and ask them to explain the logistics of their plan and the strategies that helped them to achieve success. What were the concerns of their dining service manager and how did they respond to his or her unease? Speak to as many students as possible so you can offer a few different suggestions to the manager with whom you meet.

If you are starting from scratch, you should consider asking to switch to one or two organic items. Katy Anderson, a senior at Princeton University, suggests that students “start specific, and start small. Apples, then coffee and fish... those were some of the major places where Princeton was first successful... In the process of ‘localizing’ and ‘organichizing’ and ‘greenifying’ collegiate food, it seems that these items are great entry points to improving one’s food system.” If there is presently no organic food served in your cafeteria, consider asking for organic fair-trade coffee or organic soymilk. The price differential between the organic and conventional varieties of these products is minimal, so they may be among the easiest to convince your food service provider to purchase. Also, it may be easier to convince dining services to switch to organic options at your school’s a la carte facility instead of at the “all-you-can-eat” cafeterias. In this case, the café can charge more to make up for heightened input costs.



The second major option is to designate one major dining hall as organic, while leaving the others unchanged. This approach was taken by Yale, New York University (NYC), and University of California at Berkeley. As Anderson says, “Changing over one dining hall, as opposed to all at once, brings up a really interesting point. Yale has always

emphasized that starting with one dining hall was what gave them the recognition and the bargaining power to expand their efforts just as NYU did with [their cafeteria] Hayden...The Yale/Hayden approach is useful when you’re just starting out (testing the waters, understanding the process) AND trying to snag the attention of both students and administrators.” UC Berkeley, the first university to become certified organic, began with a 100% certified organic salad bar in its Crossroads dining commons in April 2006. Now, all four of its dining halls have followed suit (see [http://caldining.berkeley.edu/environment\\_organic\\_cert.html](http://caldining.berkeley.edu/environment_organic_cert.html) for more information). See “Spotlight on: Annie Myers.”

You will most definitely have many meetings with the manager of dining services, so don’t get put off if the first meeting does not accomplish everything you have planned. Realize that you are doing an honorable thing and that your efforts will be rewarded if you are persistent.

Lastly, if the student body at your university is extremely dissatisfied with your current dining services company, you may want to consider switching to a more sustainably minded food service provider. Think about looking into the policies of other providers who may make it their priority to provide more organically grown food. For example, among the primary concerns of Bon Appétit Management Company, one of the top food service providers among colleges nationwide, is the promotion of conscious eating among students and the responsible sourcing of food. Maisie Greenawalt, Vice President of Bon Appétit Management Company, explained the deeply engrained values of this company when she said, “For more than ten years, we’ve encouraged students to think deeply about the origins of their food. We believe that human health, the environment, local farm economies and animal welfare are all critically important areas in which our food sourcing policies will have an impact. We’re delighted that these issues are now high on the radar of students, administrators and the entire academic community.” Please see [www.bamco.com](http://www.bamco.com) for more information. Sometimes, as is said in business, it is important to “cut your losses” and move on to another company whose values may be more aligned with those of your university.





## SPOTLIGHT ON: CHUCK DAVIES (Associate Director of Residential Dining, Cal Dining – University of California, Berkeley)



**W**hy would a large university dining service make the decision to “go organic?” Does it make sense? Isn’t it too expensive? Are students willing to pay more for organic dining options?

These are just a few of the questions we asked ourselves, and were asked by others, just over 2 years ago when we began the process of certifying the first of four residential dining halls. “We” are Cal Dining, the self-operated dining service program at the University of California, Berkeley. And I am Chuck Davies, Associate Director of Residential Dining. The certification initiative was my pet project but it never could have happened without the support of our Director, Shawn LaPean, and the hard work and dedication of our front line staff.

Certification may not be the right option for every college and university dining service, but in our case, it seemed the right thing to do. First and foremost, Cal Dining is here to serve our student customers. It’s our mission to provide a safe living and learning environment—a home away from home for Cal students. We take our charge to be good stewards of our student’s money very seriously, and endeavor to make wise purchasing choices. As one of the country’s largest dining service operations, we serve close to 30,000 meals a day in fourteen different locations on and off campus. Our four residential dining halls are “all-you-can-eat” locations—customers swipe once and can choose from any number of food court options, and have as much as they would like during any given meal period. We receive dozens of electronic and handwritten comment cards weekly and we respond to each one. Among those comments were requests from our diners asking for “more organic choices!” At that time, we responded by saying that we appreciated the suggestion and that we “would investigate the possibility of purchasing more organic products.” And so we did!

While we never had the notion that we could ever afford to be 100% organic in all of our purchasing, after research on pricing and availability, we were able to determine that it would be possible to begin with a 100% Certified Organic Salad Bar, and move on from there. If we were to follow through with certification, it would mean that each and every item on the salad bar including several types of greens, 16 different fresh vegetables, salad dressings, sunflower seeds, eggs, tofu, oils, vinegars, raisins, croutons and the entire selection of composed salads such as Asian Noodle, Marinated Vegetables, Spicy Spelt, 3 Bean, Black Bean and Corn and all ingredients including spices would be required to 100% Organic!



