



*The Expanding Market Competitiveness for Specialty Crop Producers at SUNY Colleges or Farm to SUNY project was a demonstration farm to college pilot at four State University of New York campuses.*

The project was funded by a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant through the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Managed by American Farmland Trust's Farm to Institution NYS (FINYS) program, the project was designed to address barriers to increasing sales of New York State-grown fruits and vegetables to SUNY and other college and university campuses across the state.

The ultimate goal of the project was, and continues to be, to use findings to help the SUNY system and other colleges and universities in New York scale up purchasing of local produce.

The 29 state-university operated campuses spend well over \$150M per year on food. Many SUNY campuses are purchasing locally-grown and processed foods. The project aimed to assess the impact of a more coordinated effort with shared goals and resources.

## Farm to SUNY Partners



We would like to acknowledge the hard work of the more than 40 project contributors, those still pushing the rock uphill and those who have moved on to new opportunities. Thank you:

SUNY Sustainability team including Deborah Howard and Adam Costello.

John Stewart, Sodexo Director, Customer Support, Client Procurement Services , Northeast.

University at Albany team including Mary Ellen Mallia, Mary Alexis Leciejewski, Tim MacTurk, Michelle Bowen, Karen Kettlewell, Stephen Pearse, Stephanie DiBacco, Radha Urribarri.

SUNY New Paltz team including Lisa Mitten, Steve Deutsch, Diane Jackson, Matthew Hill, James McKenna, Michael Hoysradt, Jennifer Lischer, Don Diamond and Emily Ferencik.

SUNY Oneonta team including Hannah Morgan, James (Jimmy) Hamm III, Diane Williams Davidson, Nicole Brown, Rex Smith, and Kathleen Schmid.

SUNY Oswego team including Jamie Adams, Steve McAfee, Craig Traub, Ruth Stevens and Rob Clark.

Distributors Kevin Terr of Red Barn, Anthony Carioto of Carioto Produce and Seafood, Dave Johnson of C's Farms, Frank Mento and Fred Mento of Mento Produce, Sherri Dunlop of FreshPoint, Dan Purdy of Purdy and Sons and Benjamin Walker at Baldor Foods and processors Jim Hyland of Winter Sun and the many team members at Bonduelle who provided information to the project.

Finally, we are so grateful to the many farmers who supported the project through feedback and advice, survey participation and most of all, the high quality delicious fruits and vegetables served at Farm to SUNY campuses.

## Project Goals

### Short-term Target Outcomes:

- 25% increase in sales of a discrete set of 5-6 fresh and minimally processed vegetable crops
- Increase in student awareness of and engagement with local foods and farmers
- Institutionalization of program and practices

### Long-term Outcome:

- Expansion and institutionalization of the the coordinated effort on more SUNY campuses and use of tools by private NY colleges and universities.



## Structure

- 4 Campus Teams – *Dining Director, Sustainability Leads, Student Interns*, Marketing Professionals, AFT Lead and Agriculture/Supply Expert
- Marketing Team – Sustainability LEADS, Marketing Professionals, AFT Staff (Team points and AFT Marketing)
- Supply Team – AFT Team Points, Cornell Oneida County and Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development (working with farmers and distributors)

## What Is Local?

- Farm to SUNY LOCAL = NY
- STARS (AASHE) = 250 miles
- Real Food Challenge = 150 miles
- Extra points for within 100 miles



Farm to SUNY had to fit into and support the existing local food programming at each campus.

As long as we could collect farm, co-packer, processor and distributor addresses from distributors, campus teams could track mileage.

Challenge: Out of state local successes did not count toward Farm to SUNY. But, they are successes! The Farm to SUNY effort did not encourage distributors to replace more local out of state sources with NY sources.

Images show Klein Kill Fruit farms within 40 miles of New Paltz and corn from Emmi Farms, 24 miles from Oswego.

