



# Advancing Sustainable Food Supply Chain Sourcing and Dining Practices Across the University of California

---

UC Global Climate Leadership Council Funded Phase I Executive Summary, Project Report, & Toolkit

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

PHASE I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, PROJECT REPORT, AND TOOLKIT

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
Who We Are .....	8
Project Team: .....	8
Technical Assistance External Partners: .....	9
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>11</b>
Project Objectives: .....	11
Background and Methodology .....	12
Project Findings .....	13
Academic Health Centers .....	13
Key Challenges .....	13
Key Recommendations .....	14
Academic Campuses .....	15
Key Challenges: .....	15
Key Recommendations: .....	16
<b>Procurement Key Strategies</b>	<b>19</b>
Strategic Cost Shift Overview .....	20
Accelerated Shift (1-2 Years): .....	20
Moderated Shift (3-5 Years): .....	20
Suggested Actions for Phased Implementation .....	20
Short-Term (6-12 Months): .....	20
Medium-Term (1-2 Years) .....	21
Systemwide Contracts and Bid Language .....	21
Bid Solicitations as a Key Strategy for Sustainable Procurement .....	21
Integrating Farm to School with CAFF and Shared Plate Strategies .....	22
Key Takeaways for Bid Solicitations .....	23
UC Davis Academic Health Center Case Study .....	23
Categorical Strategy Shifts Toward Sustainable Products: .....	24
Pre-cut Produce .....	25
Beef Purchases .....	27

**Academic Health Centers 31**

Summary of Challenges + Opportunities ..... 31

    Key Recommendations ..... 32

Detailed Analysis ..... 33

    Secondary Vendor Opportunities ..... 33

        Pre-cut produce ..... 33

        Protein..... 35

        Value-added ..... 35

        Data Integrity + Enforcement ..... 36

        Best Practices: UC Davis Health ..... 38

**Campuses 41**

Summary of Challenges + Opportunities ..... 41

    Key Recommendations ..... 42

Detailed Analysis ..... 43

    AASHE STARS ..... 43

        Leveraging AASHE STARS + Anchors in Action Alliance Framework in Bids ..... 45

    Primary and Secondary Vendors ..... 45

        Primary vendors ..... 45

        Secondary Vendors ..... 46

        Small Business First ..... 47

    Best Practice Examples: Campus Procurement and Data ..... 47

        UC Berkeley (UCB) - Leveraging Students for Data Tracking ..... 47

        NorCal campus cluster (UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz) ..... 48

        UC Los Angeles (UCLA) - Empowering staff to ease reporting ..... 48

        UC San Diego (UCSD) - Leveraging vendor relationship to streamline reporting ..... 48

        UC Merced (UCM) - Hyperlocal sourcing pilot ..... 49

        UC Irvine (UCI) - BIPOC farmer focused pilot ..... 50

        Systemwide: MaetaData pilot for system wide efficiencies ..... 50

<b>Student Fellow Engagement</b>	<b>53</b>
Summary of Key Challenges and Opportunities .....	53
Detailed Analysis .....	54
Students lack access + connection .....	54
Data collection takes time .....	54
Recruitment .....	54
Best Practices and Opportunities .....	54
Key recommendations .....	55
FY24-25 Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Sustainable Food Fellowship .....	56
<b>Marketing and Storytelling Insights</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Spotlight Impact: UC Dining Retail and EBT</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Phase II Project Recommendations</b>	<b>63</b>
Project Acknowledgements .....	65
<b>Project Resources &amp; Toolkit</b>	<b>67</b>
Procurement: .....	68
Data and Tracking: .....	68
Student Engagement: .....	68
Marketing Materials .....	68
Third Party Resources for Menu Design Strategy and Sustainability: .....	69
Menu Development Strategies and Resources: .....	69
Sustainability: .....	69
Waste .....	70
UC and Campus EBT: .....	71
August 2024 Phase I Convening: .....	71

# INTRODUCTION

01



# Introduction

---

The University of California (UC) system faces significant barriers in achieving its goal of 25% sustainable food procurement across its campuses and academic health centers. This project engages UC campuses and academic health centers to align definitions, data collection, and reporting on sustainable food procurement. This project further develops feedback from UC community members on sustainable food and small enterprise priorities to develop toolkit resources on sustainable food procurement and success tracking. The project also advances progress towards the UC President's goal of defining the actions and resources needed to procure at least 25% of UC's food supplies from sustainable sources by 2025. This report was prepared on behalf of the UC Global Climate Leadership Council's Funded Project: Advancing Sustainable Food Sourcing and Dining Practices, co-led by the UC Santa Cruz Center for Agroecology and the UC Office of the President (UCOP).

# Who We Are

## Project Team:

The [UC Global Climate Leadership Council](#)-funded project Advancing Sustainable Food Supply Chain Sourcing and Dining Practices is co-directed by Agnes Martelet from UCOP's [Office of Sustainability](#) and Tim Galarneau from the [Center for Agroecology](#). The [project](#) engaged UC academic health center and campus sites with internal project advisors and external technical assistance team partners. The project is completing its first phase (October 2023 through September 2024) with opportunities to further expand and deepen efforts across UC sites in further phases ahead. Project executive co-sponsors are Paul Williams, [UCOP Chief Procurement Officer](#) and Glenda Humiston, UC Vice President of [Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) and Project Sponsor is Darryl Wong,

Executive Director for UCSC Center for Agroecology. Advisory members for Phase I include: Marilyn Biscotti, Senior Category Manager for Hospitality and Food, UCOP; Abim Odusoga, Director of Impact, Policy, & Compliance, UCOP; UC Sustainable Food Service Working Group Co-Chairs, Santana Diaz, Dining Director at UC Davis Health, and Shannen Casey, Sustainability Program Manager at UC Berkeley; and Technical Assistance affiliates—SupplyChange LLC, H Nieto-Friga and Anna Bohbot; Community Alliance with Family Farmers & Shared Plate Strategies, Yousef Buzayan, Claire Tauber, Ben Thomas; Real Food Challenge/Anchors in Action, Amanda Chu & Jesse James Forrey; Center for Agroecology & [Southwest Food Business Center](#), Héctor Calderón-Victoria, Regional Food Systems Specialist.





## Technical Assistance External Partners:

[SupplyChange LLC](#) is a boutique firm based in California and New York dedicated to empowering underserved producers by connecting them with corporate and institutional foodservice markets. Leveraging their nationally recognized expertise in value chain coordination, they build robust partnerships that elevate producers and enrich supply chains. They collaborate with food justice organizations, government agencies, public health collectives, and market stakeholders to develop place-based policies, strategies, and networks. Their mission is to re-regionalize food systems and embed equity across the country, ensuring a fair and sustainable future for all participants in the food supply chain.

[Community Alliance With Family Farmers \(CAFF\)](#) is a statewide nonprofit organization that has supported primarily organic family farmers for over 40 years. For over a decade, CAFF has staffed a Farm to Market team that provides value chain support to K12 schools and other institutional buyers by linking them with CAFF's wide network of family farms and food hubs. CAFF also brought in [Shared Plate Strategies](#) to lead development of the bid toolkit and support marketing aspects of the project.

[Real Food Challenge \(RFC\)](#) is a national food justice organization founded in 2007 by a committed group of student activists, national food movement leaders, and higher education sustainability experts as a means to amplify student voices and focus our collective efforts on real change in higher education and in the food industry. The organization is known for its historic campaign of 20% by 2020, which won shifts of over \$80 million in campus cafeteria dollars nationwide to local, ecologically sound and humane farms and food businesses from 2010-2020. RFC is also a coalition member of [Anchors in Action](#) which is engaged with the recent AASHE 3.0 Standards.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

02

# Executive Summary

---

The project goals are to: 1) Advance the expansion of sourcing from sustainable food producers and enterprises in UC food service operations; and, 2) Assess the key barriers and introduce recommendations for improving overall reporting and sourcing practices that integrate strategic systemwide sourcing and campus-specific secondary contracts and data collection.

## Project Objectives:

The project's primary goal is to assess the key barriers and introduce recommendations for improving UC's sustainable food purchasing. In fiscal year 2023-24, UC campuses procured 17.9% of their food from sustainable sources, and academic health centers procured 20.2% of their food from sustainable sources, for a systemwide average of 18.5%.

- Identify what it would take to achieve 25% sustainable food spend for campuses and 30% sustainable food spend for health centers by 2030
- Provide technical training and support for Global Food Initiative Sustainable Food Fellows in implementing site specific engagement in data collection, reporting, and evaluation
- Facilitate technical assistance to campus and health sites for sustainable sourcing
- Identify and support pilots utilizing a new data tracking platform for campuses in concert with UCOP Procurement and the Senior Commodity Food Manager
- Review and improve vendor contracts in collaboration with UC Procurement
- Host campus and health center convenings in 2024 and 2025 to promote greater sustainable food literacy and project awareness and envision priority areas for future phases

## Background and Methodology

From November 2023 through December 2023, Project Co-Leads held virtual intake meetings with UC academic health centers and campuses in preparation for bringing on Technical Assistance Partners. They also led GFI Student Fellowship orientations for students working on UC site supply chain sourcing and tracking projects to provide baseline tools and activities to orient fellows. From January 2024 through July 2024, the TA team convened under the leadership of GCLC Project Directors Agnes Martelet, UCOP Associate Director of Sustainability, and Tim Galarneau, Project Co-Director and Specialist at the Center for Agroecology at UC Santa Cruz.

The team then conducted hybrid, virtual, and in-person site visits with dining and sustainability teams at five UC academic health centers and nine university campuses, inviting teams to share their challenges, successes, and ideas related to data tracking and food procurement. The TA team collated these insights to develop an engagement and action plan for sites that accepted TA support. They requested purchasing data from all sites, received data from all academic health center sites and all campuses except for UC Santa Barbara, UC Irvine, and UCLA, and engaged in sustainable sourcing pilot work at some sites that are included in the toolkit and this report.

Over the last year the project has: convened two student fellowship online trainings, conducted remote and in-person site meetings across campuses and academic health centers to listen, learn, reflect, and deepen connection; reviewed systemwide contracts and provided recommendations for building greater awareness and engagement with UC sustainability and enterprise vendor priorities; developed the agreement and process for pilot data tracking in a new aggregate 3rd party platform for campuses (i.e., MaetaData) as well as honed in on how existing menu management platforms support tracking; explored cost-variance and sourcing opportunities to introduce sustainable and small underserved producers/enterprises into operational sourcing, and supported site teams and student fellows with spring events and reporting activities. The team also began to better understand the varied landscape of messaging and the challenge of telling the story and building on the incredible efforts underway.

Results of the site visits and the project were also shared with over 50 UC attendees at the Phase 1 Sustainable Food Sourcing and Tracking Convening that took place in August 2024 at UC Santa Cruz. Below is a brief summary of the findings and recommendations that will be shared in greater detail in the project report herein

[Google Drive for GFI Trainings here](#)

# Project Findings

## Academic Health Centers

UC academic health centers through their Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs) rely heavily on broadline distributors (i.e., US Foods) that prioritize cost savings and sourcing efficiency over building a broader portfolio of sustainable products and vendors. Health centers are not given additional budget to purchase sustainable food, leading them to rely on the lower-cost catalog that US Foods provides. This dependency results in ongoing challenges for improving access to sustainable vendors and developing a greater focus on sustainable supply chains.

## Key Challenges

- 1. Product Quality and Consistency:** With larger vendors, sites reported quality issues with pre-cut and triple-washed produce from primary vendors like US Foods, and difficulty identifying sustainable options to purchase overall. For smaller, sustainable vendors, it can be difficult to ensure farm products meet consistent quality standards, volume, and cost needs.
- 2. Resource Constraints and Staff Bandwidth:** Budget constraints hinder outright switches to the sustainable products on offer. Limited procurement team sizes impact the ability to conduct research on more cost-competitive options from secondary suppliers. There is interest in best practices for involving staff in sustainability programs, but low bandwidth to explore them. Most sites have a high dependence on pre-cut produce due to labor costs, with concerns over current menu and labor allocations. There is limited internal marketing capacity to promote local sourcing efforts and sustainability programs, making the efforts to procure them a harder sell for under-resourced teams.
- 3. Transparency and Accountability:** Key Green Solutions has been a helpful partner for data tracking and reporting; however there have been some inconsistencies in coding sustainable items across academic health centers, making it difficult to maintain uniformity in reporting. There is a strong desire for standardizing local sourcing criteria across all vendors to streamline tracking and compliance, and make it clear what the relationship between “local” and “sustainable” is.
- 4. Infrastructure and Capacity Limitations:** Several sites are undergoing expansion in hospital capacity without parallel growth in kitchen space and storage, limiting the introduction of new sustainable SKUs. New hospital acquisitions have expanded responsibilities, but the foodservice infrastructure hasn’t yet scaled to support these increased demands. Some contracts with third party foodservice management companies (i.e. Morrison Health) are also in flux with expansions and acquisitions, further limiting staff’s ability to focus on sustainable procurement.