## SPOTLIGHT ON: CHUCK DAVIES (Continued)

Based on the USDA's national standards, which were instituted in 2002, any producer, manufacturer or processor who makes claims regarding organic ingredients is required to undergo certification by an independent third-party certifying agency. Cal Dining's management team felt that it was necessary to take this additional step in order to add integrity to our statement about the use of organic ingredients in our dining halls. In addition, we felt it was a perfect educational opportunity for our staff AND our student customers. Our experience with CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers—[www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)), our certifying agency,



couldn't have been more positive. It provided the template for our certification application and helpful hints along the way. While it takes some time to gather documentation and create Standard Operating Procedures for the operation being certified, it's not an expensive process, and CCOF and other certifying agencies across the country are there to help.

Once an application is accepted, an inspection is scheduled. Once certified, the operation is required to maintain proper records which include invoices for organic product purchases, service/production records, sanitation and pest control records, etc. These records are audited once per year by the certifying agency. Of course, education and training of staff who are handling and processing organic products are an essential piece of the success of any new program. Cal Dining's management and front line staff were informed and trained every step of the way.

Following the successful certification of our largest dining hall in April, 2006, Cal Dining proceeded with certification for its additional three residential dining halls. The program has received wide recognition and has proven to be exceedingly successful with our student customers as well as faculty and staff. In fact, it's our contention that the organic certification along with numerous other quality improvement initiatives has resulted in increased meal plan sales, particularly to non-resident students. While organic products can be more expensive than conventional products, with proper planning, bidding and contract pricing, it's possible for college and university dining programs to afford organic ingredients. Through such careful practices, Cal Dining has actually been able to reduce the cost per meal the past several years. For those campuses which have a "retail" food service operation charging a la carte prices rather than one "swipe" for an all you can eat meal, the additional costs for organic ingredients may be built into the retail price.

Since our initial organic certification of our salad bars, Cal Dining has continued to make significant additional changes by purchasing only organic eggs and organic milk for our dining hall milk dispensers. In our retail settings, we have added dozens of organic packaged items.

While organic certification may not be suitable for every campus dining operation, it's been a very successful model for Cal Dining and the University of California, Berkeley!

## Achieving Organic Certification

Helping your cafeteria achieve organic certification may seem like a far cry for many of you who are just embarking on initiatives to increase organic offerings at your school. However, according to Chuck Davies, the Associate Director of Cal Dining at UC Berkeley, it is much easier to accomplish than it may seem. Davies has seen the tremendous benefits that can come from becoming certified organic. If your school decides to go in this direction, it, too, will reap the benefits of publicity in an area that is quickly becoming attractive to potential students and the media.



Begin by speaking to your dining service director to let him or her know of your desire to gain organic certification. He or she will need to get behind you in this endeavor. To allay any fear he or she might have of heightened dining expenses, conduct research and price comparisons so you have more facts and figures to back your case. For example, although Chuck Davies admits that a lot depends on budgetary restraints, after getting certified, the cost per meal at Berkeley has surprisingly gone down! Offering this kind of supportive information based on bona fide experience will help put your dining service director at ease about making the transition to organic. Ask to be your dining service director's student assistant so he or she does not feel overwhelmed by the additional work this transition may entail. Then, contact a few certifying agencies in your state or region. UC Berkeley used California Certified Organic Farmers, one of the oldest and most respected certifiers on the west coast. The application you will be asked to fill out will most likely include step-by-step instructions for the next stages in the process, so it would benefit you to follow these directions as closely as possible. Contacting a few certifying agencies would also be beneficial in the beginning, as you will want to choose the agency that seems the most in line with your goals.

It is a misconception that to be certified organic, a dining hall must serve 100% organic food. In actuality, certification has nothing to do with the quantity of organic food sold. Instead, it refers to a clear and regulated separation of organic food from conventional food. Organic food must be kept and cooked in a separate place from the conventional food to ensure that no residual chemicals find their way into the organic food. All people working in the dining halls will need to go through a training process to understand the newly instated rules and regulations. You may consider speaking to them during this training. Student passion and enthusiasm tend to be contagious, and it will benefit all involved if the people working in dining services begin to understand—and hopefully believe in—organic.

## SPOTLIGHT ON: ERIN ALISA LYNN (MANHATTAN COLLEGE)



**M**anhattan College is a fairly small school with students hailing from a wide variety of demographics. On campus, interest in food reform happens to be concentrated within a very small minority of students. Fortunate to have found each other at all, our little Fair Trade/Food Reform coalition decided, upon organizing, that gaining public appeal and educating our peers would be our first challenge.