## The Work

- ① Team Communications (Kick-off, Ongoing Collaboration)
- ② Supply Analysis (Farmer Survey)
- ③ Demand Analysis (Study of 2013-2014 Purchasing Data)
- ④ Student Survey (Perceptions of Local Y1 and Y2)
- ⑤ Identification of Target Products (By Campus)
- ⑥ Match-making (Collaboration with Distributors)
- ⑦ Student Outreach / Campus Campaigns
- ⑧ Harvest of the Month
- ⑨ Tracking Progress
- ⑩ Farmer Evaluation Interviews

*Steps 7-9 were ongoing through Year 2.*

Team communications included monthly team calls for each campus and for the supply and marketing teams. We held full team calls monthly during year 1, then bi-monthly during year 2.

Supply Assessment (18 Farms)	
Produce Item	Total Pounds
Sweet Corn	58,165,582
Cabbage	22,966,450
Yellow Onions	13,195,000
Apples	10,556,112
Bell Peppers	4,807,928
Leafy Greens	4,597,840
Other Potatoes	3,728,000
Summer Squash	3,265,757
Green Beans	1,959,372
Romaine	1,620,000
Eggplant	1,085,548
Yukon Potatoes	1,000,000
Winter Squash	934,000

In March 2014, the Supply Team released a survey targeting farmers currently serving wholesale markets. The survey was meant to:

- 1) Identify farmers interested in selling into the college marketplace through the existing network of distributors.
- 2) Clarify farmers' capacity to meet institutional requirements.
- 3) Document availability of local produce items.

The survey was completed in June 2014. Twenty-five (25) producers responded with interest in the project, while 18 completed the full survey.

Respondents provided detailed information about product availability, shipping and distribution methods, and food safety planning/GAP certification.

The key findings were that 17 out of 18 respondent farmers use distributors to deliver wholesale products, which is critical to the project. Some were already working with distributors supplying the participating campuses (Mento Produce (5), C's Farms (3), and Red Barn (2)). Eighteen (18) farmer respondents had existing food safety plans and 12 were GAP certified, also critical to serving institutional markets.

## Demand Analysis Findings

- Compiling farm source data was a manual process for 4 of the 5 distributors
- Campuses were purchasing little to no local fresh cut produce.
- Two of the four schools were already purchasing local frozen corn, peas, green beans, carrots and mixed vegetables.
- Three of the four campuses purchased marinara and pizza sauce developed specifically for SUNY
- The food service teams were all constrained by existing distribution contracts –new producers had to work with existing distribution partners.
- GAP certification is a preferred and in most cases required.

Securing timely purchasing data from distributors that included farm source detail was by far the most challenging element of the project.

Data included items currently being purchased from sources outside New York State and those already sourced locally in order to identify opportunities to replace out of state products with NY items.

AFT staff provided each campus with a list of produce items that are grown in New York and shared the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets' *Pride of New York Harvest Chart*. We developed a template for demand data collection with the following data requirements: *produce item, description, quantity, unit, total cost, unit cost, distributor/supplier, processor, farm source name, and farm location*.

The supply team along with food service staff spent more time than anticipated chasing down the baseline data which caused some delays in program planning.

## Demand Analysis = Hot Products



### Product Availability

#### Fresh Unprocessed

- Apples (Widely available)
- Potatoes (Widely available)
- Onions (Widely available)
- Romaine Heads (Moderate availability)
- Watermelon (Limited availability)
- Mesclun Salad Mixed (Limited availability)

#### Fresh Cut – Potential pilot opportunities with processors

- Potatoes - 25# Peeled (Limited availability)
- Potatoes – diced (Limited availability)
- Yellow Onions – sliced (Limited availability)
- Yellow Onions – diced (Limited availability)
- Winter Squash – cubed (Widely available)
- Snipped Green Beans (Limited availability)
- Kale - chopped (Limited availability)
- Broccoli Florets (Limited availability)

#### Frozen

- Corn on the Cob (New product idea)
- Fajita Mix (Product had been piloted by Winter Sun)
- Broccoli Florets (Limited availability)
- Roasted Root Vegetable Mix (Product had been piloted by Winter Sun)



The team had two focuses for local sourcing efforts, the “Hot Products List” and the “Harvest of the Month” initiative. The Harvest of the Month initiative, developed by the marketing team, used the hot products list, the Pride of New York Seasonality Chart and the team’s expertise in local food to identify a seasonal item to promote each month of the academic calendar.