## Key Recommendations

1. **Develop Sustainable Supply Chains:** Expand or establish relationships with secondary vendors for sustainable protein and dairy products and take advantage of new local and organic pre-cut produce opportunities via existing vendors. Leverage Fellows to conduct research and qualify new vendors and products to ease the burden on staff to identify the most cost-competitive options.
2. **Enforce Accurate Reporting and more Training:** Engage vendors and review contracts to ensure broadline vendors (i.e., US Foods) accurately report sustainable spending and identify sustainable options in catalogs. Engage sustainability staff alongside UC Sustainable Food Fellows to audit and maintain data integrity. Partner with Key Green Solutions to align with Practice GreenHealth standards and conduct training for student fellows and culinary staff.
3. **Engage Broadliners to Update Product Catalogs:** Broadliners are currently able to apply attributes to some of the products in their catalogs (i.e., “organic” or “kosher”). Work with them to develop more attributions to better identify sustainable foods for UC academic health centers to more easily identify, order and report.
4. **Target Labor-Save/Sustainability Win-Wins:** UC academic health centers should pilot local and sustainable pre-cuts programs and other sustainable value-added products (sauces, condiments, soups, etc.) by collaborating with already-approved and emerging supply chain partners.
5. **Assess Budget Relief Options:** A cost impact analysis can inform budget enhancements for sustainable food purchasing at the UCOP level to incentivize and support UC Health teams in this effort.



## Academic Campuses

UC academic campuses struggle with inconsistent data tracking and reporting due to a lack of standardized systems and accurate vendor reporting. Primary vendors often fail to provide clear sustainability product data alongside follow through on onboarding sustainable product options, and utilize substitutions that are difficult to track - all of which further complicate sustainable purchasing and reporting efforts.

### Key Challenges:

- 1. Primary Vendor Sustainable Product Options and Tracking:** Frequent last-minute product substitutions by primary vendors complicate data tracking and reporting. Reported disparities in service quality among broadline vendors, such as Sysco, highlight the need for sustained engagement on contractual service expectations, with a focus on sustainable options that are both affordable and consistent. Reporting from broadliners on sustainability attributes lacks transparency, which causes challenges for tracking and reporting the origin and sustainability certifications of current offerings.
- 2. Sustainability and Cost Constraints:** Sustainable sourcing remains a challenge, particularly for high-cost categories like protein and produce. Campuses seek more affordable options that allow them to align with sustainability goals while managing budget constraints. Costs associated with shifting to more sustainable suppliers are a significant barrier, emphasizing the need for cost-effective sourcing solutions.
- 3. Operational Capacity and Infrastructure:** Many campuses lack commissaries or adequate storage facilities, limiting their ability to purchase in bulk and handle the storage demands of sustainable products. Constraints in kitchen and storage space prevent campuses from maximizing the potential of sustainable sourcing, particularly for produce and pre-cut items.
- 4. Marketing and Communication:** Campus dining teams have limited resources for marketing, making it difficult to communicate their sustainability efforts to students and other stakeholders. Although teams have expressed interest in unified branding, digital resources, social media templates, and point-of-sale materials, the capacity to deliver coordinated marketing engagement remains very limited. An opportunity remains for cohesive storytelling tools that showcase UC sustainability initiatives in a way that resonates with their campus communities.
- 5. Local Farm Sourcing and Engagement:** While there is a strong interest in sourcing from local sustainable farms, high case fees from produce distributors can further exacerbate the cost difference between conventional and sustainable produce options. Assessing the capacity for more direct relationships with local farms or value chain aggregators such as food hubs and/or brokers could support this goal; however, challenges such as supply consistency and delivery logistics need to be addressed in order for campuses to be able to take advantage of these options effectively.

In 2020-2021, one UC health site worked with a collective of advocates and ranchers to onboard a sustainable protein product line to the US Foods catalog. However, the program was abruptly closed because, according to a US Foods representative, the product line did not represent a large enough business opportunity across multiple accounts. UC should take this feedback into account and explore how to identify a minimum threshold of sites to meet the desired product or product line conditions.

## Key Recommendations:

1. **Reinforce UC Priorities in Contracts and Uplift Emerging Sustainable Supply Chains:** Ensure UC-specific sustainability criteria are reflected in broadliners' vendor and product onboarding processes. Support campus teams in identifying priority categories and products to focus on with vendors that result in greater spend impact. A number of sustainable solutions for produce and protein are available and being partially utilized through secondary vendors. Being strategic about SKU rationalization, brokers, and production planning can yield big wins, especially if campuses coordinate together.
  2. **Engage Broadliners to Update Product Catalogs:** Broadliners are currently able to apply attributes to some of the products in their catalogs (i.e., "organic" or "kosher"). Work with them to develop attributes to better identify sustainable foods for UC campuses and customers to more easily order and report.
  3. **Conduct Targeted Policy Reviews and Trainings:** Ensure Dining Directors and the Sustainable Food Service Working Group (SFSWG) can receive timely updates on the latest sustainability standards. Build perennial updates into these systemwide meeting structures to update staff and clarify pathways to success, especially clarifying a pathway for smaller, sustainable producers and enterprises to be considered.
  4. **Hold Vendors Accountable:** Ensure contracts build clear expectations for reporting and for stewarding sustainable vendors into their portfolio. UCOP and campus purchasing/contracts teams can incorporate stringent reporting requirements in vendor contracts and regularly review compliance with key dining personnel in order to reward innovation and service.
  5. **Leverage Student Engagement:** Engage student fellows for research and sustainability tracking tasks, reducing the burden on dining staff. Organize events to connect students with dining teams and increase awareness of sustainability efforts, and involve students in meetings with distributors and procurement software vendors to boost their engagement and expertise.
-





# PROCUREMENT KEY STRATEGIES

03

# Procurement Key Strategies

Achieving 25-30% sustainable food procurement within the UC system requires a concerted effort to develop local supply chains, enforce accurate reporting, engage students effectively, and provide sufficient budget to sites to meet the goal. By implementing these recommendations, the UC system can overcome current barriers and lead the way in sustainable food procurement practices.



## Strategic Cost Shift Overview

To reach a minimum of 25% sustainable food procurement, the UC system needs to shift approximately \$15 million from conventional to sustainable products. In order to find the total financial requirement, it is necessary to make some assumptions about the premium costs of sustainable options, as shown below.

### Accelerated Shift (1-2 Years):

- **Cost Premium:** Higher initial costs, potentially 50-90% over conventional options due to rapid changes and premium prices. This would be achieved by switching conventional products to organic and other third-party certified products in Sysco, US Foods, Daylight, and Sunrise catalogs without forward planning on production or demand forecasting.
- **Impact:** This approach allows for immediate progress but will require significant budget adjustments to accommodate elevated short-term costs. Total projected increase in spend: \$7.5mil - \$13.5mil

### Moderated Shift (3-5 Years):

- **Cost Premium:** More manageable, with a roughly projected 20-50% increase as UC can negotiate better terms and build supply chain relationships. This would be achieved through extensive negotiations and supply chain pilots with secondary vendors across protein, dairy, produce, and dry goods, with potential custom product development
- **Impact:** Allows time to establish partnerships, pilot programs, and spread costs over multiple budget cycles. Total projected increase in spend: \$3mil - \$6mil. Deeper cost impact analysis based on data gathered from primary and secondary vendors is needed to achieve a more accurate projection throughout Phase 2 of this project.

## Suggested Actions for Phased Implementation

### Short-Term (6-12 Months):

- Use RFPs to secure favorable terms for sustainable options and enforce vendor accountability.
- Engage existing secondary vendors for sustainable pre-cut produce and domestic sustainable beef, coordinate production and demand forecasting and rebates that sites can capture and reinvest in sustainable purchasing, and target the most cost-effective sustainable options.
- Explore UC's catalyzing more processing infrastructure by studying the impact of a prospective operator that is planning to process sustainable produce and dry goods into value-added products for California institutions. Establishing UC as an anchor planning partner can help project and shape product costs of this emerging project.

## Medium-Term (1-2 Years)

- Expand sustainable sourcing in additional categories (e.g., dairy, dry goods) in partnership with primary and secondary vendors, including exploring collaborative multi-campus and multi-health center purchasing arrangements.
- Increase student engagement for data tracking, and scale effective pilot programs.
- Encourage sites to conduct a gradual SKU rationalization to streamline sustainable options and reduce costs over time.

# Systemwide Contracts and Bid Language

## Bid Solicitations as a Key Strategy for Sustainable Procurement

In order to achieve the UC system’s sustainable food procurement goals across its campuses and academic health centers by 2030, specific changes need to be made to the formal procurement process through strategically enhancing bid solicitations, also called “Requests for Proposals (RFPs).”

In the first phase of the project, the main focuses have been on enhancing RFPs for the next three product categories for the UCOP system-wide RFP roll out: produce, dairy and beef.

The [Bid and Contracts Recommendations Guide](#) provides an example of how specific sustainability criteria can be embedded in an RFP process to ensure that the UC system bid process and contracts align with the UC system’s priorities of climate resilience; supply chain transparency; support of historically underserved and marginalized farmers and ranchers; and health of consumers and producers.

As contracts come to a close, it is important to consider the opportunity to update bid language to improve sustainability for the next bid cycle. Strategies for enhancing bid solicitations include:

- Referring to the UC Sustainability Policy and the food sourcing criteria in the bid itself and embedding policy criteria into bid requirements (for campuses this can reference AASHE STARS 3.0).
- Encouraging broad vendor requirements via proving existing practices.
- Adjusting a traditional item list to include seasonality and sustainable product attributes.
- Request foods that meet sustainability goals, and expand upon those goals to achieve growth.

For the short term, focusing on qualified third party certifications from AASHE STARS for campuses and Practice GreenHealth for Health and strengthening enforcement is recommended. Over the medium term (1-2 years), the TA team recommends building future RFPs around the integrated [Anchors in Action \(AiA\)](#) and [AASHE STARS 3.0](#) frameworks to embed sustainability elements into the bid language. Example of this include (but are not limited to):

- Strengthening reporting requirements to explicitly require vendors to provide information around
  - Current sustainable practices (in the areas of natural resources, company operation, and positive social/community impact, written policy statement, sustainable business practices and environmentally preferable purchasing practices or updates to vendors sustainable practices)
  - Bi-annual reviews of sustainable packaging specifications
  - Quarterly reports on product origin, small or diverse business attributes associated with product's producer(s), and product sustainability certification
- Updating vendor evaluation criteria and questionnaire questions to include information about
  - Food waste avoidance and food recovery
  - What techniques/processes a company has that promote environmental sustainability
  - Third-party certifications for environmental sustainability such as USDA Organic
  - Sustainable packaging
- Including Organic Certified products on the item list

For the full list of evaluation criteria, accompanying vendor questionnaire questions, supplier and product list strategies, and other components that the TA team recommends incorporating into future bids, visit our [Full Recommendations Breakdown](#). These recommendations are particularly relevant for Fresh Produce, Dairy, and Beef RFPs. Evaluation criteria were developed from the [AiA Aligned Framework](#) and AASHE STARS 3.0 criteria in alignment with existing UC sustainability criteria.

## Integrating Farm to School with CAFF and Shared Plate Strategies

In California, institutional food sourcing efforts stretch across K-12, higher education, and healthcare. Since 2014, Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and Shared Plate Strategies (SPS) have leveraged their expertise in RFPs and other bid solicitations for California K-12 child nutrition programs to connect them with local and sustainable producers and distributors while maintaining federal and state compliance.

In the prior [referenced bid guidelines](#) CAFF and SPS cross-referenced ways to align K-12 successes with UC sustainability priorities to further inform RFPs and bid solicitations for UC's sustainable food purchasing goals. Through building greater consistency in institutional sustainability criteria in bids we can improve vendor responsiveness and accountability.

## Key Takeaways for Bid Solicitations

The following are key takeaways determined in assessing Bid and Contract Recommendations for UC procurement:

- **Consistency in RFP criteria:** UCOP should be clear with primary vendors on contract priorities across RFPs and keep bid language specific and consistent on what is required: supplier accountability, vendor transparency, and sustainable product options. The bid language and processes developed within UCOP can then be used by individual campus and academic health centers systemwide across food product categories.
- **Collaborative development of RFP language:** Through collaboration with the UC Procurement and TA teams, the UC systemwide Dairy RFP (for campuses) has been enhanced to add criteria and evaluation elements that enhance traceability and prioritize sustainable and values-based producers. This process demonstrated a new approach to enhance sustainability in RFPs through collective expertise and can be replicated to advance sustainable procurement in beef, produce, and other future RFPs for systemwide, individual campus and academic health center use across the UCs.
- **Leveraging Regional Vendors and Small Business First:** Several of the individual campuses and academic health centers have already engaged with regional, sustainable suppliers. Purchasing from these vendors is critical to access small, midsize, BIPOC, and sustainable farmers and ranchers that have high quality, sustainable foods in the volumes and at prices appropriate to the UCs. The [Small Business First for UC Suppliers](#) program allows vendors that qualify as Certified Small Business vendors and/or Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises to participate in a simplified bidding process for contracts that do not exceed \$250,000.