After meeting with our food service managers, representatives of Sodexo, we learned that to make any change in our dining halls it would have to first be made clear that it was the popular opinion of the students, their customers. So, we began by setting up camp outside the dining halls, providing literature on Fair Trade, personally delivering brief definitions to new terms, and handing out Divine chocolates, for free. This step was absolutely necessary and perhaps the most challenging because, like most Americans living in cities, my fellow students had been trained to simply accept a finished, packaged product, and not wonder about the steps of production. But I believe we successfully piqued the curiosity of the students

by appealing to their pockets, their health, their taste buds, and their conscience. We also showed documentaries and hosted open-mic nights on campus during which we interjected facts about the injustices of some free trade practices, and how Fair Trade works.

After this, we handed out Sodexo comment cards, encouraging the students to demand their rights as customers and ask Sodexo to provide more Fair Trade and organic goods, beginning with coffee. We collected hundreds of comment cards, delivered them to the managers, and informed them that the people had spoken. Our managers were surprisingly responsive and by the following semester we had all Fair Trade, organic coffee on campus. Additionally, we had gained a voice on campus and a relationship with Sodexo. We have continued to communicate with the students and Sodexo about achieving a healthy, just, sustainable food service on campus.





## Raising Awareness

As Elisabeth Farrell from the University of New Hampshire Office of Sustainability so aptly explains, “While more and more students are interested in and advocating for organic/local/sustainable foods, many are not. If dining sees a large demand for certain products, they are more likely to try to integrate them, versus only a small demand from a select group.” In other words, it is truly in your best interest to focus much of your efforts on raising student awareness of organic. A few students can indeed make a huge difference. However, because dining halls are businesses, it is the collective power of students that will have the most significant effect.

### FREE FOOD NEVER FAILS

Concerned about people’s willingness to try organic? Let them sample it for free! We all know by now that students respond exceptionally well to food, especially food they do not have to pay for, so try publicizing a club meeting by highlighting “FREE ORGANIC FOOD” on your flyers. Serve food that breaks old stereotypes of organic as “crunchy granola.” Instead, serve a “crowd pleaser.” Tobin Porter-Brown of Hampshire College found this to be one of the most effective measures taken to increase interest in his club. Also, try not to be overbearing in your organic message delivery. Instead, create a social and entertaining atmosphere and conclude with a 5-10 minute explanation of organic, your club’s goals, and why you hope the students attending the meeting will join you in your efforts.

If you have become an official club at the time of this meeting, you can fund the food with the usual budget allocated to clubs and organizations. If you are still unofficial, or are trying to raise awareness as an individual or through a small informal group, you can try to finance the food by going to local stores that sell organic food and products. Ask them to support your cause by donating organic products to the club in exchange for publicity (i.e., feature their name on flyers, distribute their coupons at meetings, etc.). Many organic food companies would be happy to donate their products to an organic club for a meeting or fundraiser. See The Organic Pages Online™ ([www.theorganicpagesonline.com](http://www.theorganicpagesonline.com)) for a list of organic companies. These companies would be a great place to start calling!

Consider setting up a “free food for feedback” table in your cafeteria. According to Thom Stevenson of Ohio State University, because cafeterias highly value student feedback, if you are trying to get, say, organic fair trade coffee served in the cafeteria, give out samples of the brand you are hoping to buy along with student feedback forms. Encourage the students to fill out



the suggestion form and ask their dining services to order more of the product in the future. In many schools, the results of such efforts have been remarkable. See “Spotlight on: Erin Alissa Lynn (Manhattan College).”

Another option is to adopt a potluck format for your weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly club meetings. Ask that each member bring a dish prepared with organic ingredients for everyone to sample. In publicizing each meeting, be sure to highlight this tasty feature! Dory Dinoto of Slow Food Boston University found organic tastings to go over extremely well and attract scores of students. If you think money will be an issue, this could be a cheap and easy place to start if your members are willing to contribute a bit of their own money to the cause.

Lastly, do not forget to mark each new food option with an “organic” label as you begin to achieve success with your initiatives. It is important for students to see the difference between the organic and conventional varieties of each item, so that they can have the option to chose organic and thus show the dining hall managers that it is, in fact, a desired commodity.

## SPEAKERS AND VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Advertising a film or a speaker for your club can be a good way to add a level of excitement that is sure to attract a larger crowd. Because speakers are often very expensive, a film about the organic industry can be a good place to start. Consider documentaries such as:

- “Food, Inc.” (U.S. release in June 2009)
- “King Corn”
- “The Future of Food”
- “Bad Seed: The Truth About Our Food”
- “How to Save the World”
- “The Real Dirt on Farmer John”
- “Young Agrarians”

See [http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/mtm\\_good\\_food/](http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/mtm_good_food/) to view selections from the Media that Matters Film Festival.

