

Colorado Mountain College Food Policy Toolkit

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PART I

Introduction

Colorado Mountain College Alpine Campus Real Food Challenge History

In the fall of 2013, Sustainability Studies senior Alex Orton was introduced to the Real Food Challenge (RFC) movement at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) conference in Nashville. In the following months, through his own efforts and with help from the Students for Sustainability club on campus, Alex got the ball rolling quickly on educating the campus administration and Sodexo dining services management about RFC and why it was necessary at the Steamboat campus. By April, the Vice President at the time Peter Perhac signed the RFC commitment, and the real work on RFC and procuring sustainable options in the dining hall began.

Since that spring, interns, faculty, Sodexo staff, administration, RFC organizers, and student volunteers have all worked hard to ensure that the RFC would not fizzle out after Orton's graduation. As we approach the end of 2015, RFC has faced many successes and hurdles. This toolkit is designed to help you navigate your journey through creating, implementing, and evaluating your own sustainable food policy, whether it be through the RFC model or your own. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the resources provided by the Real Food Challenge organizers and consider using the RFC model at least as a starting point.

Benefits of a Sustainable Food Policy (CMC Food Policy, 2015 p. 2)

1. Demonstrate CMC's values and improve public/community relations
2. Meet or exceed quality and cost expectations
3. Participate in and support local economies
4. Attract a more diverse student population
5. Minimize CMC's global footprint
6. Realize marketing advantages over competitor schools
7. Boost AASHE STARS rating (should the college join this ratings system)
8. Set positive examples for stakeholders
9. Raise morale and deliver health benefits for students, faculty, and staff
10. Reduce waste and waste disposal charges
11. Create and rationalize incentives for change by food suppliers and food service providers
12. Build support and unity from campus to campus and from faculty, staff, and students to dining services

Tips for How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit covers the planning for, implementation of, and evaluation of a Colorado Mountain College campus food policy.

1. Each campus will have a *unique situation* in regards to dining service providers and their attitudes towards a food policy, as well as *different environments* regarding administration and faculty buy in. Do what is best for your specific campus, not exactly what was done in Steamboat.
2. This is only a guide, so be prepared for *unexpected challenges* that may present themselves and haven't been addressed in this toolkit.
3. The format of the toolkit is based on the Alpine Campus food policy experience with the Real Food Challenge model and Sodexo Dining Services. It may suit you or your group to jump around through the steps and *follow the method that will help achieve your goals* most effectively and efficiently. Some steps may be completed concurrently, or skipped entirely.
4. We must stress that this document would never have come to fruition without years of *detailed recordkeeping* by students and faculty involved in the project. It is important that you keep track of what you have done, when, and why, so that your efforts can be learned from and expounded upon in the future.

PART II

The Planning Phase

How to Start and Secure a Sustainable Food Movement on Your Own Campus

This is the most crucial phase in ensuring the success of your sustainable food policy. The research, organization, and networking done during this phase will be the base upon which all future progress is built.

During this phase, you will:

1. Identify your stakeholders
2. Conduct initial research necessary to present a solid case
3. Set goals
4. Effectively communicate your mission and what needs it will satisfy for stakeholders
5. Collaborate with other stakeholders to develop an initial policy and achievable objective

Identifying your stakeholders

When identifying parties that have a vested interest in your movement, it is important to include *all* parties that may be affected by a more sustainable food system. Do not disclude those that may be *against* the changes that you are proposing.

Examples of stakeholders may include:

- Dining hall managers and employees
- School Administration
- Faculty and Staff
- Student Leadership
- Student Life directors
- Part time students
- Community Members
- Local farmers, ranchers, and agriculturalists
- Incoming Students
- Alumni
- Local food marketplaces or co-ops
- Community Organizations
- Sodexo (or other) Account Managers

During this step it is important to **find others who want to work with you**. Are there people on campus or in the community already working on related issues, projects, or campaigns? There is no need to waste time and energy recreating the wheel. Partner with other people and organizations as

much and as often as possible. It may be in your best interest to allocate jobs for your student leaders (student researchers, dining coordinators, food-system working group, etc.)

Example: The creation of Food Club at the CMC Alpine campus came from the union of two food justice movements, Real Food Challenge and the Food Recovery Network. By joining the two movements, students are able to pool resources and volunteer networks. It also allows for students and community members to eliminate multiple meeting times, by having one weekly meeting addressing all things food related.

Connecting with a Real Food Challenge regional field organizer during this phase will also help provide support for and guidance through your process.

Conducting initial research

There are two key steps in this phase of planning:

First, **learn about what is already happening** around issues of social justice, sustainability, health, & equity on-campus.

- Are there any other clubs that have involvement in this issue?
- Talk to faculty about perceived interest and history of these issues
- Research successes and challenges on other college campuses in your region
- Assess resource availability and gaps
 - This will need to be done in much more depth later, but initial research can save time. (*i.e. Preliminary research at CMC Alpine found that while there is an abundance of local meat product, local produce is rarely available during the spring semester due to weather. This saved us the trouble of pushing for local produce and instead focusing on organic purchasing and seasonal menu planning.*)

Second, **learn about how decisions are made** on your campus and what it takes to access decision-makers and work on campus policy change.