### UC Davis Academic Health Center Case Study

The UC Davis academic health center (UCDH) team has been doing innovative work to bring in vendors offering high quality products as well as California-based produce and proteins into their healthcare and retail settings. By engaging with internal leadership and physicians to get buy-in to using very specific terminology in the RFPs, they have excelled in bringing in quality products and increasing their sustainable percentage points. To view some strategies and examples of language the team is employing, see: [UC Davis Health Best Practices around Sustainable Sourcing, RFP Strategies and internal leadership buy-in](#)

## Categorical Strategy Shifts Toward Sustainable Products:

UC leadership is particularly interested in understanding the go-forward **strategies** and **cost impacts** that get the entire UC system to 25% sustainable food spend. Some key strategies are reviewed below that will be expanded on later in the report for each site operation (i.e., academic health centers and campuses).

UC Site	Total Sustainable Food Spend 2024 (\$)	Sustainable Purchasing % 2024	\$ shift needed to achieve 25% (campus) or 30% (health)
UCB	\$3,629,275	19.6%	~\$1mil
UCD (campus)	\$2,048,507	9.3%	~\$3.5mil
UCI (campus)	\$3,300,060	31.0%	
UCM	\$1,504,559	19.6%	~\$400k
UCR	\$169,036	2.5%	~\$1.5mil
UCSB	\$1,430,026	10.8%	~\$1.8mil
UCSC	\$1,934,457	13.0%	~\$1.8mil
UCSD (campus)	\$7,027,113	27.3%	
UCLA (campus)	\$5,202,944	18.5%	~\$1.8mil
UCSF (campus)	\$335,191	50.7%	
UCD Health	\$3,532,546	36.8%	
UCSD Health	\$1,548,876	16.9%	~\$1.2mil
UCLA Health	\$3,555,905	27.1%	~\$370k
UCSF Health	\$918,669	7.3%	~\$2.9mil
UCI Health	\$689,714	11.3%	\$1.1mil
Systemwide	\$36,826,878	18.5%	~\$22.8mil
Campus (all)	\$26,581,168	17.9%	~\$17.9mil
Health (all)	\$10,245,710	20.2%	~\$4.9mil

The table above shows all UC sites' total sustainable spend, their current % of sustainable purchasing, and the implied amount of spend shift needed to achieve at least 25% sustainable food procurement spend.

By focusing on the key categories of pre-cut produce and beef, most sites can make a large amount of headway into achieving their 25% goal. Additionally, a renewed focus on leveraging bids and contracts around innovation can accelerate the shift.





## Northern California Analysis and Example

Item	Certified	Cut Spec	New price/lb	Old cut \$/lb	Delta %	Delta \$
Sweet Potato	Organic	Potato Sweet Diced W/O Skin 3/4 4/5 Lb	\$ 1.45	\$2.83	-48.74%	-\$0.49
Tomato, Heirloom	Organic	Tomato Slices 5x6 2/5 Lb	\$ 5.14	\$3.32	54.78%	\$0.55
Mushroom, Shiitake	Organic	Mushroom Shiitake Sliced 1/4 10 Lb	\$ 3.99	\$11.89	-66.44%	-\$0.66
Squash Butternut	Organic	Squash Butternut Pl/Dice 1/2in 4/3 Lb	\$ 3.10	\$2.68	15.53%	\$0.16
Kale	Organic	Kale Green Shred 4/1 Lb	\$ 4.62	\$3.80	21.75%	\$0.22

This table shows data from one example Northern California campus with a selection of pre-cut produce items that:

- Are in the top-20 list of highest spend items
- Are currently being sourced conventionally
- Can be substituted for a local, organic pre-cut version at a competitive cost
- Show new costs that are available by purchasing directly from a broker and processor arrangement that can sell directly to UC campuses or via Daylight - but note that purchasing these items via Daylight would add an additional 15-30% increase in cost

This type of result can be replicated across any campus. For all UC academic health centers in California, a similar supply chain can be scaled through approved vendor **Vesta Foodservice** (again, using an additional distributor would add markup cost).

The pre-cut/value-added opportunity is dynamic, and UC can address it on multiple time horizons:

- **Near-term:** Shift pre-cuts towards sustainable options by:
  - Campuses: requiring **Daylight** or **Sunrise** to onboard sustainable farmers or purchasing directly from brokers and processors
  - Academic health centers: purchasing from brokers and processors via Vesta
- **Medium-term:** Analyze menus for optimizing seasonality to maximize price efficiencies for sustainable and local farmers - purchasing on a week-to-week basis subjects all parties to the volatility of the produce market.
- **Long-term:** UC can become a formal supply chain partner of operations like the **Yolo Food Hub Network**. Food Hubs are emerging in CA developing custom sustainable, cost-competitive, regionally-produced products for institutional foodservice. UCOP can become an anchor partner of the Yolo county based project acting as a catalyst by processing and sourcing directly to UC campuses for local pre-cuts, with TA team support to set up. With emergent [food hubs across CA](#), UC sites can continue to build regional aggregation strategies as suggested with the example above for qualifying products through other food hubs in proximity.

## Beef Purchases

Item	Total Spend
Beef Fajita Thin 0.25"X1"X2" 6mm X24mm X 48mm	\$144,747
Beef Thin Fajita 0.25"X1"X2", 6mm X24mm X 48mm	\$120,527
Beef Strip Boneless 0x1 .25" Choice	\$105,292
Beef Sirloin Tri Tip Peeled Choice	\$97,205
Beef Cab Stir Fry 1/4 X 1/4 X 3 In	\$49,335
Beef Thin Sliced 3-4mm, 1" X 1.5"	\$36,492
Beef Patty 80/20 3x1hs Cagrown 5.330z	\$32,614
Meatloaf, Bf Pty 3 Z Grass Fed	\$31,350
Beef, Philly Flat Sirloin Raw Frozen 4 Oz Breakaway Sliced	\$29,585
Beef Patty Ground 80/20 4:1 Hs Bp 80/4 Oz 1/20 Lb	\$29,405
Beef Roast Top Rnd Sli C/Off	\$27,016
Beef Ribeye Shaved	\$25,547
Beef, Patty Ground Chuck 80/20 Choice 4:1 Round 3/8 Thick Natural Raised-W	\$24,574
Entree Beef Short Rib Braised 6/3.4 Lb Avg	\$23,151
Beef Meatball Italian Style .5 Oz	\$21,744
Beef Patty 80/20 Rnd Frz 160/2oz	\$20,908
Beef Cab Stew	\$19,363
Beef Carne Asada Diced 1 2 In 2/5 Lb Avg	\$19,157
Beef Bulk Ground Dir 80/20 4/10 Lb	\$18,642
Beef Strip .5x.5x2 Raw Ref 1/10 Lb Avg	\$18,137
Beef Bnls Tri Tip Denuded (30pc) Ra Usda Choice	\$15,738
Beef Patty 80/20 5/32 4oz 1/2 Thick 4 Dia 12/Cryo Pack	\$14,590
Beef Ground Chub 80/20 Halal Uc Schools	\$14,249
Entree Pot Roast Beef (Barbacoa) 4/5 Lb	\$14,061

This table shows a selection of beef items purchased by **all campus and academic health centers** that are:

- Highest-spend items for 2023-2024
- Are currently being sourced all or partially conventional
- Are not halal (which is difficult to source sustainably due to a precise slaughter method)
- Can be likely substituted for a domestic, sustainable product

All beef products that meet the specifications above represent a yearly spend of **>\$3.5M** across the system. Due to the void of data clarity on case pack and poundage, it is not possible to generate an accurate cost impact analysis of beef until we obtain more detailed data. What we can point to is that a significant amount of sustainable shift is possible across campuses through partnering with secondary suppliers such as Cream Co. and Niman Ranch.

Campuses and academic health centers can **SKU rationalize** towards **tri-tip, flap meat, and ground chuck** to consolidate demand and take advantage of a **campus-oriented rebate** that UCOP is negotiating with vendors of interest.

---





# ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTERS

04

# Academic Health Centers

---

## Summary of Challenges + Opportunities

UC academic health centers through their GPOs rely heavily on broadline distributors (i.e., US Foods) that prioritize cost savings and sourcing efficiency over the consideration of a broader portfolio of sustainable products and vendors. The availability lists and pricing reflects the larger vendor contracts and may limit responsive access to emergent client requests regarding sustainable products. This dependency results in ongoing challenges for improving access to sustainable vendors and developing a greater focus on sustainable supply chains.

Secondary vendors present significant opportunities for sustainable sourcing, especially in diverting pre-cut produce from conventional suppliers like US Foods to more sustainable sources. For instance, a heavy reliance on pre-cut produce points to opportunities to stand up a local and sustainable pre-cuts program that is ready and actionable. A collaborative purchasing program focused on select protein SKUs is also available via secondary vendors if academic health centers are willing to coordinate their demand. Value-added manufacturers that are approved for Vizient and US Foods sales are able to develop labor-saving frozen foodservice products such as sauces, broth concentrates, soups, and condiments sourced from sustainable producers that upcycle onsite farm waste.

Effective tracking and reporting are crucial, with Key Green Solutions helping to streamline these processes, though as shown by UC Davis Health, it requires regular audits and enhanced trainings to ensure accuracy. To amplify these efforts, consistent marketing and messaging strategies are essential for engaging academic health center affiliates and the broader community. A unified branding and messaging effort can elevate the intensive efforts that upleveling sustainable food procurement requires. Finally, UC Health Food Service Director systemwide meetings and convenings would benefit from including sustainability sourcing and reporting as an active discussion item to learn from one another and give timely feedback.

## Key Recommendations

- **Shape Sustainable Supply Chains in Broadline and Secondary Contracts:** Ensure the specific sustainability criteria and categorical scope of products are reflected in what broadliners are prioritizing for onboarding new vendors and providing accurate pricing and volume capacity. Sites will further benefit from nourishing relationships with secondary vendors for protein and dairy products and leveraging existing regional and organic pre-cut produce options. Pilot measures can include smaller sole source contracts through the UC Small Business First Program that can be elevated for specific events, catering, and rotating foci in menu offerings.
- **Reinforce Accurate Reporting:** Engage broadline suppliers (i.e., US Foods) and implement measures to ensure they accurately report sustainable spending with UC policy guidance and the UC Sustainability Attribute Matrix (see Project Resources at the end of this report) prepared for vendors. Build greater shared understanding that can engage sustainable food fellows and staff to provide proactive support for data integrity. Consider implementing additional training opportunities for operational and culinary staff, and student fellows.
- **Engage Broadliners to Update Product Catalogs:** Broadliners are currently able to apply attributes to some of the products in their catalogs (i.e., “organic” or “kosher”). Work with them to develop attributes to better call out sustainable foods for UC academic health centers to more easily identify, order and report.
- **Target Labor-Save/Sustainability Win-Wins:** UC academic health center sites have an opportunity to pilot local pre-cut programs by collaborating with emerging supply chain partners that are ready to build on existing whole and sustainable produce successes and protein pre-cut collaboration.
- **Integrate Further Branding and Messaging for Academic Health Centers:** Ensure sites continue to utilize sustainability marketing and messaging that uplifts their innovations, impacts, and incredible commitments to date (“tell the story”). Consider ways to lift both site and systemwide marketing and communication channels to extend the impact of media and messaging.
- **Leveraging RFPs and the Small Business First for UC Suppliers:** Enhancements made to systemwide RFP criteria and evaluations can be replicated at the Academic Health Center level to increase sustainable purchasing through the bid solicitation process, increasing traceability and sustainable sourcing options. Further utilization of the Small Business First for UC Suppliers program can be leveraged to more easily access key regional vendors.



# Detailed Analysis

## Secondary Vendor Opportunities

### Pre-cut produce

While some sites have made progress on sourcing more local produce, most of the local options identified are in a whole and fresh format. However, UC academic health centers face labor pressure, leading to reliance on pre-cut produce from US Foods, which has been reported to have quality consistency issues and lacks sustainable and local options. Of the \$11.7mil spent on produce from January 2022 through April 2024, \$8.1mil (~70%) was spent on pre-cut produce. Diverting this pre-cut segment to sustainable sources is a major opportunity for increasing sustainable food spend.