Alex Barrett Prescott of Colorado University at Boulder (CU) is a member of a group called CU Going Local. The members of this organization have the ambitious goal of transitioning their entire school to organic and locally grown food. He has found that showing videos related to the organic benefit has been one of the most compelling aspects of CU Going Local's campaign.

Consider showing a film, followed by a short speech about your organization's mission and goals. Maybe you'd like to have a discussion at the culmination of the documentary to hear people's opinions and ideas. Possibly pair the viewing with the signing of a petition and/or a free tasting. Advertise all around campus, but focus on getting the attention of the select subset of the student population whom you think will be most receptive to organic and interested in joining your team (i.e., students taking environmental studies courses or those involved in other socially-conscious clubs, etc.).

If you have procured enough money to fund a high-profile speaker to lecture on behalf of your club, wonderful! You will want to heavily promote this event since it may not happen very often.

## MEDIA OUTREACH

One of the best parts of any organic campus initiative is that half of the work has already been done for you. What I mean is that in the past ten plus years, organic corporate culture has spent millions of dollars to make "organic" a household term and thus when people see the term, they take notice. Because it is a hot topic, you will most likely not have to work very hard to convince your school and/or local paper of the benefit of printing articles about your organization's initiatives. Consider the following options for increasing publicity for your group and educating the local population (student and/or general public) about the organic benefit.

## MEDIA ADVISORY/PRESS RELEASE

In the event that you have secured a big-name speaker or are holding a large demonstration or event, a media advisory—a document sent to inform local media of an upcoming event—is a great way to inform the public. This notice should be sent to publications at least a few days before the event so there is time to get a reporter to cover it. A good rule of thumb is to include the "who, what, when, where, and why" of the event. Try to keep this notice brief and to the point, but be sure to include a brief background of your organization and a contact number and e-mail address in case a reporter would like more information for a follow-up article.

Then, on the day of the event, send out a more detailed press release. Think "newsworthy." What would grab a

reader's attention about this event? What makes it important on a grander level? Be aware that some newspapers will simply print your press release without much revision or cutting, so make sure it is written in a professional manner without any spelling or grammatical errors.

Weave some type of message about organic into every release that your organization puts out. You can also issue special releases that specifically announce your club's support for organic agriculture. This type of release may be especially useful during September which has been deemed "Organic Harvest Month™" in an effort to heighten attention given to organic



farming and organic products. Reiterate the benefits of organic. Urge consumers to support organic agriculture to protect public health and the environment. In addition to heightening awareness of the standards, doing this will remind local press that you are an authority on the topic and should be used as a media resource on future organic stories.

When issuing a release, here are a few rules of thumb to keep in mind:

**HEADLINE** — Write this in the present tense and be sure it tightly positions the news you're announcing.

**LEAD** — The first paragraph should announce the major news in past tense and attribute it to a spokesperson for your club.



**DATELINE** — Begin the lead paragraph with the city and state of your school, followed by the month, date and year it is being released. Most releases are also marked "For Immediate Release" to let the press know they can run the story that day.

**QUOTE** — Be sure to include at least one quote from your club or campaign's leader or representative and include that spokesperson's full name and position.

**FACTS** — Include all the essential facts in supporting paragraphs, with the most important facts going first.

**BOILERPLATE** — Your last paragraph should be a concise description of your organization that includes its full name, address, phone and possible web site address.

**CONTACT** — Always include the name, phone number(s) and e-mail address of the person who will be available to the media to provide further information.

**LENGTH** — The shorter the better. Keep releases to one page, especially if you single-space them. Avoid more than two pages. If reporters need more information, they'll call you.

**DISTRIBUTION** — Releases can be e-mailed, faxed, mailed, hand-delivered, or sent by overnight mail. No one way is preferred.

**FOLLOW-UP** — Speaking with media on the phone about the news being announced by your club or campaign can help ensure coverage of your story. Never call them when they are on deadline, however, and always ask if they have time to talk before proceeding. Be courteous and brief.

### OPINION EDITORIALS (OP-EDS) IN SCHOOL AND LOCAL PAPERS

Don't forget about the great resource you have to speak directly to your student body: the op-ed section of your school newspaper. Through this lens, you will be seen as the resident "organic expert" of your school. This is a great way to correct misconceptions about organic and to offer organizational updates. Maybe you can even convince the editor to give you a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly spot to offer your opinion about various organic issues. Consider writing about a specific aspect of the organic industry that you think will be of particular interest to students.

For example, you may decide to offer your opinion of the ongoing local vs. organic debate on college campuses. Or maybe you feel more passionate about informing people of what other colleges have done to increase organic in their dining halls—a likely way to inspire your peers to get more involved! The topic is up to you. Just make sure that you include plenty of facts and figures, which you can get at [www.ota.com](http://www.ota.com).