The supply team worked primarily with the four dedicated produce distributors to identify opportunities. We identified which products were “purchase ready” and where the supply team needed to focus its energies.

Through their distributors, campuses were able to readily procure the following “target products” from local farmers:

- A diverse variety of local apples (Ida Red, NY Style, Honey Crisp, Macintosh, Jona Gold, Rome, Gala, Cortland, Empire, Macoun, Fuji, Gala, and Golden Delicious, Red Delicious)
- Red and white B size, “regular” red, chef, salt (C size)
- Red and white onions
- Winter squash (cut/cubed)
- Sliced and diced onions. Albany and Oneonta were able to meet a portion of demand through Capital City Produce. Torrey farms supplied the onions.
- Albany was also able to procure cut potatoes from Capital City Produce.

While sweet corn is widely available in New York State, it was challenging to procure fresh-cut shucked corn on the cob.

# Harvest of the Month Materials

## Day of the Mushroom



### Menu Featuring:

Beef Mushroom Barley Soup  
Cream of Mushroom Soup  
Barley and Mushroom Pilaf  
Beef and Mushroom Sauté with Potatoes  
Chicken and Mushrooms with a Wine Sauce

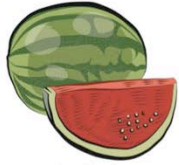
*proudly sourced from*  
**Bulich Farms in Catskill, NY**

For 69 years, Bulich Farms is one of the last remaining large farms in NY State. They do not use any chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

Patron Room  
April 16th  
11:30a - 2p



# More Harvest of the Month



Emmi & Sons Inc.  
1482 West Genesee Road  
Baldwinsville, NY 13027  
28 miles from campus  
last year we bought 260 watermelons

## Watermelon

Watermelon has the highest concentration of lycopene, a powerful antioxidant, of any fresh fruit or vegetable.

Watermelon is not actually a fruit – it's a vegetable! It is related closely to cucumbers, pumpkins and squash.

Watermelon is an ideal health food because it doesn't contain any fat or cholesterol, is high in fiber and vitamins A & C and is a good source of potassium. And it is extremely fun to eat.



Ontario Orchards  
7735 State Route 104  
Oswego, NY 13026  
3 miles from campus

## Squash

"Squash" comes from the Narragansett Native American word askutasquash, which means "eaten raw or uncooked."

For pie, Pilgrims first hollowed out a pumpkin, filled it with apples, sugar, spices and milk, then put the stem back on and baked.

Virginia and New England settlers were not very impressed by the Indians' squash until they had to survive the harsh winter, at which point they adopted squash and pumpkins as staples.



## Corn

Corn has an **amazingly** long shelf life – archeologists have been able to pop **1,000** year old corn!



[www.oswego.edu/sustainability](http://www.oswego.edu/sustainability)



## Leveraged National Campaigns

Used Campaign  
Marketing Materials  
and Social Media  
Conventions of  
established events



#nationalkaleday



#foodday

## Marketing/Student Outreach - Face to Face & Social Media



UAS @UASAlbany · Oct 4  
Did you know? All of the apples served on campus are locally grown at Yonder Farms in Colonie, NY! Nothing but the best, local and fresh.



Did you know New York is an Agriculture state?

- The value of agricultural production was over \$5.70 billion in 2012.
- About 23% of the state's land area, or 7.00 million acres are used by the 36,000 farms to produce a very diverse array of food products.



The Marketing team collaborated closely on joint initiatives including:

*Logos and Tagline:* Held a multi-campus student campaign to develop a Farm to SUNY marketing tagline. The winning tagline was, “*Nothing but the Best, Local and Fresh*”. SUNY Albany developed a program logo.