#### Academic Health Center Purchases by Cost: Jan 2022 - Apr 2024

	Total Spending	Sustainable	Percentage Of Total Food Spend
All Produce	\$ 11,680,330	\$ 893,864	7.7%
Pre-Cut Produce	\$ 8,147,906	\$ 535,214	6.6%

Two sites shared that, while US Foods provides conventional pre-cuts at a low cost, the quality and freshness of the produce is inconsistent.

- UCSF switched its pre-cut sourcing to Bay Cities Produce, a regional distributor with a local sourcing program and robust sustainability reporting. However, Bay Cities went out of business in October of 2023, leading UCSF to alternate between sourcing pre-cuts from US Foods and Vesta Foodservice. Neither distributor currently has a local pre-cuts program.
- UC Davis Health switched its whole and fresh produce sourcing to Produce Express and has requested the company stand up a local pre-cuts program, but Produce Express has not been able to manage the complexity of it, forcing UCDH to source its precuts from US Foods.
- The key factors to a successful sustainable pre-cut program are:
  - The ability to manage the complexity of sustainable farmers
  - The ability to produce robust and accurate sustainability reports

The TA team has engaged UC supply chain partners to prototype a working local pre-cuts program. A local pre-cuts program for UC academic health centers can build on previous successes in the region. Through previous supply chain work, members of the TA team have started local sourcing pilots with Permanent and Vesta at Google, Kaiser Permanente, PayPal, LinkedIn, and Alameda Health System. There is potential to leverage UC’s purchasing power to develop a local pre-cuts supply chain by expanding on these existing processes. This supply chain could become a new systemwide contract over time. UC academic health centers interested in a local and sustainable pre-cuts pilot can participate by:

- Reviewing and suggesting edits to a “hit list” prepared by the TA team of potential pre-cut products that can be sourced sustainably
- Providing feedback on initial pricing
- Selecting and setting pars on their desired products

UCSF Top 10 Pre-Cut Items by Cost: Oct 2023 - Apr 2024

Item Type	Cost	Cost/lb	Permanent Cost/lb	Permanent Cost Impact %	Vesta Projected Cost/lb	Vesta Cost Impact %
Potato Diced	\$33,355	\$1.94				
Tomato Sliced	\$29,028	\$4.77	\$5.14	7.82%	\$6.17	29.39%
Onion Yellow Diced	\$22,377	\$1.69	\$2.98	76.43%	\$3.58	111.71%
Potato Peeled	\$18,979	\$2.70				
Vegetable Blend	\$15,896	\$2.61				
Mushroom Sliced	\$12,767	\$2.19	\$3.99	82.19%	\$4.79	118.63%
Apple Sliced	\$10,356	\$3.89				
Salad Mix	\$9,424	\$4.38	\$3.49	-20.32%	\$4.19	-4.38%
Avocado Half	\$8,890	\$9.55				
Onion Grn Diced	\$7,903	\$7.21				
Carrot Coin	\$7,599	\$1.27	3.48	174.02%	4.176	228.82%
Onion Red Sliced	\$7,071	\$3.73	\$3.13	-16.18%	\$3.75	0.59%

The table above shows the most commonly ordered twelve pre-cut items across all sites. Some local and sustainable items are not competitively priced compared to conventional items sourced from US Foods. However, some of the items show a cost savings for salad mix and sliced red onion with the alternative vendors. With collaborative, volume-based purchasing, additional local and sustainable products that are cost-competitive can be added to the program over time.

Similar to the local/sustainable pre-cuts option proposed in the introduction, Permanent can broker and manage pre-cut options for UC academic health centers. If dining directors wish to start with an established and approved vendor, the product could be routed through Vesta Foodservice, though adding another company would increase the cost impact due to their markup, shown in the table above. The TA team has designed and implemented similar successful sourcing pilots with Vesta and Permanent for Kaiser Permanente, Alameda Health System, Google, PayPal, and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland.

## Protein

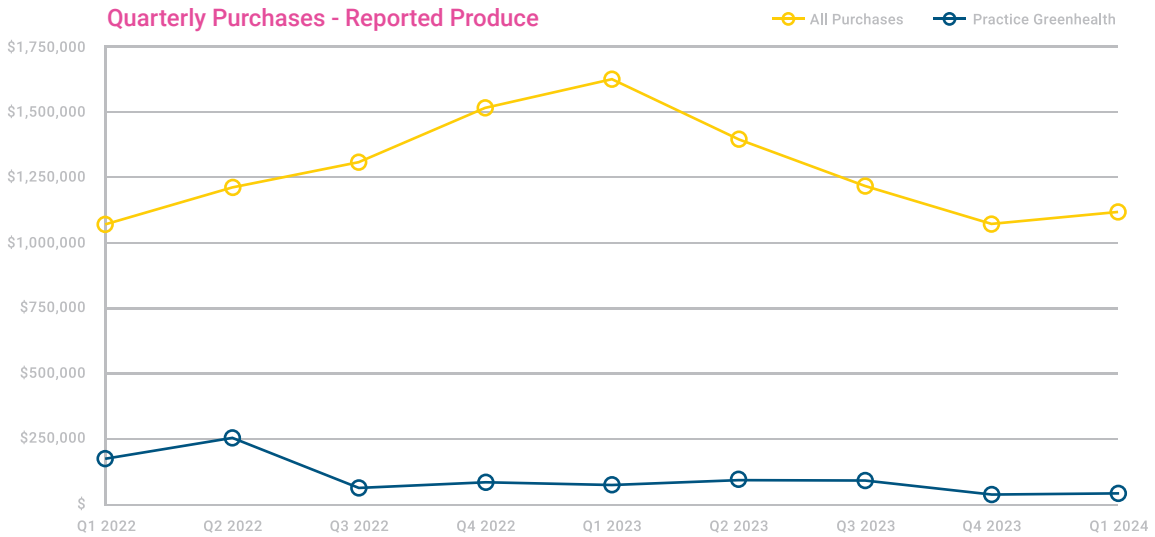
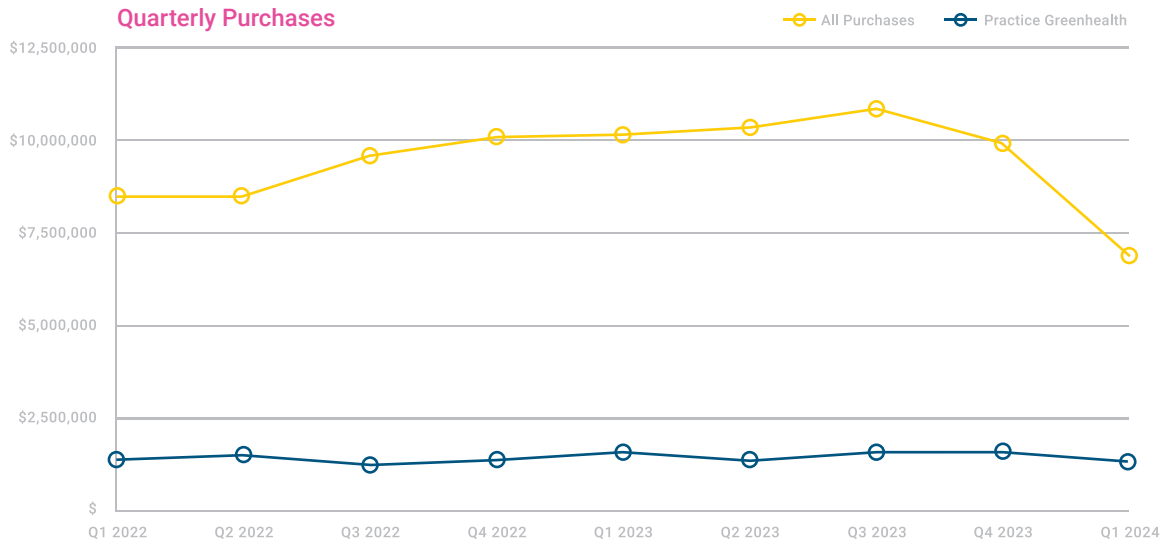
- **Santa Monica Seafood** is a reliable supplier of sustainable seafood for SoCal sites, and provides excellent sustainability reporting.
- **Real Good Fish** is utilized by UC Berkeley, and is a good option for NorCal health sites as it has provided very competitive pricing to all UCs in addition to robust reporting.
- **Cream Co.** supplies local, regenerative beef for UC Davis and UC San Diego Health and is able to supply the entire UC system. However, an alternative product line from Tasmania via US Foods meets UC sustainability standards and is more cost-competitive, so other sites choose this option. Cream Co. has the ability to negotiate costs via a collaborative buying program on pre-cut beef and poultry SKUs with multiple institutions. If multiple sites are willing to convene with CreamCo. and align on a hit list of SKUs that balanced production costs, CreamCo. may be able to deliver a slightly lower price on a custom product line that meets UC sustainability criteria with domestic product.
- **Niman Ranch** offers multiple product lines in pork and beef that meet UC sustainability criteria, and is available via distributors and direct.

## Value-added

- **Matriark Foods** is an approved Vizient, Sysco, and US Foods vendor that sells labor-saving foodservice products such as broths, broth concentrates, condiments, and sauces made from surplus farm produce. Matriark is able to develop additional custom sustainable product lines sourced from CA farmers for UC academic health centers (and campuses) if enough volume is generated. Supporting this carbon neutral, Upcycled Certified and Certified Women Owned Business would also contribute to the site's EaSR spend.

## Data Integrity + Enforcement

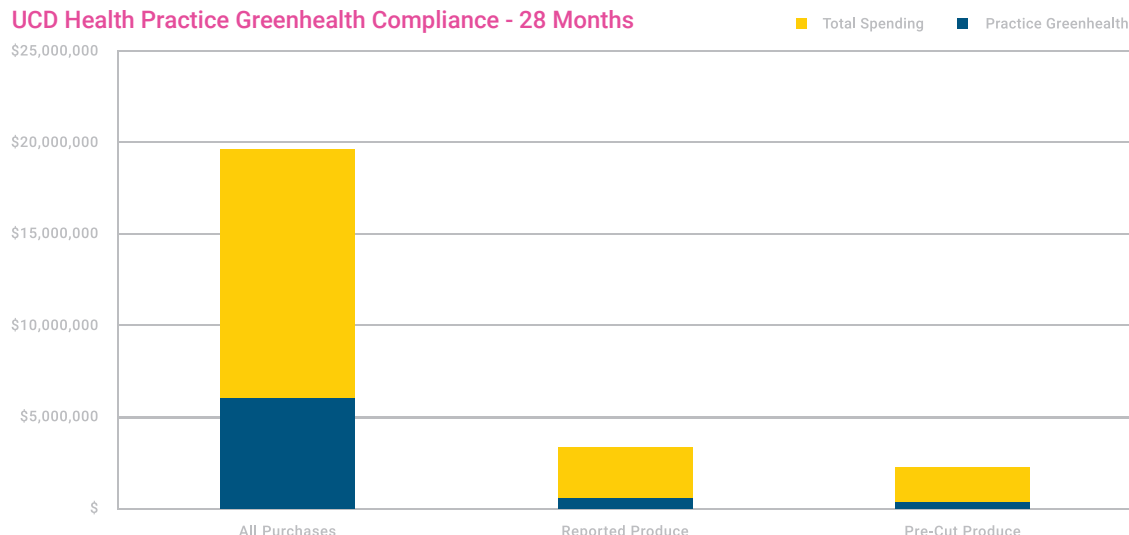
- **Practice GreenHealth** (PGH) and its partnership with **Health Care Without Harm** (HCWH) developed the framework of standards that UC academic health centers use to measure sustainable food spending. PGH and HCWH are members of the **Anchors in Action Alliance** (AiA), which also includes the **Center for Good Food Purchasing** (representing public institutions and K12) and **Real Food Challenge** (representing higher education). AiA members convened from 2019-2021 to align all of their sourcing standards, so that all institutional procurement standards would be similar.
  - These updated sustainability certification standards by Practice GreenHealth (PGH) can create confusion and challenges for tracking and reporting by dining teams. Key Green Solutions (KGS) has helped. **Additional training and engagement** by PGH would be helpful.
- KGS eases the burden on staff for vendor and product research, and UC academic health center staff enjoy working with KGS staff.
- Although staff generally believe KGS to be a good tool, it does have challenges, including an outdated user interface and lack of visibility into the underlying certifications included in the database, which reduce its usability as a planning tool. In addition, KGS makes occasional mistakes in coding that can be missed, and does not track everything. **KGS likely over-reports** sustainable spending.
  - US Foods will sometimes mis-report spend as local or sustainable to KGS due to quirks in the supply chain (e.g., when the raw product is internationally sourced, but the processing step happens within the US).
  - Some UC academic health center sustainability staff shared in their intakes that their expertise is in categories other than food - so they may miss opportunities to notice misrepresentation of sustainable spend. This risk may be higher where Morrison is involved; while the extra layer of support eases the burden, it also increases the likelihood of inaccurate data.
  - UC academic health centers with a higher overall knowledge of food brands and broadliner practices shared that even with KGS overall time-saving benefits, they still **must regularly audit** purchases both within their own operations and **catch errors frequently** in KGS reporting due to vendor errors.
  - Some staff noted that when looking at other sites' reporting, KGS will report the same product as sustainable at one site, and not sustainable at another
  - For the 2023-2024 reporting period, there was miscommunication between KGS and UC academic health center sustainability staff regarding changes in PGH standards, leading to significant reporting challenges.