These "opinion editorials," or "op-eds" for short, are excellent targets for communicating information about your initiative in a formal newspaper or publication as well. Edited by an "Editorial Page Editor," these pieces usually run about 750 words and are bylined by leaders of a field related to the topic being discussed. Papers often have their own editorial guidelines for op-eds, so contact the Editorial Page Editor or check the paper's web site for a copy. In general, op-eds deal with current issues that are in the news and affect a lot of people, so monitor the paper's news coverage every day to identify appropriate subjects. As with letters to the editors, issues related to the environment,







public health and consumer buying power all make good topics for op-eds about organic agriculture and standards. Back your piece up with statements of support and close with a recommendation or call to action.

Once your op-ed piece is finalized, send it to the Editorial Page Editor by mail, fax or e-mail, depending on the newspaper's preference, along with a cover letter emphasizing the timeliness and importance of the issue. Thank the Editorial Page Editor for his or her consideration and attach a copy of the piece. Make sure the full name, address, title, affiliation and phone number of the author of the piece are on the op-ed as well as the cover letter. The cover letter can be sent by the author or someone else in your club or organization.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

One of the most widely read sections of the paper, the letters to the editor section publishes reader responses to recent editorials and news coverage. Monitor your local, daily, weekly, and school newspapers for opportunities that make sense. Look for pieces relating to appropriate topics such as organic farming, water quality, pesticide use, food safety, farm legislation, or animal welfare. Then compose a letter that presents the your point of view as a proponent of organic. Find a way to alert readers to the upcoming standards. Keep letters short and to the point. Many newspapers only publish letters that are three paragraphs or less. Study your local paper to see what length they prefer. As for content, if you're writing a letter disagreeing with an op-ed, editorial or news piece, start off on common ground by noting at least one point you agree with or can praise, e.g., "Congratulations to the *Daily News* for addressing the difficult issue of pesticides in our drinking water." But never use a letter to the editor to bash the media. Stay positive.

Once your letter is finished, send it to the newspaper, marked "Attention: Letters to the Editor." Send it by mail, fax or e-mail, depending on your paper's preference. When in doubt, sending it by mail is fine.



## Beyond Organic Food...

Your cafeteria may be the most logical place to start making progress because it is probably among the most widely used facilities at your school. However, there are many other places where you could help to promote organic. College t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, banners, etc. are often made with conventionally produced cotton. With that in mind, why not try to get your school bookstore to incorporate organically produced apparel?

Many colleges, such as Colgate University and the University of Michigan, have already added organic cotton t-shirts and sweatshirts to their collections. This follows the national surge of organic cotton products and the trend towards purchasing more sustainable clothing. According to Organic Exchange, global production of organic cotton increased by 53 percent from 2005/2006 to 2006/2007; global organic cotton sales are projected to skyrocket from \$583 million in 2005 to \$2.6 billion by the end of 2008. Apparel companies are developing programs that either use

100 percent organically grown cotton, or blend small percentages of organic cotton with conventional cotton in their products. Many of these companies would be more than willing to work with your school to provide items with your usual school insignia or even a specialty version highlighting the fact that the clothing/apparel is made from organic textiles.

Along a slightly different line, as many of you are aware, most schools send out a brochure for incoming freshman that offers package deals on necessary dorm-room items such as bedding, bathroom totes, etc. You might consider getting your school to offer organic bedding, rugs, sheets, and pillows in its brochure. If major retailers like Target and Bed Bath & Beyond are highlighting organic cotton bedding for college students, there's no reason for schools to be skeptical of the fact that there is a high demand for these items.

There are a number of companies driving the expanded use of domestic and international organic cotton. For a current list of such companies, visit The Organic Pages Online™ ([www.theorganicpagesonline.com](http://www.theorganicpagesonline.com)).



## Publicize Your Success

Lastly, do not forget to publicize the successes of your organization! It is easy to get swept up in the process and forget to inform people of significant milestones. More students will want to get involved once they realize that your organic organization is making great strides. A new section will be featured on OTA's Student Blog, [organiconthegreen.wordpress.com](http://organiconthegreen.wordpress.com), which will be designed to give you a way to share the successes of your organization. Contact Nina Merrill at [nmerrill@ota.com](mailto:nmerrill@ota.com) for more information.



## SPOTLIGHT ON: KATY ANDERSEN (Princeton University)



**M**y college career began and ended with a farmers' market. In the fall of 2004, on a Saturday afternoon, my parents dropped me off at Princeton University for my freshman year of college with an armful of fresh organic fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Just a few hours earlier, I had been setting up tents, arranging children's books, and chatting with farmers at our town's farmers' market in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. My parents founded the market two years earlier, shortly after our family started an organic vegetable CSA to provide 150 member families in the area with healthful, local produce. As our waitlist for farm memberships grew, we realized the local demand for this type of food was greater than one farm could provide.

My parents started the farmers' market to meet this demand. There I volunteered regularly and watched it grow into a town mainstay of local, organic food sold by knowledgeable sustainable producers. Leaving the market mid-morning to move into college, I was armed with a week's supply of local, organic food and lifelong passion for it.