*National Kale Day:*

On October 7, 2014, each school served New York kale in a variety of recipes.

*National Food Day / Campus Crunch:* On October 24<sup>th</sup>, each campus held National Food Day events. Food Day was anchored by the Campus Crunch

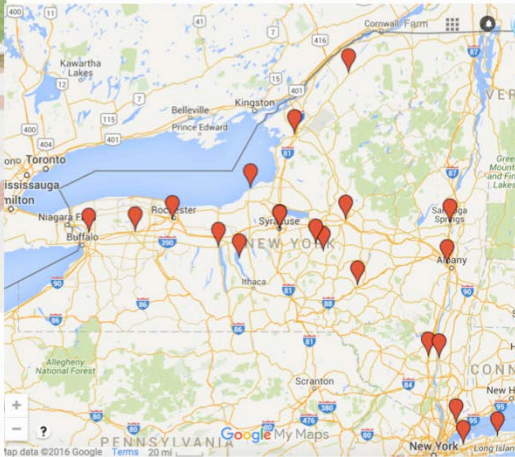
Other events included Soup Month and Local Soup Night at SUNY New Paltz and Day of the Mushroom at New Paltz and Albany.

Each campus also had many of its own activities and the teams coordinated website materials, shared listserv and Google Drive, posters, Looping Display Monitor Marketing in Dining Halls, napkin holders, table tents, tabling, social media, and speakers

The Marketing Team was responsible for spreading the word about Farm to SUNY in collaboration with AFT through public presentations, press releases and a video project. The goal of communications efforts was to engage additional campuses and farm to college stakeholders in the effort.

AFT developed the full color “*Scaling Up Farm to SUNY*” marketing piece.

## New York Campus Crunch

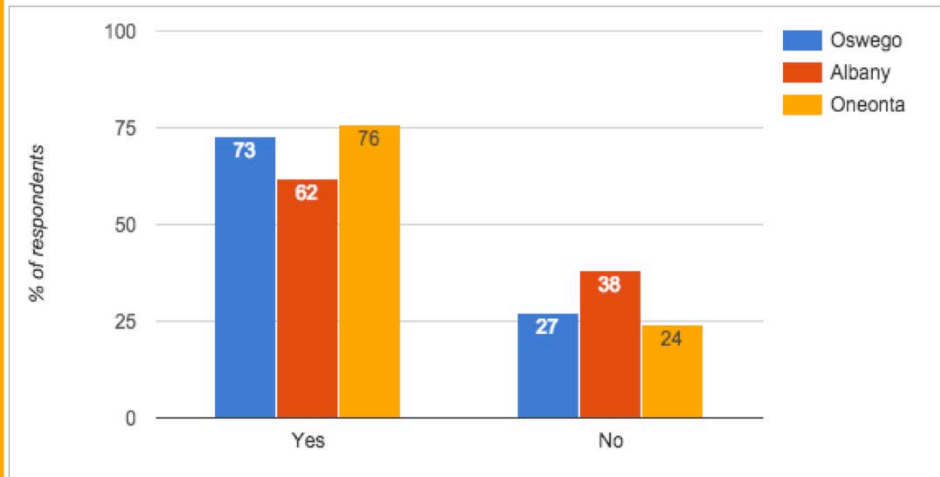


Over 6,100 apples crunched by 2015 Participants (21 SUNY and private colleges and universities):

University at Albany  
SUNY Oswego  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges  
Jefferson Community College  
Syracuse University  
University of Rochester  
Purchase College at State University of New York  
CW Post College  
Skidmore College  
Wells College  
Genesee Community College  
SUNY Oneonta  
Stony Brook University  
Colgate University  
State University of New York at New Paltz  
SUNY Institute of Technology  
Marist College  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Morrisville State College  
SUNY Canton