Sustainable spend across academic health center sites has not changed significantly between Q1 of 2022 and Q1 of 2024 - and in the Produce category, it has fallen. Actual sustainable spend may be even lower due to potential over-reporting.

## Best Practices: UC Davis Health

### UCD Health Practice Greenhealth Compliance - 28 Months



**UC Davis Health** (UCDH) has been recognized as a [Top 25 Practice GreenHealth](#) recipient for 3 years in a row. Under the leadership of Executive Chef Santana Diaz, sustainable practices, including sustainable food spend, has increased steadily under his tenure. There is ongoing conversation between Chef Santana, his financial team, the leadership, and physician leadership at UCDH on justifying the worthy investment of food as medicine for their patients. This leadership support helps build a case for supporting higher quality food and being responsible stewards to the local economy.

- UCDH's sustainable food spend has stayed consistently **above 30%** from 2022-2024, compared to an overall **17% average across the UC Health system**. A [report](#) co-written with the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP), outlines top strategies in produce:
  - Setting **tiered priority strategies** (California grown, within 250 miles, priority California grown, priority within 250 miles).
  - Taking produce away from US Foods completely and partnering with a local **secondary vendor**, Produce Express, who could be more nimble and responsive to pilot work.
  - Writing **replicable seasonal menus** that enable local product integration.

- This success is remarkable not only because their percent is nearly two times the systemwide average it also spotlight's UCDH's commitment to **data integrity**. Santana's team practices data integrity by implementing a **three pronged approach**:
  - **1) Invoice reconciliation:** Every invoice is signed and reconciled against a vendor's emailed order confirmation as product is received - which catches vendor errors and unauthorized substitutions. Occasionally, vendors will invoice for a sustainable product while shipping a non-sustainable product. Without this check, sustainable spend would be over-reported.
  - **2) KGS report audits:** Purchasing manager Norman Tellez closely audits Key Green Solutions reports and finds errors where distributors report that a product was sustainable when it was actually conventional. For example, a produce item that was grown in Mexico but processed at a facility in California is often reported by US Foods as local/sustainable.
  - **3) Distributor supply chain audits:** Chef Santana will request California-produced, sustainable specifications for products from US Foods, and regularly audits those sustainable supply chains to ensure the right products are being shipped. Occasionally US Foods has changed specifications without changing what they report to KGS, so UCDH remains diligent in enforcement.
- UCDH, like many other sites, are understaffed and manage financial constraints - so the commitment to data integrity represents an extra strain on their team. They note that frontloading and sharing of these accountability tasks by UCOP and/or other academic health center sites would benefit all sites collectively.
  - The TA team recommends that some of these tasks could be absorbed by leveraging student fellows and interns, similarly to the way UC Berkeley engages student workers.

# CAMPUSES

05



# Campuses

## Summary of Challenges + Opportunities

UC campuses juggle a variety of operational needs, all while navigating tight budgets in both labor and sourcing. Offering healthy, fresh, sustainable and affordable food options is a top priority, aligned with the university's commitment to enhancing student experiences. Yet, many campuses face challenges with achieving truly sustainable foodservice operations.

Primary vendors often fall short in providing reliable sustainability data, and their responses to data requests can vary widely. Secondary vendors sometimes bring innovative procurement opportunities but struggle with delivering consistent quality and volume. Aligning UC's sustainability goals with equity-driven procurement priorities, such as supporting small businesses and minority-owned enterprises, requires further internal coordination and integration with AASHE STARS updates.

Non-standardized procurement systems and uneven staffing add complexity to these efforts, in addition to inconsistent data tracking and reporting due to a lack of standardized systems and limited third-party support. However, initiatives like the MaetaData pilot and expanded staff training show promise in overcoming these obstacles and improving sustainability metrics. By strengthening emerging supply chain initiatives, dining program messaging across service points, and collaborating strategically with admissions, student orientation, residential life, and campus leadership, UC can amplify the sustainability work already making an impact.



## Key Recommendations

- **Expand Emerging Sustainable Supply Chains:** Ensure that dining teams can identify product priorities that create impact. A number of sustainable solutions for produce and protein are available and being partially utilized through secondary vendors. Being strategic about SKU rationalization, brokers, processors, and production planning can yield big wins, especially if campuses coordinate together.
- **Hold Primary Vendors Accountable on Data and Service:** Ensure UC specific sustainability criteria, service expectations, and data requirements are reflected in contracts with broadliners. Primary vendors have failed to provide consistent service across campuses. The lack of standardized naming and category conventions makes tracking and reporting difficult, forcing under-resourced staff to spend excessive time on vendor and product research. Disparities in staffing across campuses compounds inaccuracies and uneven burdens in reporting tasks. Ensure RFPs and contracts build clear expectations for reporting and integrating sustainable producers and products, with an accountability system based on scorecards, incentives, and/or penalties as necessary.
- **Streamline Data Collection:** UC Procurement and some campuses are piloting a third party solution, MaetaData, to simplify sustainability data collection. Piloting will require campus level data sharing MOUs and allow cross site product and vendor details to improve sustainable sourcing. This will also provide a potential project for sustainable food fellows to support with professional staff advising for auditing certifications and adding smaller vendor data into MaetaData.
- **Train Dining Teams on Standards Updates:** With AASHE STARS standards recently updated, campus dining teams may need some training on these changes and how they integrate with Anchors In Action. Clarification is also needed on integrating UC Procurement prioritizing “small enterprise” and minority-owned business spending in relationship to sustainable vendor sourcing to align equity and sustainability efforts. Ensure Dining Directors and the SFSWG can receive timely updates on the latest sustainability standards. Build perennial updates into these systemwide meeting structures to update staff and clarify pathways to success, especially with clarifying a pathway for smaller, sustainable producers and enterprises to be considered.
  - Convene the SFSWG to review the AASHE 3.0 guidelines to consider UC Sustainable Practices Policy updates and to update standards for campus reporting in FY24-25.
  - Convene the Data and Tracking Subcommittee of the SFSWG to discuss integrating small enterprise and equity UC Procurement priorities and assess how that also reflects AASHE 3.0 and Anchors In Action.
- **Explore Tool Alignment:** The lack of a unified procurement management system limits data tracking and collaboration across campuses, though the adoption of Jamix shows promise for campuses alongside data integration with MaetaData.
- **Brand and Celebrate Success:** The substantial effort to shift towards sustainable procurement isn’t matched by sufficient marketing and celebration. Unified branding and messaging can better connect these efforts with students and the broader community. Sustainable food fellows can also be leveraged to support campus community engagement on sustainable food.

- **Leverage student engagement:** Students are customers of UC Dining, and are also a resource. Fellowships and internship opportunities can support vendor and product research and sustainability tracking and coding tasks while providing real world experience in the sustainable procurement field.

## Detailed Analysis

### AASHE STARS

The UC Sustainable Practices Policy uses the AASHE STARS sustainable food definition for campuses and Practice Green Health for academic health centers. The differences in approved third-party certifications accepted by the two programs can create confusion when looking at sustainable food across the UC system. Thus, dining teams have had challenges understanding which certifications qualify as sustainable food spend and why third-party certifications matter in defining sustainable food. This confusion extends to defining and counting spend on local, minority, and women-owned producers, which are not included in the sustainable food definition, but are part of EaSR metrics in UC's sustainable procurement guidelines.

Convening the SFSWG to evaluate these nuances and provide clarity and guidance for campuses is essential. Changes and considerations that the SFSWG should review and provide clarity on include the following:

- AASHE STARS recently updated from the 2.2 version to 3.0, removing 8 certifications and qualifiers and replacing them with 9 separate qualifiers. See [Dining Service Procurement \(3.0\) - The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System](#) (STARS) for more information on changes pertaining to sustainable food spend.
- AASHE STARS 3.0 allows higher education institutions to report on purchases that adhere to the Anchors in Action Aligned Framework in lieu of the sustainable/ethical criteria provided by AASHE for OP7 credits.
- As the SFSWG develops guidance and clarity on UC's sustainable food goals and reporting standards, data tracking and menu management platforms should be reviewed and updated to support tracking the updated criteria.

- **A pathway to qualify local:** AASHE STARS 3.0 qualifies a local spend as sustainable if it meets OP7 certification standards, adheres and is verified by [Real Food Standards 3.0 calculator](#), or meet the following [small producer criteria](#) (page 2):
  - Grown, raised, or caught by small producers (producers who are not structurally dependent on permanent, year-round hired labor and/or manage their production activity primarily with a family or owner-operator workforce) using sustainable or ethical methods, as evidenced by or documented through one or more of the following:
    - Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), i.e., Certified Naturally Grown in the US
    - Short food supply chain (SFSC), i.e., a supply chain with a minimal number of intermediaries (ideally, no more than one) between identified farms, boats, or harvesters and the institution. Examples include direct sales, contract production, regional food hubs, local farm-to-institution programs, organic growers' cooperatives, and community-supported fishery programs that pass transparent information about the origin, production method, and sustainability of the product to the consumer and provide full traceability through all stages of production, processing, and distribution. Small Producers' Symbol (SPP) World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) or Fair Trade Federation (FTF) membership
    - An alternative verification program led by farm/food workers, academic or student researchers, an NGO, or a producer cooperative

#### How has Dining Service - OP 7 changed between STARS Version 2 and Version 3?

- The criteria covering sustainable/ethical products have been updated to recognize the Anchors in Action aligned standards (US) and to be more readily adaptable internationally.
- A list of qualifying standards will be maintained in the STARS Help Center rather than included in the Technical Manual.
- A pathway for products from small producers to qualify without certification has been directly integrated into the criteria.
- Plant-based foods now earn points at the same rate as certified products.
- The definition of plant-based foods has been updated to align with prominent international standards. Products containing animal-derived ingredients no longer qualify.
- A new indicator (7.2) requires an analysis of the dining service spend in regard to diverse and socially preferable suppliers.
- A comprehensive list of differences can be found in the STARS 3.0 Summary of changes.

## Leveraging AASHE STARS + Anchors in Action Alliance Framework in Bids

Soliciting bids for vendor contracting is a key strategy for advancing UC's sustainability goals. Including AASHE STARS standards as listed in the [AASHE STARS Technical Manual](#) in RFP evaluation criteria ensures vendor accountability. The UC Procurement team can then incorporate these selection criteria in their RFP scoring. (see Bid Solicitations as a Key Strategy for Sustainable Procurement section for more examples and detail).

## Primary and Secondary Vendors

Campuses primarily depend on a handful of broadline and private regional distributors for their food procurement needs, with vendors regionally grouped to serve Northern California (NorCal) and Southern California (SoCal) locations. These primary vendors were selected through systemwide bids and contracts aimed at streamlining vendor relationships and leveraging collective purchasing power for reduced costs. However, varying levels of service and challenges in sustainability reporting across regions have highlighted limitations in relying solely on primary suppliers, emphasizing the important role that secondary vendors play in meeting UC's sustainable food procurement goals.

Feedback aggregated from UC site visits and meetings with the project Technical Assistance team suggest inconsistencies in the level of responsiveness, reporting and service. This has helped highlight ways to improve systemwide contracts while honoring the agility and innovation that secondary vendors can offer, particularly in regards to more transparency and willingness to participate in pilot programs.

### Primary vendors

- **Sysco**, a systemwide broadline vendor that covers nearly all product categories. At times they struggle with providing timely, accurate reporting and offer limited sustainability options across some of the categorial product areas campuses source. Frequent substitutions can also further complicate tracking and increase errors. Sysco relationships vary significantly by site. Sites where the relationship is positive can provide learnings for other sites to improve service and reporting expectations.