Entering college as a clueless freshman, it took me several months to figure out how to get involved with the 'greening' – local-izing, organic-fying, and sustainable-izing – of Princeton University's food system. (Advice to freshman: if there's an existing college group that works on improving campus food, join it when you set foot on campus, if only to learn about the campus culture and attitudes towards sustainable food). Greening Princeton, the campus environmental group, had already spent some time with Princeton's Dining Services to "green" our five dining halls and campus center. Through this partnership, students helped research different improvements to make, from buying organic cereal to brewing organic, Fair Trade, shade-grown coffee and setting up a partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to purchase sustainable seafood. Our Dining Services Director and his staff took suggestions seriously, and while the first changes were 'baby steps,' they began to understand our long-term vision of grass-fed beef and pastured poultry alongside organic apples and local beets.

As Dining Services began to take charge on the dining hall front, our group considered ways to expand our efforts to bring more local, organic food to campus. During a winter meeting in 2005, our Director, Stu, suggested we start a farmers' market. He had learned about Brown University's farmers' market at an All-Ivy Dining Meeting, and brought the idea to us. With



## SPOTLIGHT ON: KATY ANDERSEN (continued)

visions of our home market's freshly-picked, vine-ripened tomatoes and newly-ripened sweet corn, I jumped at his idea. I had no clue that I would spend the next three years planning the project before launching the student-run weekly campus Greening Princeton Farmers' Market with ten vendors, live music, and cooking demonstrations.

I wrote a detailed project proposal following Stu's suggestion, and presented it to administrators at one of Princeton's monthly Sustainability Committee meetings. But words on a page are far less enjoyable than fresh fruit on a plate. Most administrators had never been to a farmers' market, and did not understand the major differences between such a venue and a Whole Foods supermarket. Ironically, an exotic-fruit-filled grocery store aisle was familiar to them; a local-seasonal-vegetable-filled farmer's stall was a foreign sight. They could read about, but not perceive, the social aspects, environmental impacts, and basic gastronomic benefits of a local food producer's market. It was this dichotomy, between an appreciation for a locally-based food system and a widely-held conception of a nationally (or internationally!) based one, that I would spend three years sorting out.

On September 19, 2007, Ruthie Schwab '09 and I finally launched the Greening Princeton Farmers' Market with the guiding hand of the Office of Community and Regional Affairs. It was a resounding success: from our point of view, the farmers' perspective, and the consumers' experiences. Over 1,000 students, professors, mothers, children, and even President Tilghman anxiously waited in line to purchase local food directly from its producers. Our cheese producer reported higher sales after four hours at Princeton than after a full day at Union Square Greenmarket in New York. By our numbers, the market ranks as one of the most financially successful in the Garden State.



What is most important, and relevant, for other students interested in supporting the local and organic food movement is that starting a campus farmers' market is an ideal way to achieve this goal. Looking at a campus farmers' market from a student perspective, I believe there is ample opportunity for other students to replicate the market on their campuses. A farmers' market takes improving campus food to a different level for several reasons. It unites one's university and the surrounding community. It enhances the economic viability of small-scale suburban or urban food production for farmers whose levels of production might not meet levels of demand from Dining Services, who could wipe them out with a single order. And a well-located

## SPOTLIGHT ON: KATY ANDERSEN (continued)



campus farmers' market makes local agriculture highly visible on campus, which educates consumers about the benefits of this type of food production and allows them to ask questions about their food system.

When we first designed the market, we defined three clear goals under this mission to make good, healthful food available on campus: to support local farmers, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to educate the University and the community. With this in mind, we selected vendors who use sustainable, if not organic, growing and production methods. As per the definition given by the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market in San Francisco, sustainable agriculture is "the method of agriculture that is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and humane." Such methods take into account the health of everything and everyone involved in the

production of each food item: from the environment to the people and to the animals in our food chain. With this necessary guideline, we could successfully pursue the three goals.

While it took three years to start a farmers' market at Princeton, it is my hope that we have shortened the process for students who wish to establish markets on their own campuses. Not only should our market be a model for other campuses, but I have worked hard to record the planning process to facilitate the founding of new markets. As part of my senior thesis, I wrote a manual for starting and running a campus farmers' market, which includes a copy of our vendor guidelines and applications, and would be happy to share it with any and all students interested in bringing local, organic vendors to campus. As I finished writing the 100-page market manual and as our second season of operation came to a successful close this spring of 2008, I realized that one of the greatest qualities of a farmers' market is the adaptability of the model to different situations. My college experience began with a farmers' market in a suburban town in Pennsylvania, and ended with a farmers' market tucked between the library and chapel at a world-renowned university in New Jersey. Most exciting of all, this model can continue to replicate and change across the country as more campuses support similar projects. But first, we need the students to lead them in this delicious revolution.