## Student Surveys (Spring 2015)

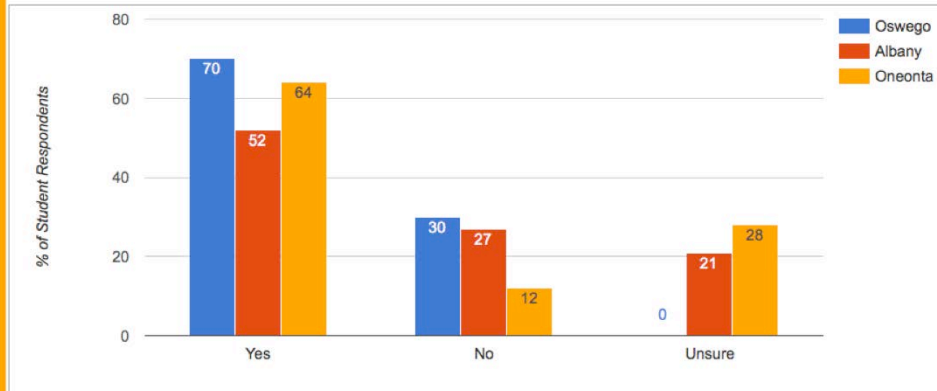
Does it matter to you where your food is grown?"



According to aggregated spring survey results from the three campuses, 70% of students responded that they cared about where their food was grown. New Paltz did not participate in the survey effort.

## Student Survey (Spring 2015)

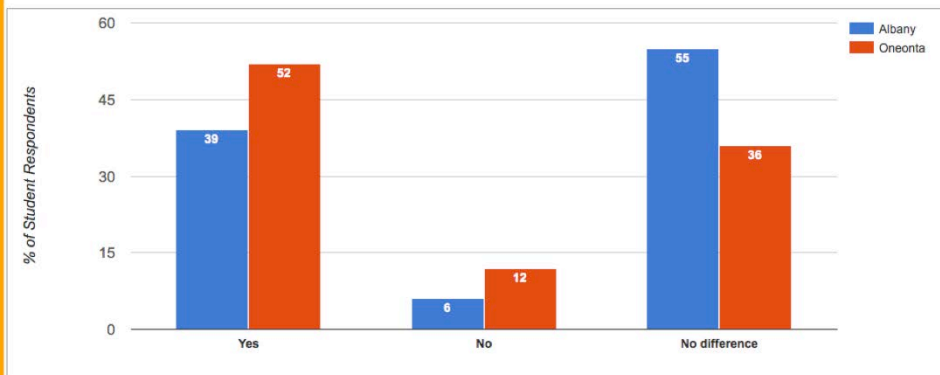
Does your school's local food procurement plan matter to you?



Sixty percent (60%) cared about their respective school's local food procurement plan.

## Student Survey (Spring 2015)

Would you eat more frequently in the dining hall if it served local food?



At Oneonta, over half of the students responded that they would eat more frequently in the dining hall if it served local food.

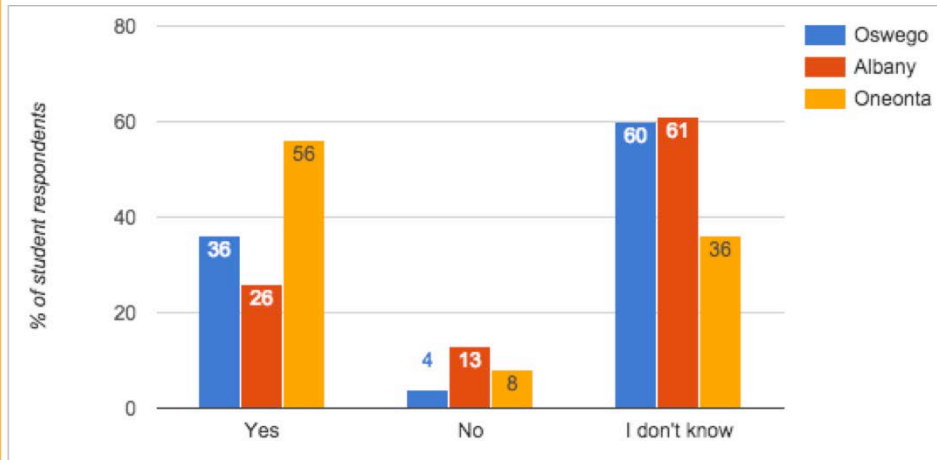
Albany and Oneonta's spring surveys also included a tradeoff question, with 34% of Albany students, and 56% of students at Oneonta, stating that they would be willing to pay more for food that is locally grown. These numbers reflect a student body that is supportive of local food and care about their dining halls' efforts to buy local--even potentially at a higher cost.