- NorCal primary produce vendor **Daylight Foods** initially offered a higher level of service in sustainability including onboarding additional vendors to support UC sustainable sourcing goals. More recently, several locations indicated that service and sustainability product offering has dropped and/or pricing increases have made it cost prohibitive.
  - Daylight Foods began a process of farm-level sustainability reporting in 2019, but suspended this during COVID. They promised at least one campus that they would resume this program, but have not resumed the program.
  - Several sites have requested a local pre-cuts program from Daylight, with no results.
  - Organic broker/shipper **Coke Farm** offers its catalog of certified Organic, local, BIPOC farmers through Daylight, though utilization and promotion of this program has dropped in recent years. Some sites report that the week-by-week spreadsheet ordering system from Coke Farm is burdensome.
  - Local farm broker **Permanent** has successfully sold some of its produce through Daylight to several campuses (UC Berkeley, UC Merced), but clarity is needed around the structure of the markup Daylight uses for Permanent products.
- SoCal primary produce vendor **Sunrise Produce** has struggled to provide accurate reporting on the sustainability of their supply chain. Although they currently cannot provide any attributes/certifications beyond some product offerings that are certified organic, they have committed to a new farm-level reporting system in the future.

## Secondary Vendors

In addition to broadline engagement in sustainable food product sourcing across a short list of suppliers (i.e. Sysco, US Foods, Daylight, and Sunrise) many secondary vendors are engaging with UC sites. The project team learned of several secondary vendors working with UC sites including those below:

- SoCal secondary produce vendor [Nature's Produce](#) is occasionally able to produce farm-level sustainability reporting, using special item codes for certain farmers sparingly. They do use item codes effectively for certified organic producers.
- Sustainability-centric broker [Permanent](#) is able to sell through Daylight Foods or directly to campuses. When Daylight Foods is the vendor of record, it does not provide Permanent's sustainable sourcing data proactively to campuses, which sites may not be aware of. At present, Permanent, as a vendor of interest in other UC sites, has been able to produce separate sustainability and impact reporting for UC Merced, who they are now in a direct sales relationship with as of summer 2024.
- Several campuses source directly from food hubs like [Spork](#) (UC Davis), and [FoodShed](#) (UCSD), and other food hubs are able to serve nearby campuses.

- [Santa Monica Seafood](#), [Cream Co](#), and [Real Good Fish](#) are alternative sustainable protein suppliers that are able to provide regular and consistent sustainability reporting to all campuses they work with. The challenge for UC sites in secondary protein vendors continue to be balancing priority cuts/items and pricing while increasing these sustainable qualifying options in menu cycling. Working with production teams to map menu cycling with new cuts and items as sustainable qualifying alternates in menu planning may address pricing and product integrity when piloting and increasing sourcing from these secondary vendors.

### Small Business First

- UC has a [Small Business First policy](#) to help award contracts quicker to certified small businesses. Campuses are able to spend up to \$250k on small vendors without a contract in place. This can be an excellent tactic to onboard alternative sustainable vendors to pilot new products and programs. See the below section on UC Merced for how UCM has leveraged this policy for more sustainable purchasing. If a site is finding success in a secondary vendor and the vendor is looking to increase regional or statewide partnerships, they can be referred to [UCOP Procurement](#) and Marilyn Biscotti for further review in determining whether they could be a good fit for further contracting.

## Best Practice Examples: Campus Procurement and Data

### UC Berkeley (UCB) - Leveraging Students for Data Tracking

**UCB** has the most extensive staffing dedicated to tracking.

- Sustainability Program Coordinator Shannen Casey oversees a staff of 19 student workers, including two GCLC fellows. Student workers engage in in-depth product and vendor research to verify sustainable attributes.
- Shannen and Director Sunil Chacko mentor student workers, and Shannen led her staff in a rigorous data integrity project over the 2023-2024 school year that concluded that many vendors had misreported sustainable spend. While UCB originally projected that they had been above the 25% sustainable target, the project concluded that they were roughly at 19% sustainable spend. This result speaks to similar struggles that UC academic health center staff have noted about the difficulty of aligning with vendors on reporting.
- UC Berkeley, alongside UC Davis and UC Santa Cruz, is also part of the NorCal sustainable procurement working group. This group collaborates with shared vendors like Daylight Foods to enhance sustainability sourcing. Their efforts have led to a pilot partnership with Cream Co., increasing the NorCal cluster's sustainable protein purchasing to 26%. However, sustainable produce procurement lags at 4.2%, with ongoing challenges detailed in this report. Dairy and Eggs are highlighted as key areas for potential sustainability interventions, as shown in the table below.

## NorCal campus cluster (UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz)

Category	Total Spend	Sustainable Spend	% Sustainable
Protein	\$12,708,580	\$3,377,022	26.60%
Prepared Goods	\$6,682,812	\$40,858	0.60%
Produce	\$6,411,717	\$272,321	4.20%
Dairy and Eggs	\$3,511,105	\$124,570	3.50%
Frozen	\$2,998,289	\$279,509	9.30%
Beverages	\$2,244,142	\$257,298	11.50%
Dry Goods	\$2,222,239	\$272,977	12.30%
Condiments and Sauces	\$1,679,399	\$18,859	1.10%
Packaged Goods	\$1,325,292	\$41,222	3.10%
Canned	\$829,049	\$18,954	2.30%
Staples	\$342,777	\$57,013	16.60%

## UC Los Angeles (UCLA) - Empowering staff to ease reporting

**UCLA** is adjusting its staffing responsibilities to ease tracking.

- To confront the issue of unauthorized substitutions, Director Al Ferrone has empowered Executive Chef Michael Chang to act as a gatekeeper with US Foodservice.
- The team has also implemented quarterly “coding sprints” to frontload the tracking burden and be well-prepared for annual reporting.

## UC San Diego (UCSD) - Leveraging vendor relationship to streamline reporting

**UCSD** has the most positive relationship with a primary vendor related to tracking.

- UCSD staff meet **weekly** with their Sysco representatives to review spending targets and frontload any data tracking concerns. This greatly reduces the friction between the vendor and staff, and makes annual reporting related to Sysco much less burdensome.
- The team meets monthly with other vendors and weekly with the dedicated Sysco sourcing team. The relationship with Sysco is unique as no other site has this level of oversight from Sysco.
- No other campus has had success with Sysco in this way, and it is unclear if it is possible with other Sysco regions.

The UCSD team has created a process that streamlines purchases and reporting. It does involve upfront work before purchases can be made.



## Review Process

1. Their Retail Manager and Food Purchasing/Contract Administrator identify products for use. Before bringing in product, vendors provide all necessary information, i.e. nutrition information, ingredients, sustainability certifications, and anything else we may require from the product.
2. The products are then vetted, tested by a group comprised potentially of registered dietitians, the executive culinary team, dining directors, and managers.
3. If they decide to move forward with the product, the Retail Manager and Food Purchasing/Contract Administrator will add to order guides and notify the operations team of these new products. The Dining Business Analytics Manager and the systems team will add these items to FoodPro and flag them with any sustainability attributes they track.
4. When reporting, the Dining Business Analytics Manager will pull a purchasing report with all of these flagged attributes and be able to identify spend and/or weight of purchased product; the system does distinguish when they are subbed an item and will not be part of the reporting results.
5. Reports are submitted to all relevant stakeholders.

## Fellow and Student Engagement

- Undergrad advisory council, DEI student group and Student Sustainability Collective give the leadership feedback. They work collaboratively.
- Fellows, known as “Eco-nauts,” report to the Dining Sustainability Coordinator and review products and coding, relieving the administrative burden on dining teams.

## UC Merced (UCM) - Hyperlocal sourcing pilot

UCM is leveraging the [Small Business First Program](#) with Permanent after a successful pilot.

- Starting in fall 2023, UCM began purchasing local and sustainable produce from the Permanent catalog via Daylight Foods, impacting 32 local farmers with >\$80,000 of direct farm income. 18 of the farmers were BIPOC-owned and 12 were woman-owned. [Click here to review the impact report on this program.](#)
- To manage costs, UCM elected to purchase produce directly from Permanent, which will yield up to \$40,000 in savings at current projected spend compared to Daylight distribution.
- Permanent, SupplyChange, the Alice Waters Institute, and UCM Dining are coordinating an expansion of the pilot that centers on hyperlocal menu development celebrating Merced-grown foods.

## UC Irvine (UCI) - BIPOC farmer focused pilot

UCI Dining's Aramark team was the first location to pilot a program called [Farm-Fit](#) in conjunction with a secondary vendor, The FruitGuys, as of 2021.

- Farm-Fit is a nationwide initiative crafted by [The FruitGuys](#) and Aramark with the aim of enabling small, BIPOC-owned farms to supply their produce to Aramark accounts.
- UCI plans out their orders months in advance by placing a weekly standing order with a local BIPOC farm, [Bonita Farms](#), averaging \$2k weekly spend. This format provides stability and predictability for the farmer. It also allows for the chef to crop plan directly with the farmer for future product needs.

## Systemwide: MaetaData pilot for system wide efficiencies

Several campuses are migrating from [FoodPro](#) and [cBord](#) to [Jamix](#) which has the potential to act as an integrated platform with enhanced tools for sourcing, tracking, and reporting.

- Campuses that use Jamix are able to look in on other campuses' work and verify that similar products are being coded the same way.
- This also opens up the opportunity for collaborative **sourcing** as well as **enforcement** of accountability with vendors.

UC Procurement is also piloting MaetaData to support data collection from systemwide distributors. MaetaData will be able to provide data across the system, which will help compare similar products and identify opportunities for increasing sustainable substitutions in addition to identifying cost savings with larger UC distributors. The use of MaetaData will also allow site sourcing leads and UCOP to improve upon collaborative purchasing and future contract development.





# STUDENT FELLOW ENGAGEMENT

06

# Student Fellow Engagement

## Summary of Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Sustainability strategies and efforts are a shared priority for students and professional staff on campus and systemwide.
  - Alongside campus sustainability offices to residential and dining based sustainability positions there is further potential for students to engage in sustainability goals and target activities through direct fellowships, internships, and project advising.
- Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Sustainable Food Fellows can support dining in FY24-25.
  - During 2023-2024, 34% (12 of 35) of total fellows representing 10 different campuses had projects related to procurement and dining.
  - Student training materials are available and can inform other campus level student staff and academic internship based project affiliates who may work with dining ([See GFI student training materials](#)).

### Plant-Based Foods

Consistent with Menus of Change, plant-based foods are defined as "fruits and vegetables (produce); whole grains, beans, other legumes (pulses), and soy foods; nuts and seeds; plant oils; and herbs and spices", simple combinations of these foods and their derivatives, and vegetarian/vegan alternatives to meat and dairy.

### Food Service Glossary of Terms

From culinary terms and kitchen equipment, to food safety, point of sales systems, and marketing and accounting terms, here is a spectrum of food services industry terminology to reference.

**Accreditation** - Certain jobs in the food services industry can require accreditation or employers will prefer to hire accredited employees for them. One example is a baker, who can become accredited through the Retailer's

GFI Student Training, 11/9/2023 (screenshot)

### UC Global Food Initiative

#### Sustainable and Equity Driven Food Sourcing Fellow

Alia Espinoza - University of California Santa Cruz

#### Advancing Healthy, Sustainable, and Culturally Relevant Food for Students Across Basic Needs Food Access Sites at UCSC

#### Objectives

- Explore food donations and recovery as well as new vendors and partners to advance sustainable food for all students
- Lay the groundwork for long term food sustainability at Basic Needs sites
- Address food insecurity in the UCSC and greater Santa Cruz community

#### Basic Needs Mission

The mission of Basic Needs is to provide hubs for food, housing, health and wellness, financial security, and other basic needs resources both on campus at UCSC and off campus in the greater Santa Cruz area.

According to UCSC Basic Needs, they are a group of organizations that support financial stability by ensuring

#### Food Access Sites

UCSC's Basic Needs food access sites use the student development model to operate on a "take what you need basis". Sites include Cowell College Shop, For the People, Redwood Free Market, Produce Pop-Up, and various other food partners including

#### Outreach

For this project, I reached out to over forty food vendors. Of those vendors, most have offered a one-time and/or occasional donation to UCSC's Basic Needs Sites. There are four vendors who have guaranteed a monthly donation over the academic school year. Once I confirmed these food donations,

Sustainable and Equity Driven Food Sourcing Fellow Alia Espinoza, University of California Santa Cruz, 2023-2024 (project poster)

## Detailed Analysis

### Students lack access + connection

Given the ongoing annual campus tracking and reporting efforts there is a need to ensure incoming students can work with advisors on how to best step into a collaborative work environment. Limited access to data, procurement specialists, AASHE STARS reporting teams, and enough context regarding campus food purchasing, were a few noted challenges for FY23-24 Fellows who were focused on improving sustainable food procurement.

### Data collection takes time

Some Fellows supported dining by analyzing a campus' sustainable food spend. Those students reported difficulty soliciting responses from distributors and producers, as well as with transferring data efficiently from invoices to data tracking tools. It takes time for students to work with dining officers and engage in research.