- Assess the environmental trends affecting your policy development
 - Are there budget constraints, tensions between stakeholders, lack of support, etc.? Contractual obligations may prove to be one of the biggest challenges you have to work with. Being aware of their expiration dates, stipulations, and affected parties is crucial.

Chances are these questions will be addressed by outside parties when it comes to making institutional changes. Being realistic with your answers will help you be prepared to overcome obstacles.

Setting goals

With other leaders, **set campaign goals and develop a strategy** for how you can meet your goals. Plan for how your campaign can have the widest, deepest reach. Look at the Real Food Wheel and the Spectrum of Allies. Engage potential allies, and strengthen student leadership on-campus. Consider [the Multi-Year Action Plan](#) that you will be creating later into the Real Food Challenge.

Some things to ask yourself when creating goals:

- How will you build up your base of supporters?
- Are your targets and goals realistic?
- Who will you need to include to help you reach these goals?
- How will you make sure that the group is keeping up the pace to meet set goals?
 - To stay organized and on track, consider using Gantt Charts for your team
- Do your goals directly challenge another group on campus? If so, this could pose an issue for you.

Examples of goals set by CMC Alpine:

- *Complete Real Food Calculator to gather baseline information*
- *Engage incoming students to build stakeholder interest*
- *Build and maintain positive relationships with dining managers and staff (Sodexo)*
- *Stay informed of upcoming dining contracts being signed or negotiated on campus*
- *Switch to 20% real food by 2020 by dollar value.*

Communicating your mission and gaining stakeholder buy-in

While intentions drive any movement, ultimately, participation and perception are two of the greatest determining factors of success. Real Food Challenge offers these words of advice “**Use great, strategic tactics** to engage your allies, build your base, and get the support of your targets. Use tactics that can develop the leadership of campaign leaders and build power for your group to be able to engage your targets. **Spread the word:** be sure your campus and community know about the campaign, what you're up to, and how they can engage.”

Creating an on campus food movement and a food policy is a lot of work. Time and dedication are essential, however they need not be a burden. Listed below are several ideas for engaging stakeholders and hopefully keeping their attention.

1. Consider developing an internship or work-study position with an interested faculty member. This will help incentivize some of the heavy lifting of a sustainable food movement.

At CMC Alpine there were a combination of these offered. The drafting of the sustainable food policy and this document were internship projects. The completion of the Real Food Calculator was completed with a combination of work study, internships, and classroom required volunteer hours.

2. Meet frequently to reinforce and keep sight of goals. During meetings, outline tasks to be completed and have a clear idea of who is in charge of what.
3. Come up with an elevator speech to describe what your goals are and how you aim to reach them. Be prepared to talk more in depth on anything you mention in this speech.
4. Consider team building exercises or outings that do not involve work.
5. Develop a means of communicating with people not in the immediate leadership circle. This may be through email updates, bi-annual dinners, or Facebook groups. Find what works for you and be flexible.
6. Remember that progress may be slow. Do not get discouraged if things have not changed in a while, but also do not be afraid to try a different approach if need be.
7. Crowd-source answers and help! There is power in numbers.

Developing your policy with key collaborators

There are many ways to go about developing your sustainable food policy. The process should be unique to each situation, however there are three areas that should be noted: **research**, **presentation**, and **content**.

The **research** process should be a continuation of and a more in depth look at some of the initial research that you conducted earlier. In this phase, you will address *social* and *logistical* areas surrounding your food policy, so it may be helpful to find information and examples of policies in place at other, similar institutions. [This](#) guide by Real Food Challenge as well as sustainablefoodpolicy.org are both great resources for this process.

Presentation of your policy should be professional, clean, and well thought out. Create a document that can be confidently passed among the upper tier of administration- this will garner attention and respect, if not support. Eliminate linguistic clutter and outline sections for easy navigation.

The **content** of your policy should be developed in concert with processes that have been discussed by your stakeholders that fit your goals or mission statement. It will be useful to observe language that has been used in other sustainable food policies. The Real Food Challenge has developed a Best Practices [document](#) that may be used either as a guide or a template when deciding on content and language for your food policy.

Part III

Conclusion: Where to Go from Here

Implementation and evaluation are the critical pieces that will follow the planning phase. We at CMC Alpine have not yet implemented our policy, as the first Real Food Challenge calculator to establish a baseline is nearing completion. As is, this toolkit should serve as a planning guide for anyone interested in establishing a food movement on their campus. Whether you're in the very early phases of gauging interest or have moved further in your endeavors, following the steps laid out in this guide will help you gain the support and knowledge you need to start your movement and keep it going.

References

[Start a Campaign - Real Food Challenge](#)