However, the surveys also suggest that there remains a gap in the education and marketing of local food being served in SUNY dining halls. While students are open-minded and want to support local food and new products, more than half surveyed were unaware of the efforts taking place in their dining halls, and unclear on the benefits of eating locally.

More specifically, according to the Spring 2015 surveys, 70% of students care about where their food is grown and 60% support their school's local food procurement plan, yet only 39% think that their school serves local food, with 52% stating "I don't know" (Figure 9). At Albany the majority of students responded "Neutral" when asked if they make an effort to know where their food comes from and how it is grown and produced.

## Student Survey (Spring 2015)

Do the dining halls serve local food?



The message from these numbers is that the fall efforts were not visible enough and it is highly likely that we needed more than one season to build more awareness amongst the student population at these campuses.

When we asked students about what had the greatest impact in building awareness they said that while social media is a must do these days, the face to face student tabling was the more effective way to get people engaged.

## Results

Campuses achieved 25% growth year over year in the purchases of at least 5 produce products at each campus from 2013 to 2014 academic calendar.

### Winning Product Purchases

Totaled **\$156,000**. **\$90,400** was new New York sales.



*\*This is not the total local produce spend. It only measures spend on TARGET local New York produce items from partner distributors that met the 25% growth in spend goal.*

For two of the four campuses we focused on the short list of products for tracking purposes. Because it was challenging for some distributors to provide farm source details, we did not pressure the distributors to provide all the local produce detail.

Where local fresh cut or frozen produce is delivered through Sysco, we were not able to provide the data.

These campuses spend more on local produce. Our data only reflects the target products each campus focused on for the project. Going forward the trick will be simplifying the local purchases tracking process so that the full set of data is more readily available to campuses.

Since University at Albany has local sourcing requirements built into its contract with Sodexo and a stated local sourcing goal as well as reporting requirements for AASHE (Association for Sustainability in Higher Ed), they needed all the data for more than just Farm to SUNY so we were able to track all local fresh and most minimally processed produce items that are available locally.

For Albany we can share that Dining Services increased spend on NY-grown fruits and vegetables purchased through Carioto Produce Distributors 20% year over year (data from July 1, 2014 through May 30, 2015). Total Carioto spend on New York-grown produce was \$191,736!

## Farm to SUNY Product Highlights

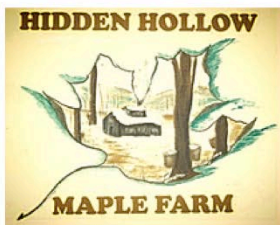
- University at Albany purchased 21,365 pounds of New York **tomatoes** spending a total of **\$25,497**.
- Three of the four campuses increased purchases of New York **apples** - Albany (113.7%), Oneonta (76.73%), and New Paltz (53%) for an additional spend of **\$20,677**.
- Oswego purchased 1,472 pounds of **watermelon** at a cost of **\$9,837** in September 2015.
- Albany (all new) and New Paltz (+238%) increased purchases of New York **mushrooms** by **\$7,691**.

## Product Highlights

- All four campuses purchased more local whole New York **red and yellow onions** for an increase of **\$14,825**.
- Oneonta purchased 4,950 pounds of New York potatoes and Albany purchased 26,590 pounds. Total new spend on local **whole potatoes** was **\$11,444**.
- Oneonta purchased 3,918 pounds of New York **green and red peppers** for an increase of **\$5,946**.

Total **new spend** across the “winning products” at the four campuses was valued at **\$90,426**. Note this only reflects additional spend on a select set of purchases. Total spend on these products was **\$156,043**. Note that there is additional New York produce purchases happening across these campuses, but we were not able to track all fresh and minimally processed purchasing across campuses and what made the project doable for some of the campuses is that we did not require this (although we requested it). Knowing how challenging the tracking is, two of the four campuses needed to focus tracking on a limited set of items – which still worked for the ultimate project goal.

## Some Things to Cheer About!



- Increased NY apple purchases by more than \$20k at just three campuses (What if all NY colleges and universities only bought NY apples?)
- C's Farms is now providing Oswego with Gorgeous comprehensive monthly local food purchasing reports. Reporting has become institutionalized in the sales process!
- In 2014 we could not get NY watermelon. For 2015, Al Lansing grew watermelon for University at Albany. Oswego was able to procure local watermelon from Deconnick Farm.
- Students like kale at all four campuses! It is now served year round, is seasonally available from NY and local is cost effective.
- Campus Crunch had 21 participating campuses and 6,041 student/faculty "crunches"!
- Albany increased local produce spend by 20% (\$191,736 spent on NY fruits and veg)!
- Oneonta demonstrated that retail is a great point of introduction, especially for more costly local items by serving New York maple syrup soft serve ice cream at Seasons.
- Oswego demonstrated you can make a higher quality more costly product work every day in the dining hall by sourcing Hidden Hollow maple syrup year round.
- Participants share that the program has strengthened internal teams (more collaboration between Dining Services and Sustainability) and has provided key structure that keeps them "on the hook" – they would like to see it continue.

## Lessons Learned

- Farm source data collection shouldn't be so hard.
- Contractual requirements are the sure fire way to institutionalize local purchasing.
- The coordinated effort needs top-down support from SUNY Administration to continue.
- Farmer-campus engagement needs to be easy during the high season.
- Dining services executive buy-in is make or break.
- A Farm to SUNY ongoing program will need to balance standardization with flexibility.

**1. Contractual Requirements Institutionalize the Work** - University at Albany was the only campus where the food service management company had language within its contract requiring that the dining team achieve a base level of local purchasing. This formal commitment drives change and is evident by the progress being made at University at Albany.

**2. Top Down SUNY Commitment Is Needed** - Pilot participants valued the coordinated effort – sharing ideas, spreading the work, and sharing in collective success. Institutionalizing the Farm to SUNY collaboration within SUNY Administration will have to happen for the program to continue.

**3. Farmer – Campus Engagement** - There were high hopes for farm visits and farmer presentations on campus. But, demand for farmers aligned with their high seasons. Also we lacked up front information on where products were coming from. Going forward we want to take better advantage of farmer materials and cultivate relationships ahead of the season.

**4. Real-time Marketing is a Priority** – This requires knowing the farm source for a product in advance of menuing it versus receiving a historical report (farm info on the packing slip or label). Dining staff would like to be able to tell farmers' stories.

**5. Dining Services Commitment Is Critical** - Without contractual requirements, the program is dependent on the strong commitment of Dining Services leadership. And when leadership changes, local sourcing can drop down the priority list.

**6. Balancing Flexibility and Standardization** - Product purchasing flexibility was critical (sometimes products are unavailable or too expensive) while joint promotions are highly effective. For evaluation, standardization was key and where there was more autonomy,

## Next Steps

1. Can we staff Farm to SUNY within SUNY Administration to grow a coordinated initiative?
2. Secure funding for a Farm Source Traceability Demonstration Project in partnership with the Center for Technology and Government at University at Albany.
3. Raise funds for the development of a more formal Farm to SUNY/College Toolkit.
4. Consider Regional Trainings.
5. Track ongoing progress at the pilot campuses.

## Additional Resources

- Marketing Materials - Sample posters, splash guard examples, signs
- Harvest of the Month Recipes
- Evaluation
  - Student Survey
  - Farmer Evaluation Interview
- Scaling Up Report Marketing and Educational Piece
- Tracking Tools
- Farmer Info

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