### Recruitment

Multiple campuses and academic health centers experienced hardship in their timeline for recruitment and onboarding for student fellows, and questioned how to right-size student project engagement while ensuring a broader understanding of dining's sustainability goals.

### Best Practices and Opportunities

- When dining-focused students and staff have a clear understanding of the UC's sustainable food standards and how the unit operates in respect to these goals for tracking and reporting they become more empowered. This ensures a more effective ability to determine achievable student engaged activities to support their sustainable food procurement team, offering support in staff intensive activities.
- When Fellows have the support of a staff member who is close to dining, they gain insightful access to data and information and they are able to create outcomes that enhance dining's sustainable food procurement initiatives.

- Potential types of projects for Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Sustainable Food Fellows:
  - Create a food map of where a campus' food originates (online and printed formats)
  - Conduct research on sustainable product substitutions
  - Interview local farms whose products can be found on campus and create marketing materials
  - Validate sustainable food claims and certifications
    - Examples: Leverage sustainable food fellows at UC academic health center sites to stay current on Practice GreenHealth's updated standards, and conduct product and invoice audits in partnership with Key Green Solutions (KGS) to get to true data integrity.
    - Campuses and UC Procurement sites that are using MaetaData should consider the lessons-learned from KGS to ensure auditing of sustainability metrics.
- Coordinate with the AASHE STARS OP7 and OP8 reporting teams to calculate the sustainable food spend and food waste reduction.

## Key recommendations

- Enhance continuity, communication and clarity amongst system-wide coordinators, Fellow site supervisors and at least one (1) procurement specialist or dining administrator or staff professional.
- For the Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Sustainable Food Fellows program, plan more frequent meetups that allow for more opportunities for Fellows and advisors/supervisors to connect across campuses. Feedback in FY23-24 has found that co-learning, which occurs when students are connected with one another, helps them reflect on their own initiatives while gaining insights about closely related components of sustainable procurement.
  - Ideally support in-person and/or hybrid connections that can build on UCOP coordinated fellowship convenings to weave closer regional relationships where meaningful exchange can occur regarding overlapping project undertakings.
  - Systemize, document, and share in depth trainings earlier in the academic year to ensure fellows/student interns are onboarded and resourced to engage in collaborative activities. These trainings should include timely content as linked in GFI trainings (former Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Fellow program) from fall and winter of 2023-2024 alongside interactive discussion spaces such and topical break out rooms for students to interact and foster relationships (where they are coming from, what they hope to learn and accomplish, a personal story).

- Consider students' ability to become key partners in data cleaning and product assessment. At the campus level, make sure to include students in any food service management IT platform orientation training on these systems if students are expected to review and update data in them, as each campus has a different approach to data management.
- Consider supplemental training of Fellows by including them in discussions related to food procurement. These spaces may be actual working meetings with distributors, new product/vendor tastings with production teams, food procurement software enhancement and platform improvement meetings with your vendor, or meetings with other units, faculty, and partners looking to work with you on sustainable food sourcing and tracking. By being inclusive this increases students' confidence, expands their perspective and boosts their buy-in as they support dining through their projects. Additionally, dining and procurement teams gain labor capacity by training up students and Fellows who have committed at least one academic year to their involvement in sustainable food procurement.

## FY24-25 Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Sustainable Food Fellowship

Background:

The [Bonnie Reiss Climate Action Student Fellowship](#) funds student-generated projects that broadly support the UC's Climate Action and sustainability goals by (1) shaping the university's climate action programs and supporting the university's aggressive sustainability goals while creating a more equitable, sustainable, resilient and healthy world and (2) conducting projects that support sustainable agricultural practices and helping campuses and health systems work toward the University's sustainable food goals.

The Fellowship is funded by the Global Climate Leadership Council, which advises the UC President and Chief Financial Officer on pursuing fossil free operations and furthering the University's long standing sustainability goals. The Fellowship has two cohorts of student fellows that focus on climate action and sustainable food and agriculture.

This Fellowship honors a former UC Regent and her legacy. The University of California lost one of its most passionate, caring and effective advocates with the passing of Regent Bonnie Reiss in 2018. One of Bonnie's biggest passions was working to mitigate the effects of global climate change, and so the Fellowship program was renamed in her honor. Students are known as Reiss Fellows, and their work will become part of Bonnie's long and distinguished legacy.



FY24-25:

In this academic year, the UC Office of the President (UCOP) will fund Sustainable Food and Agriculture Fellows at each of the ten campuses, five academic health centers, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) and UCOP. Each campus, LBNL, ANR and UCOP will receive \$5,000 per fellow, with up to three fellows per campus. The awards may be given to undergraduate or graduate students to support the fellowships foci outlined below. As in past years, each location will administer the program locally so students' efforts can be aligned with local issues being addressed through campus aligned projects.

Bonnie Reiss Sustainable Food and Agriculture Fellows can work on projects broadly related to this subject. In addition, in more directed projects, Sustainable Food and Agriculture fellows will help campuses and health systems define the actions and resources needed to procure at least 25 percent of UC's food supplies from sustainable sources. Fellows may work on areas of high priority to those in campus and health system food service operations, such as:

- Aligning definitions and reporting of sustainable and plant-based food procurement
- Engaging UC community members on sustainable food priorities
- Conducting data collection and analysis of current institutional food procurement
- Working directly with food service procurement and operations staff to identify challenges and potential solutions related to increasing sustainable food procurement
- Identifying the costs associated with switching to sustainable suppliers to meet the 25% goal
- Completing or auditing the food service annual reporting for the systemwide Sustainability Annual Report
- Developing case studies on sustainable food procurement actions taken by locations
- Preparing grant submissions to support sustainable food priorities

For more information on the Bonnie Reiss Leading on Climate Fellowship, and the Sustainable Food and Agriculture cohort, please contact Yuka Matsuno at [Yuka.Matsuno@ucop.edu](mailto:Yuka.Matsuno@ucop.edu)



# MARKETING & STORYTELLING INSIGHTS

07

# Marketing and Storytelling Insights

---

During the intake meetings with all campuses and academic health centers, we learned that the majority of all sites have a need for more support around marketing and storytelling. Not all sites have a dedicated marketing person to run marketing and do not have the tools in place to execute campaigns or to plan campaigns in advance. Some locations have successfully leveraged interns and students to assist in content development for social media, but these are short term solutions. From a storytelling standpoint, the person developing marketing content needs to have access to the origin of the foods being purchased to help tell the story about the farmer or the farming practices, which ties back to the traceability and transparency from the distributors. If transparency on sources is lacking, it creates difficulty telling a good story about the food being served.

Sites have clearly expressed a need for support in receiving templates they could leverage as well as find a way to share best practices. As a result of the first phase of this project, teams now have access to a simple, blank marketing calendar tool, editable flyer templates ([for printed and digital materials](#)), and a sample Best Practices overview of how the UC Irvine Dining team manages their marketing program. The editable templates were drafted to reflect input from sites after the August 2024 convening, including notes about marketing language, students' aesthetic preferences, and QR code usage.

Editable templates include:

- [Instructions on Using the Template Resources](#)
- Table tents
- Printable flyers
- LCD screen digital flyers
- Square template for social media posts
- Systemwide: Marketing and UCI Irvine (UCI) Dining Best Practice
- UC Irvine (UCI) Dining, which operates under Aramark, provided an alternate example from our self-operated sites in how they manage their marketing program across various social media platforms and onsite engagement and signage.

[Best Practices around marketing/storytelling from UCI Dining](#)

# SPOTLIGHT IMPACT: UC DINING RETAIL & EBT

08

# Spotlight Impact: UC Dining Retail and EBT

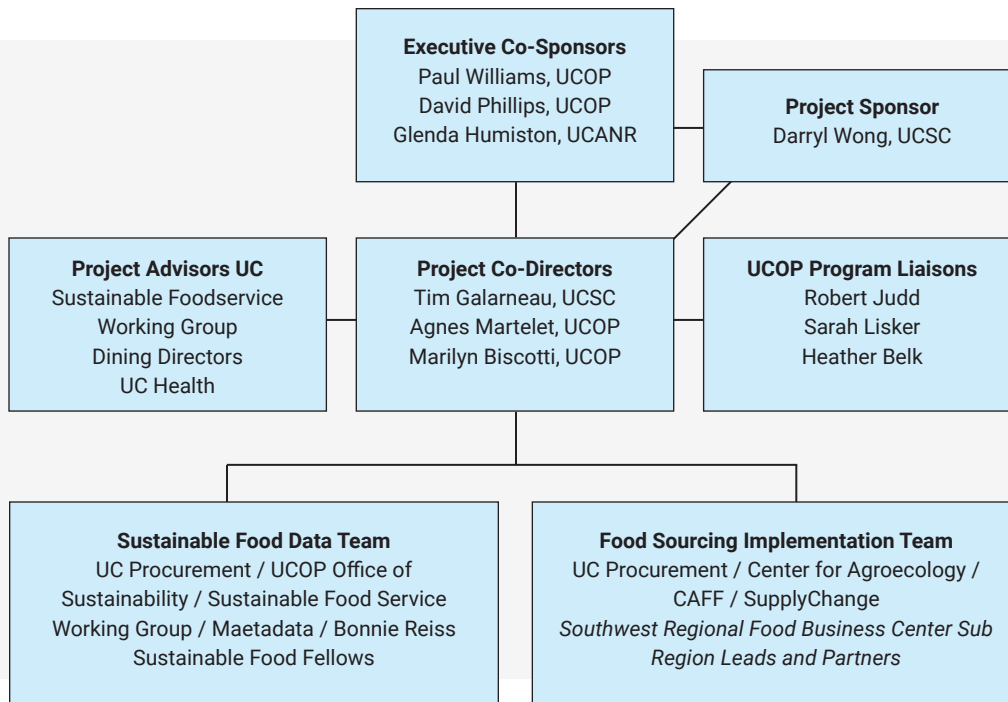
---

In addition to the aforementioned efforts in this project, the team also established a protocol for the UC to increase food access through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) at campus sites by becoming the first higher education institution in the US to sign a Multi-Store Owner (MSO) contract with [USDA Food & Nutrition Services SNAP EBT Program](#) ensuring greater ease for our dining retail operations in accepting and processing CalFresh EBT benefits onsite. For more details please see below:

University of California undergraduate campuses have undertaken individual steps to advance onsite dining retail EBT locations. Over the last five years campuses have shared application challenges and renewal hurdles that have stymied smooth operational access for our student EBT users on an ongoing basis. This past year the UC Essential Needs Consortium hosted a salon bringing together UC dining site operators, USDA Food & Nutrition Services, alongside campus CalFresh program staff. From that initial convening Project Co-Director, Tim Galarneau, worked with USDA FNS staff and UC Procurement project advisor, Marilyn Biscotti, to outline the process for the UC to become the first systemwide [Multi-Store Owner](#) (MSO) in the country! As of this June 2024 UC has evolved its approach for the current 19 campus operated EBT retail sites. All sites will now be part of one federal contract with a direct federal staff assigned liaison to support our campuses as we advance greater access to EBT across the UC. This federal liaison will work directly with UCOP's Senior Category Procurement Manager for Dining and Hospitality, Marilyn Biscotti who reports to UC Chief Procurement Officer, Paul Williams. Under one MSO contract campuses will have greater efficiency and responsiveness to challenges as well as simplify steps for opening new EBT self-operated sites. Resources, approved permitted sites, and onboarding guidance for UC sites can be [accessed here](#).

# PHASE II PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

09



# Phase II Project Recommendations

Based on feedback from campus, academic health centers, and systemwide attendees at the August project convening, coupled with supplemental input from the UC Sustainable Food Service Working Group and UCOP project partners, Phase II of the Sustainable Food Project will include objectives and activities that reflect multi-stakeholder input and engagement.