# Organic Glossary

**ANTIBIOTICS** — drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria and other microorganisms

**BIODIVERSITY** — variety and abundance of species, including plants, animals, birds, and invertebrates

**CERTIFIED** — verified by an accredited agency as meeting national standards for organic production, processing and handling

**GMOS** — genetically modified organisms, which are products of genetic engineering. The use of genetic engineering is not allowed in organic production or processing.

**IRRADIATION** — exposure to ionizing radiation. Food irradiation is a synthetic process that is not allowed in organic production.

**NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS** — U.S. national organic standards were initiated with the passage of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1990 (Title XXI of the 1990 Farm Bill). The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a final rule implementing OFPA in December 2000. Full implementation of the national organic standards governing the production and processing of organic products sold in the United States took place on for Oct. 21, 2002. See <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>.



**NITRATES** — a salt of nitric acid. Potassium nitrate or sodium nitrate used as fertilizers produce nitrates that, if in overabundance, can leach out of the soil into crops and into water supplies or adjacent streams.

**ORGANIC** — refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. USDA's final rule governing national organic standards describes organic as "a labeling term that refers to an agricultural product produced in accordance with the Act and the regulations in this part."

**PERSISTENT TOXIC CHEMICALS** — detrimental materials that remain active for a long time after their application and can be found in the environment years, and even decades, after they were initially used.

**PESTICIDES** — substances defined in Section 2(u) of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act that kill pests such as weeds, insects, rodents, mold, and fungus.

**rBGH** — recombinant bovine growth hormone: a synthetic growth hormone used to stimulate milk production in dairy cows. (NOTE: rBGH is not allowed in organic farming).

**RENDERED ANIMAL BYPRODUCT** — animal-derived material that has been processed for use in feed or other products

**SEWAGE SLUDGE** — a solid, semisolid, or liquid residue generated during the treatment of domestic sewage in a treatment works. Sewage sludge includes but is not limited to domestic septage; scum or solids removed in primary, secondary, or advanced wastewater treatment processes; and a material derived from sewage sludge. Sewage sludge does not include ash generated during the firing of sewage sludge in a sewage sludge incinerator or grit and screenings generated during preliminary treatment of domestic sewage in a treatment works. (NOTE: Sewage sludge is not allowed in organic farming).

**SOIL HEALTH** — the condition of the soil, including its ecosystems (minerals, nutrients, and microbial activity), pH, and structure

**USDA** — United States Department of Agriculture



# Resources

## ORGANIC RESOURCES

### ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCTS EDUCATION INSTITUTE



The mission of the Organic Agriculture and Products Education Institute (Organic Institute) is to educate about the attributes, benefits, and practices of organic agriculture and products today for better environmental and personal health tomorrow. The Organic Institute is a non-profit organization founded by and affiliated with the Organic Trade Association (OTA). The Organic Institute and OTA are two organizations sharing a common vision that organic products will become a significant part of everyday life, enhancing people's lives and the environment.

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PO Box 547  
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[www.theorganicinstitute.org](http://www.theorganicinstitute.org)  
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### THE ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

Organic Trade Association (OTA) is a membership-based business association that focuses on the organic business community in North America. OTA's mission is to promote and protect the growth of organic trade to benefit the environment, farmers, the public and the economy.

PO Box 547, Greenfield MA 01302  
(413) 774-7511  
[www.ota.com](http://www.ota.com)  
[info@ota.com](mailto:info@ota.com)

### ORGANIC ON THE GREEN

This blog is specifically designed for college students who are interested in bringing more organic food and products to their college or university! A unique space to discuss the successes and pitfalls of organic campus initiatives, this blog gives students the opportunity to network with others from around the country who have similar goals and concerns. *Organic on the Green* features essays from students, administrators, and food service professionals on the front lines of making college dining more sustainable. All students are encouraged to share their efforts to bring more sustainable food choices to their campuses.

Contact Nina Merrill ([nmerrill@ota.com](mailto:nmerrill@ota.com)) for more details.  
[www.organiconthegreen.wordpress.com](http://www.organiconthegreen.wordpress.com)

### THE ORGANIC PAGES ONLINE™

The Organic Pages Online™ provides users with a quick, easy way to find certified organic products, producers, ingredients, supplies and services offered by Organic Trade Association members, as well as items of interest to the entire organic community. This is an excellent place to direct dining services if they are looking to source organic ingredients.

[www.theorganicpages.com](http://www.theorganicpages.com)

### HOW TO GO ORGANIC™

This web site features an online collection of resources for anyone exploring the transition to organic. This is a particularly useful resource if you are considering establishing an organic garden on campus.

[www.howtogoorganic.com](http://www.howtogoorganic.com)





## **RULES, REGULATIONS, CERTIFICATION, AND RESEARCH NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM**

The National Organic Program (NOP) develops, implements, and administers national production, handling, and labeling standards for organic agricultural products. The NOP also accredits the certifying agents (foreign and domestic) who inspect organic production and handling operations to certify that they meet USDA standards.

[www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

### **HOW RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS CAN COMPLY WITH NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM REGULATIONS**

The following guidance is designed to delineate what the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations require of retailers (Part I), and to suggest procedures that they may establish to meet these requirements (Part II).

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004673&acct=nopgeninfo>

### **GOOD ORGANIC RETAILING PRACTICES TRAINING MANUAL (GORP)**

The GORP Training Manual was developed by the Organic Trade Association in cooperation with the Independent Organic Inspectors Association to meet the needs of stores' organic retail operations. In addition to general handling practices, the manual specifically addresses Fresh Produce, Bulk Foods, Meats and Prepared Foods (Deli, Bakeries and Juice Bars) and Pre-packaged Groceries departments. This is a particularly good resource for campus retail outlets looking to better understand what it means and what is required to stock organic products on their store shelves.

<http://www.ota.com/bookstore/4.html>

### **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

Since 1988, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program. The national outreach office of the SARE program is supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. It operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Maryland and the University of Vermont to develop and disseminate information about sustainable agriculture.

<http://www.sare.org/>



### **THE ORGANIC CENTER**

The Organic Center's mission is to generate credible, peer-reviewed scientific information and communicate the verifiable benefits of organic farming and products to society.

[www.organic-center.org](http://www.organic-center.org)

### **RODALE INSTITUTE**

Rodale Institute is putting its 60 years of sustainable farming experience and extensive research to work to provide farmers with the know-how, tools and techniques they need to succeed; policy-makers the information they need to best support our farmers; and consumers with the resources they need to make informed decisions about the food they buy and eat.

<http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/home>

## INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS (IFOAM)

IFOAM's mission is leading, uniting and assisting the organic movement in its full diversity. Its goal is the worldwide adoption of ecologically, socially and economically sound systems that are based on the principles of organic agriculture.

[www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)

### CAL DINING

Cal Dining received the nation's first organic certification on a college campus in March 2006. This web site, listed below, provides logistical information about the university's four organically certified their dining halls.

[http://caldining.berkeley.edu/environment\\_organic\\_cert.html](http://caldining.berkeley.edu/environment_organic_cert.html)



## STUDENT-DIRECTED ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS

### THE REAL FOOD CHALLENGE

The Real Food Challenge is a national campaign that unites and empowers students and their allies to create a food system that truly nourishes people, communities, and the earth. The purpose of the Real Food Challenge is to establish a common platform for existing networks to talk with each other—to amplify the work that fair trade campaigners, local food advocates, farm worker activists, student farmers, and others do in relative isolation from each other.

[www.realfoodchallenge.org](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org)



### SLOW FOOD IN SCHOOLS

Slow Food on Campus is a network of Campus Convivia, chapters of Slow Food USA run by college and university students across the country. These Campus Convivia are the working arm of Slow Food USA in the college community. Campus Convivia represent a passionate cross-section of youth addressing food system and food justice issues, spanning environmental and social causes. By engaging their fellow students in the pleasures of the table and the garden, Campus Convivia aim to promote good, clean and fair food on college campuses.

<http://www.slowfoodusa.org/education/sfoc.html>

### UNITED STUDENTS FOR FAIR TRADE (USFT)

USFT is a national network of student organizations advocating Fair Trade principles, products, and policies.

<http://www.usft.org/learn>

### CALIFORNIA STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

To unite and empower the California community of higher education to collaboratively and nonviolently transform ourselves and our institutions based on our inherent social, economic, and ecological responsibilities.

<http://www.sustainabilitycoalition.org/>



## **THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Promotes sustainability in all sectors of higher education—from governance and operations to curriculum and outreach—through education, communication, research and professional development. It works in partnership with businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies that support its mission.

<http://www.aashe.org/index.php>

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE FOOD PURCHASING POLICY**

This guide provides logistical information to help you understand and effectively communicate with dining services. It is intended to assist universities, colleges, hospitals, and other institutions—as well as those advocating for food system change—create, promote, and implement practical sustainable food purchasing policies.

[www.aashe.org](http://www.aashe.org)

### **A NEW VOCABULARY IN SUSTAINABLE DINING**

A great tool to use to get a handle on the “eco terms” you must understand to communicate effectively with dining service. The Guide provides an overview of approximately thirty “big picture” terms and concepts used in food purchasing and provides a platform for ongoing revisions as the subject of sustainable dining evolves.

<http://www.sustainablefoodlab.org/article/articleview/17174/1/2373>

### **MEDIA THAT MATTERS FILM FESTIVAL**

The Media That Matters Film Festival is the premier showcase for short films on the most important topics of the day. Local and global, online and in communities around the world, Media That Matters engages diverse audiences and inspires them to take action.

<http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org>