## Phase II Objectives and Activities

- Expand the integration of campus sites utilizing MaetaData for systemwide tracking and UC site level feedback in concert with UCOP procurement and the senior food commodity manager. Leverage engagement through the SFSWG.
- Facilitate systemwide and region-based campus/academic health center technical assistance on sourcing and new sustainable food supply chain vendors and contract advances.
  - Work with academic health centers and campuses to develop a plan and process for transitioning to sustainable pre-cuts for bigger impact.
  - Evaluate the feasibility for developing a collaborative protein purchasing strategy and implementation plan.
  - Review opportunities for sustainable value-added product pilots across UC Sites.
  - Support teams in working with primary and secondary vendors to create improved coding of sustainable products in product catalogs.
- Support procurement food commodity leads and teams to review existing contracts and further improve contract language to increase sustainable food sourcing for UC campus and academic health center sites.
- Host a spring 2025 sustainable institutional food sourcing convening to share opportunities, challenges, and best practices across CA education and health care sites in order to improve local supply chains, contracts, and identify opportunities for partnerships.
- Conduct detailed cost analysis of shifting from conventional to sustainable proteins and produce across the UC system and develop sustainability and social equity metrics to evaluate the impact of UC sourcing 25% of its food from sustainable and small and diverse enterprises. Develop clear outcomes for the UC in order to ensure site leads and systemwide leadership can speak to the implications of achieving this goal.
- Convene UC campus and academic health center site partners with UCOP and Project team in summer 2025 to review project impacts and inform next steps and directions for advancing interventions in FY 2025-26.
- Provide technical training and support for Bonny Reiss Leading on Climate Sustainable Food Fellows in implementing site specific data collection and reporting/evaluation, as well as student and community engagement on sustainable food.
- Develop a Phase II project impact report providing insights on barriers and recommendations for improving regional and systemwide sustainable food sourcing to continue to build momentum to reach the Sustainable Practices Policy goal of 25% sustainable food sourcing.





grateful  
thanks  
sustainability  
equity  
farmers  
staff  
students  
organic  
food  
regenerative

## Project Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the members of the Sustainable Foodservice Working Group (SFSWG) for their review and support of the project, and to the Dining Directors of all the UC campuses and academic health centers and their teams for the invaluable feedback and guidance provided, which made this project possible. The first phase of this project involved many hands and hearts noted in this report and we are moving forward with gratitude and momentum as we prepare for the next phase of this systemwide project effort.

---

# PROJECT RESOURCES & TOOLKIT

10



# Project Resources & Toolkit

---

Below is a summary of resources, templates, guidance, and materials referenced in the report and available for furthering efforts across campuses and academic health centers:

## Procurement:

- [Sustainable Food Qualifications Matrix](#)
- [Bid Recommendations](#)
- Best Practices:
  - [UCSD - Efficient Onboarding Process](#)
  - [UCDH - Food as Medicine Program](#)
  - [UCM - Hyperlocal Sourcing Pilot](#)

## Data and Tracking:

- [AASHE STARS 3.0 Credit Criteria](#) (3rd Party Certifications and Qualifiers)
- [Anchors in Action \(AiA\) Framework](#)
- [Real Food Challenge 3.0 Standards](#) (AiA Framework aligned)
- [Practice Green Health Standards](#) (AiA Framework aligned)

## Student Engagement:

- GFI student training materials [[Training 1](#)] [[Training 2](#)]
- [Best Practices for Working with Students](#)
- [2023-2024 Student Fellow Project Posters](#); [Examples of projects](#) that supported or advanced sustainable food procurement and data analysis

## Marketing Materials

- Best Practices: [UCI Dining Marketing Program](#)
- [Toolkit can be accessed here](#) and includes:
  - Instructions on Using the Template Resources
  - Template Overview and Style Guide
  - Downloadable font to match templates
  - Editable Marketing Materials / Templates
  - Marketing Calendar Template

# Third Party Resources for Menu Design Strategy and Sustainability:

## Menu Development Strategies and Resources:

- [Greener by Default](#) (also Scope 3 emissions reduction resource)
  - Work with institutions to determine what menuing strategies they can implement in order to reduce carbon emissions. GBD will calculate how many emissions were reduced as part of the changes. [Click here to access links](#) to studies done around plant forward menuing and menu design.
- [Food for Climate League](#)
  - Work with institutional dining accounts to make climate smart eating and dining the norm. [Click here to access their toolkits, research and studies.](#)
- [Menus of Change](#)
  - Resource for “plant forward” definition, marketing materials and studies you can use as resources. Backed by Stanford and Harvard’s nutrition departments. Host annual conference open to the public. [Click here to access.](#)

## Sustainability:

- [Sustainable Food Qualifications Matrices, by Food Type](#)
  - Includes AASHE STARS 2.2, AASHE STARS 3.0 and Practice Green Health 3rd party certifications and other qualifiers for “sustainable food”
- Carbon Emissions
  - Plant Forward Menus (related to Scope 3 emissions reduction)
  - [Eat LANCET Commission Report and Summary](#)
    - This global study outlines the most impactful ways we can change the food system to sustain our global population within planetary boundaries and combat climate change. Of the top ways, the food system related strategies are: 1) transitioning to plant forward diets and 2) reducing food waste.
- [Planet FWD](#)
  - California, woman owned business specializing in helping food and beverage companies create a path to decarbonization.
    - Decarbonization Resources, Guides, White Papers, Success Stories and Webinars to learn more.

# Waste

## Packaging

- [2023 LCA study on packaging for dairy](#)
- [Understanding Packaging Scorecard](#)
  - A science-based online tool to help users compare foodware and food packaging options to understand which are the more safe and environmentally sustainable option.

## Reusables

- [Rethink Disposable](#)
  - This website contains studies, reusable foodware purchasing guides, and white papers that you can reference as resources while you assess your transition to more durables. [Click here to review.](#)
- [Foodware](#)
  - Bay Area based start up that replaces single use to go boxes with reusables. They are able to provide a dashboard that shows climate impact as well as return rate, cycle time, and asset rotation level. Have been working with UC Berkeley.
- [Best Practices - UC Irvine Reusable To Go Box Program](#)

## Food Waste

- Resources
  - [Refed](#)
    - For food waste research and case studies.
- Potential Tools/Products to consider
  - Food Waste Tracking:
    - [Winnow](#)
    - [Leanpath](#)
      - [Case studies](#) from contract foodservice and other hospitality sectors.
    - [MetaFoodX](#)
      - Front of house food line live consumption tracking, leverages AI for predictive analytics. They are actively looking for pilot locations.
- [Matriark](#)
  - Upcycled tomato sauce made from surplus farm produce. Certified woman-owned business, carbon neutral certified.
  - Great storytelling opportunity on upcycling and also contributes to diverse spend.

## UC and Campus EBT:

We have ongoing guidance and support available for existing and new campus sites. Feel free to reference the approved campus permits and guidance for operators on [UC sites here](#).

## August 2024 Phase I Convening:

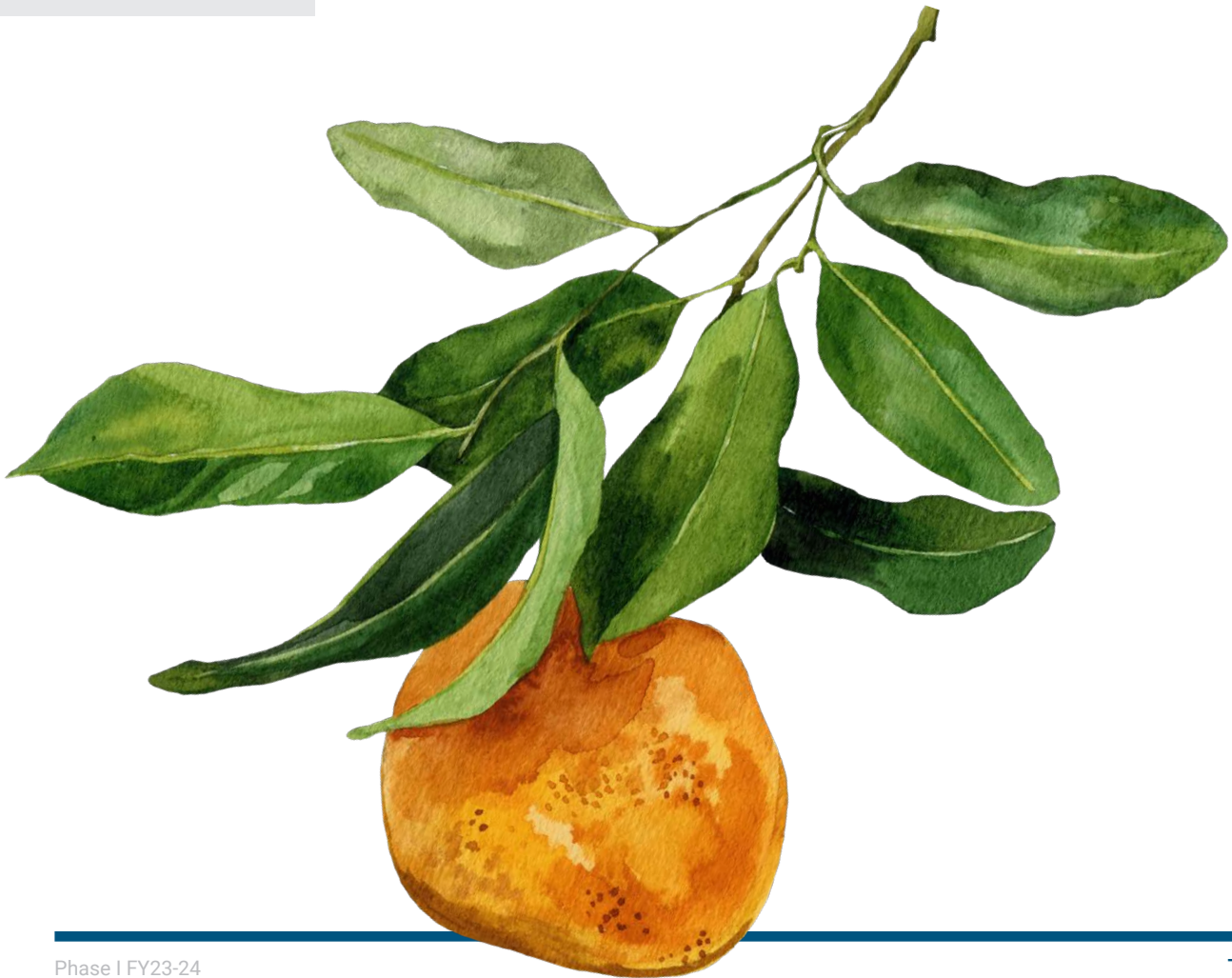
Overview: The Sustainable Food Service and Sourcing Convening occurred August 13 – 14th at UC Santa Cruz, Historical Cowell Ranch Hay Barn. 50 plus attendees from UC Campus & Health Food Procurement; Dining Directors; Chefs; and UCOP Executive Procurement & Sustainability Leaders; as well as Student Organizations from the GCLC Food Sustainability Team; Alice Waters Institute; Roots of Change; and UC ANR & the Southwest Food Business Center. This summit shared project initiatives to: 1) how we are expanding the sourcing for sustainable food producers and enterprises in UC food service operations; 2) assess the key barriers and introduce recommendations for improving overall reporting and sourcing practices that integrate strategic systemwide sourcing and campus-specific secondary contracts and data collection; 3) share resources and grant opportunities.

- [Presentations](#) (For Day 1 & Day 2):
  - The Report/Outcome of Interviews with the Campus/Health Locations regarding current vendor Challenges and then stating Opportunities (H Nieto-Friga - Supply Change)
  - Contracting Best Practices (Chef Santana Diaz - UCDH) and Data Tracking Best Practices (Justin Martinez & Norma Witzel Smith - UCSD)
  - AASHE and Practice Green Health Overview (Agnes Martelet - UCOP Sustainability)
  - MaetaData Sustainability System Overview & Update (Marilyn Biscotti - UCOP Hospitality & Foodservice Procurement)
  - Student Engagement and Storytelling Best Practices (Amanda Chu & Jesse James - Real Food Challenge; Ben Thomas - Shared Plate Strategies; Claire Tauber - Community Alliance with Family Farmers)
  - UC Berkeley Student Fellowship ( Shannen Casey - UC Berkeley Sustainability)
  - Sustainability Food Initiatives (Paul Williams - UCOP Chief Procurement Officer; Abim Odusoga - UCOP Impact, Policy & Compliance; Marilyn Biscotti - UCOP Hospitality & Foodservice Procurement)
  - UC Merced Culinary Workshop & Edible Training Program (Linda Burch, Yael Cypers, Jennifer Sherman - Alice Waters Institute and Chef Anthony Pangelina - UC Merced)
  - Advancing Regenerative Beef to Market (Michael Dimock & Coco Sanabria - Roots of Change and Marilyn Biscotti - UCOP Hospitality & Foodservice Procurement)

- Advancing Market Success for Underserved Producers and Enterprises (Glenda Humiston & Tracy Celio - UC ANR and Hektor Calderon-Victoria - Center for Agroecology)
- Connecting Policies, Structures, & Strategies for Impact (Tim Galarneau - UCSC Project Co-Director, of the Center for Agroecology, and Agnes Martelet - UCOP Associate Director of Sustainability)
- [Breakouts & Attendee feedback](#): This impactful 2-day event was full of information; project sharing; with personal and team engagement amongst our UC Community. Presentations from all departments and organizations. Through breakouts both days we explored the status of project, opportunities, and challenges regarding procurement, sourcing, data tracking, and best practices. For breakout proceedings please [review here](#).







UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA