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“Feasibility Analysis of Real Food Challenge at HWS”

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1. Abstract:

The Real Food Challenge is a student-led movement that aims to shift $1 billion of existing university food budgets towards local, fair, ecologically sound, and humane food sources, which are considered real food. Through my environmental studies independent Senior Integrative Experience (ENV 300), I hope to provide Hobart and William Smith with the necessary information and an action plan to sign the Real Food Challenge’s Campus Commitment to sourcing 20% real food by the year 2020.

Over the course of the spring 2015 semester, I analyzed purchasing invoices and other receipts provided by Sodexo to determine the quantity of real food that is currently served on our campus. In addition, in order to put our student body’s efforts to increase the amount of real food served on campus in perspective, I draw comparisons between Hobart and William Smith and other schools in the NY Six Liberal Arts College Consortium. I also researched which colleges nationwide have been successful in sourcing real food after signing the Real Food Challenge’s Campus Commitment so that HWS might learn from these experiences. To gain campus-wide support for this initiative, I collaborated with the Sustainable Foods Club to obtain 500 student signatures on a petition to bring more real food to campus as well as get underclassmen on board to carry out this movement at HWS after the other leaders of the Real Food Challenge initiative and I graduate this year. I will develop a set of best practices that includes future recommendations for how Hobart and William Smith Colleges and its Sustainable Foods Club should proceed with the Real Food Challenge.

Sourcing real food will help improve global levels of sustainability, benefit local economies, and provide students, staff, and faculty healthier options, while simultaneously supporting more ethical food production practices. I hope that my research can help advance Hobart and William Smith Colleges toward finding a more sustainable set of policies with this pressing food issue that institutes of higher educations around the US are involved in and committed to improving.

2. The Real Food Challenge History:

The Real Food Challenge was started in 2008 by a group of high school and college students, who were all passionate about food access, food justice and organic, sustainable foods, while they were at a Kelloggs’ Food Conference (Brewster, 2015). At the time, there were many different food-related movements occurring around the country pertaining to, for example, workers’ rights, food access in food deserts, fair trade, and/or purchasing local food. These students decided they wanted to bring together all of these causes to create a food movement that could be activated in high schools, colleges and universities across the US with the same end goal in mind: to increase the amount of real food served to students on their campuses. Once they came up with the idea to advocate
for *real food* as a way of uniting their initiatives and campus activism, they realized they needed to define what *real food* is.

Students conducted research and consulted experts in the industry or people who study food certifications such as professors, graduate students and industry experts to determine what defines real food (Brewster, 2015). They decided on four categories to help define *real food*, which include:

- local;
- fair trade;
- humanely raised; and,
- ecologically sustainable.

After agreeing on the above categories, they determined which certifications within those categories accurately justifies a food as “real.” The students also determined seventeen different ingredients and conditions that would automatically disqualify a food. This list of ingredients was developed with the help of specialists from the Center For Science and the Public Interest (Narvaez, 2015). The Center for Science and the Public Interest researches health side effects of ingredients found in consumer products, as well as provides consumers with useful information about health and well-being (Center For Science in the Public Interest, 2015). For example, if a food contains high fructose corn syrup, caramel coloring or sodium nitrate it is immediately disqualified.

After five years of research and collaboration, the *Real Food Challenge Guide 1.0* was completed the fall of 2012 and developed in tandem with the online calculator tool (Brewster, 2015). The guide was created to provide students a reference that explains how to determine if a food is considered real (Naverez, 2015). The Real Food Calculator was developed as a tool for students to determine what percentage of real food is served on college and university campuses nationwide. Today, the guide is reviewed and updated every two years as new food certifications emerge and additional research is conducted on food ingredients, their health impacts and how the food is produced or raised. Not all food certifications are meaningful or truthful. The Real Food Challenge team, made up of employees at as well as an employee who works at the humane society, investigates food certifications to determine if they are considered green-washing, unofficial or unimportant (Brewster, 2015, Narvaez, 2015).

The Real Food Challenge calculator is an online tool that uses information from the guide to categorize food products as well as record and save information on a food item served on campus. Universities, colleges and high schools alike can use the calculator to determine what percentage of the food served on their campus is considered real food. This process is done by inputting food receipts from the school’s food provider(s) into the calculator and subsequently analyzing the data. In order to use the calculator tool you have to be trained by someone from the Real Food Challenge organization to ensure the information is being researched and uploaded in a consistent manner. There are currently thirty universities that have committed to the Real Food
Challenge Campus Commitment to source twenty percent real food by 2020 and there are another 363 schools working toward signing this agreement (“About Us”). According to Emma Brewster, who is the National Program Coordinator, the real food challenge is growing rapidly as the number of schools who join increase each year (Brewster, 2015).

Since 2008, the Real Food Challenge movement has secured about $60 million worth of pledges to purchase real food consisting of local, fair, sustainable and humane food by signing the Real Food Campus Commitment and shifting already existing campus food budgets towards real food purchases (“Press and Success”). Notably, schools from the University of California System and the California State University system became involved in the Real Food Challenge, integrated sourcing 20% real food by 2020 into a system-wide sustainability policy (“Press and Success”). While these schools technically have not signed the commitment, they, like HWS, are completing the suggested steps provided by the Real Food Challenge.

3. The Real Food Challenge History at Hobart and William Smith Colleges:

During the summer of 2013, Mollie Kenerson obtained a summer internship with the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) to research food supply in Geneva, as well as how to better utilize local agricultural resources. Following a visit by Oberlin faculty member David Orr to the HWS campus during the summer of 2013, the internship sponsor recommended that Mollie research Oberlin College to discern a set of best practices for successfully sourcing local, sustainable foods from local agricultural land to be served on campus (Kenerson, 2015). It was during her research on Oberlin’s approach to local food systems that she first learned about the Real Food Challenge initiative. With the help of Adam Mauer, Lisa Cleckner and others at the FLI, it was decided the RFC was an initiative in which HWS should consider taking part (Meyer, 2015). Mollie met with Mark Robinson, the Operations Manager at HWS Dining Services, and President Gearan to discuss the feasibility of the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment. Both President Gearan and Mr. Robinson were on board as long as there was enough student support and sufficient research and data to help see this initiative through. Soon thereafter, Mollie decided to get her classmates who were passionate about sustainable food involved. In coordination with the Finger Lakes Institute they organized two on-campus farmers markets for the 2013-2014 school year as well as food event titled Love Local in Bicentennial Park in downtown Geneva (Kenerson, 2015). At these farmer’s markets and the local food event, food vendors from the Finger Lakes region and student groups participated and HWS students, faculty, staff and Geneva residents purchased local food items. Student groups like Eco Reps, Campus Greens and the Sustainable Foods Club were able to raise student awareness about the Real Food Challenge and the importance of local, sustainable food (Kenerson, 2015). During Food Week of fall 2013, Mollie and two of her peers, Stacey Davis and and Mekela Bertocci, organized a panel to
inform students about food production and the importance of local food (Davis, 2015). There were two Sodexo representatives, a farmer, Tatiana Bruno who was the owner of the Leaf Kitchen local foods restaurant on the panel. At this event, the students learned the regional Sodexo representatives did not appear to prioritize sourcing real food unless there student demand for such products is strong (Davis, 2015).

On the heels of their early success in bringing attention to the Real Food Challenge on campus, Mollie, Stacey and Mekala attended a Real Food Challenge conference¹ in Minnesota in October 2013 where they learned about other colleges’ initiatives concerning and participation in the Real Food Challenge. Reflecting back on this experience, Stacey noted how fortunate we are because our administrators and Sodexo managers are willing to work with student needs and preferences. Many students at the college were there to learn about how to petition and campaign for administrative support (Davis, 2015). Moreover, Mollie, Stacey and Mekala learned some of the schools that were successful in completing data calculation had about two to three paid calculator internships (Davis, 2015). While in Minneapolis, they also listened to speakers who spoke about immigrant farm workers, fair wages, social justice and the troubles with certifying food organic (Kenerson, 2015). One tomato farmer from South America spoke about not being paid fair wages from Wendy’s restaurant chain. Afterward all of the students who attended the conference participated in a march outside of a Wendy’s Restaurant in the town asking for fair wages (Davis, 2015). After this conference, these three HWS student leaders were able to bring momentum and passion back on campus through organizing the farmers markets and working with the Sustainable Foods Club.

The Spring of 2014 the Finger Lakes Institute hired Mekala as a student intern for the Real Food Challenge (Meyer, 2014). During the semester, Mekala obtained the food receipt data from Sodexo, as a co-president of the Sustainable Foods Club with Sarah worked with the members to host sustainable food club activities, recruited students for a sustainable food movement at HWS and help plan a sustainable foods event (Meyer, 2015). The Fall of 2014 the Real Food Challenge Advisory Group was formed with Sarah Meyer, Robin Lewis, Adam Mauer, Stacey Davis, Kelly Mauch and Mollie Kenerson in order to start setting goals and moving forward with the Real Food Challenge (Meyer, 2015).

Some challenges Hobart and William Smith have faced with the Real Food Challenge thus far include:

• change in leadership between semesters;
• problems with the Real Food Challenge calculator tool itself; and,
• getting students who claim to be passionate in this issue to help with the work.

The initial leader of the initiative, Mollie, went abroad so it was challenging to continue the momentum that was started. While Mollie and Stacey were abroad, the Sustainable

¹ Funding for this trip was provided by the Environmental Studies Program’s Kloman Fund, as well as the William Smith Dean’s Office.
Foods Club experienced technical difficulties with the Real Food Challenge Calculator website and were not able to upload food invoices (Kenerson, 2015). It has also been difficult to get people to commit even though many students are interested in the club or having real food on campus. In the fall of 2014, Mollie, Stacey and Kelly hosted a Real Food Challenge/ Sustainable Foods Club interest meeting that approximately 30 interested students attended. Mollie believes it would be helpful in the future to call it a movement, initiative or coalition so students can help out when they can rather than taking on extra work outside of their studies (Kenerson, 2015).

4. Real Food Calculation:

In order to calculate the percentage of real food served on campus, the Real Food Challenge developed an online calculator tool that uses food receipt data from the food vendors the college or university uses. I was trained by Emma Brewster, the Real Food Challenge National Program Coordinator, to use the online calculator tool in December 2014 along with members of the Sustainable Foods Club. Due to the large amount of food receipts collected by Mekala previously, the Real Food Challenge advises schools to start their real food calculation with the months of September and February because these months are at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters when the bulk of the food served on college campuses is purchased (Brewster, 2015). The real food calculation for HWS will be based on the months of September 2013 and February 2014.

Over winter break of the 2014-2015 academic year, the Sustainable Foods Club members who were trained how to use the online calculator tool were each assigned 50 food receipts to enter into the calculator system. Unfortunately, not all of the students completed the data entry. Therefore, not much progress was made towards calculating the percentage of real food served by Sodexo at HWS by the time the spring 2015 semester commenced.

In order to help keep the movement going on the HWS campus, the Finger Lakes Institute offered an unpaid but credit-bearing internship for a student willing to enter receipts into the Real Food Challenge Calculator. This student was supposed to help me with data entry and analysis however she ended up dropping the project a few weeks into the semester. The data calculation I completed was for the months of September 2013 and February 2014 from the vendor SYSCO. There was also a misunderstanding that we had all of the food receipt items but after working on the data entry I realized that there were items missing, including certain local food items served at HWS. Although Mark Robinson informed me that we were missing many other food vendor receipts he stated that about 80% of Sodexo purchases come from SYSCO. Thus, the data calculation I completed accounted for about 80%
of the food receipts. The missing data will most likely increase the percentage of real food served at HWS because it includes vendors that provide local food.

The data for September 2013 and February 2014 was uploaded as files rather than line-by-line because the data was provided in an excel sheet. I was able to take the data needed and manipulate it in documents separated by month in order to upload all of the items at once. The data had to be placed in specific categories in a certain order so the Real Food Challenge Calculator could properly read the data being uploaded into the system. After the data was entered into the calculator each food receipt item had to be researched in order to determine if it was considered real food. I closely followed the *Real Food Calculator Assessment Tips and Frequently Asked Questions, Tips for Assessing Dining Purchases* and the *Real Food Guide* while I completed the data entry. I first researched the brand of the food item to see if the food or company had received any of the certifications listed by the real food challenge. If the food I was looking for received one of the certifications then it would count as real food. I also researched where the food was produced to determine if it could be considered a local food item. If the food item was produced within 250 miles distance traveled (not radius) to HWS I had to research if the producer or cooperatively owned business grosses less than 1% of the industry leader. The Real Food Challenge Assessment Tips Guide uses the example of, “if the business is a poultry farm, their revenue must be less than 1% of Tyson’s revenues,” (Real Food Challenge Calculator Assessment Tips, 2015). Most of the food receipt items from SYSCO were not local therefore I did not have to look for that information more than a few times. I also researched the ingredients of the food items to see if they contained any disqualified ingredients. After researching each item I was able to determine if it counted as a real food item based on the categories: local and community based, humane, fair, and ecologically sound. I was unable to find information on were food items that had the brand SYS IMP or SYS CLS which means it is a SYSCO specific brand. Part of being considered a real food is having transparency of ingredients, production and practices. Some foods that were not found because they were from the vendor SYSCO and were branded by SYSCO. These food items were not transparent and did not qualify as real food for any of the categories. About 7% of the conventional food data consisted of SYSCO branded products which were non transparent. These products would most likely not count towards real food but could increase the percentage of disqualified products.

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2 The ingredients that disqualify a food product according to the Real Food Challenge are; high fructose corn syrup, soy sugar, beet sugar, Acesulfame-Potassium, Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA), Carmel Coloring, Olestra (Olean), Partially Hydrogenated Oil (trans-fats), Proply Gallate, rGBH/rBST, Saccharine, sodium nitrate added, Dyes: Red #3, Yellow #5, Yellow #6, Blue #3. Other characteristics that disqualify are if the producer is guilty of a case relating to an OSHA, FSLA, or NLRB violation, or if the producer is a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (Real Food Challenge Guide, 2015).
In February 2015 Sodexo announced that they would only be sourcing eggs from cage free hens (Sodexo). About 20 million pounds of liquid eggs are used by Sodexo annually and these eggs will be transferred to cage free in phases but completely cage free by 2020 (Sodexo). After speaking to Mark Robinson I decided to count all of our shell eggs as cage free because they are now and will continue to be cage free. Even though the 2013-2014 school year may not have served all cage free eggs I believe it is important to be as accurate as possible with our current food purchases. When eggs are produced by cage free hens they are considered a real food item.

Another decision I was able to make was disqualifying most of our meat products because the meat came from animals who were most likely raised in a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO). The Real Food Challenge guide suggests if the animal products do not have any certifications the RFC deems real food then the producer most likely is a CAFO.

If a food item contained ingredients including canola oil, high fructose corn syrup, soy, beet sugar, zucchini or yellow squash or papaya, the Real Food Challenge suggests the product contains GMO’s and should be disqualified (Real Food Calculator Assessment Tips and Frequently Asked Questions).

The following data analysis consists of food receipts from the vendor SYSCO data for the months of September 2013 and February 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September: 1,841 Items</th>
<th>February: 1,736 Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5% Real Food</td>
<td>6% Real Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16% Disqualified Food</td>
<td>19% Disqualified Food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Percentages of Real and Disqualified Food at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.
For both September 2013 and February 2014 only 3% of the total food served at HWS by Sodexo was considered local food (Figure 1,2). An example of a local food product served at HWS is LaBella pasta produced in Kingston, NY which is 246 miles from the HWS campus. This percentage will most likely increase when the other food vendor receipts are added to the calculation because Byrne Dairy, and Purdy and Sons sell local products.

5. New York Six College Consortium and the Real Food Challenge:
The New York Six College Consortium is made up of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, St. Lawrence University, Skidmore College, Hamilton College, Colgate University and Union College. These schools are all liberal arts colleges that have similar characteristics including the size of the student body, location in New York State, curriculum goals and more. The mission statement of the New York Six College Consortium is as follows:

“Established with the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium facilitates collaboration among its member institutions in fulfilling their educational missions and serving the public good. Through the sharing of expertise and resources, the Consortium enhances options for students, faculty, and staff, while reducing colleges’ individual and collective operation and capital costs (NewYork6, 2015).”

I thought it was important to include the status of each New York Six Colleges’ efforts towards the Real Food Challenge initiative. In order for HWS to improve, it is important to be educated on the efforts the other schools are working towards in order to stay a competitive school within the Consortium. None of the New York six schools have signed the Campus Commitment but many of the school are already serving 20% real food in their dining facilities.

**New York Six College Consortium and Sustainable Food Efforts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NY6 College</th>
<th>HWS</th>
<th>St. Lawrence</th>
<th>Skidmore</th>
<th>Hamilton</th>
<th>Colgate</th>
<th>Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed the RFC?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in the RFC?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Provider</td>
<td>Sodexo</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Bon Appetit</td>
<td>Sodexo</td>
<td>Sodexo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current % of real food</td>
<td>~5.5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15-20%</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Farm</td>
<td>Yes, 34 acres</td>
<td>No, rents 34 acres</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes ¾ Acre</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Garden</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Sourced from the above campus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td>2,396</td>
<td>2,406</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>2,872</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student body population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town population</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>Saratoga</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Schenectady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13,199</td>
<td>6,714</td>
<td>27,315</td>
<td>1,927</td>
<td>4,176</td>
<td>65,902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Modified from Sarah Meyer. An overview of the NY6 food related data in.

**St. Lawrence University:**

St. Lawrence’s food service is privately owned and the provider has a partnership with North Country Grown Cooperative and other local businesses to provide local foods (St. Lawrence University Green Pages, 2015). St. Lawrence provides a Sustainability Semester where students go on a two week trip to Boston to complete the Urban Sustainability Component (St. Lawrence University, 2015). During this component students explore food access as one of the topic areas (St. Lawrence University, 2015).

St. Lawrence has supported sustainable agriculture since 2003 when it joined the Farm to School Network (St. Lawrence University Green Pages, 2015). St. Lawrence defines sustainable food according to the Sustainable Table definition as, “a way of raising food that is healthy for consumers and animals, does not harm the environment, is humane for workers, respects animals, provides a fair wage to the farmer, and supports and enhances rural communities” (St. Lawrence University Green Pages, 2015). The Sustainable Table is a communications foundation that increases public awareness of the health and environmental issues that are caused by our food system (Sustainable Table Food Program, 2015).

St. Lawrence has not committed to signing the Real Food Challenge but is working towards increasing their percentage of real food. St. Lawrence has a partnership with North County Grown Cooperative where they purchase local items such as maple syrup, honey, bison burgers and produce (St. Lawrence University Green Pages, 2015). Their milk and eggs are locally purchased and they purchase coffee from an organic fair trade company in Connecticut. They also receive some local products such as apples in the fall from their main food supply vendor, Sysco. St. Lawrence also has a campus garden where produce is sold to the St. Lawrence dining services to be served in the dining facilities during summer and fall months. The campus garden was founded in 2010 to provide students a learning experience on how to grow food (Seed To Table). In 2011 St. Lawrence was successfully able to supply campus dining with vegetables during the summer and fall (Seed to Table).
Skidmore:

Skidmore has been calculating its real food percentage for the months of October and April since 2011 (Rogers, 2015). October percentages have calculated to be about 10% each year and April percentages have been a few points lower. Since Skidmore started using the Real Food Challenge guidelines their percentage has been below 10% due to the strict criteria and certifications because some of the food they were counting as real do not count as real under Real Food Challenge guidelines. They have decided to increase their percentage of real food served on campus but without signing the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment. Skidmore tends to agree with all of the Real Food Challenge Certifications but disagrees with some of the disqualifiers (Rogers, 2015). Although Skidmore is not going to sign the Real Food Challenge they are incorporating sustainable food as a component to Skidmore’s Campus Sustainability (Rogers, 2015). Skidmore has used most of the Real Food Challenge’s tools in order to develop guidelines on how to increase their percentage of real food (Rogers, 2015).

In 2011-2012 students from the Environmental Action Club worked on the Real Food Challenge. Dining services and the Skidmore Office of Sustainability hired two interns to complete research and projects related to serving more local food in the dining halls as well as local food purchasing (Rogers, 2015). Dining services works with local farms such as Saratoga Apple, North Country Farms to receive flour from a local flour mill, Thomas Poultry to purchase shell eggs and milk from Battenkill Farms and Stewart’s (Skidmore Sustainability Office, 2015).

Currently Skidmore is working on developing partnerships with local farms to improve their local foods program. They have developed an online survey based off of Cornell’s Farm to Cafeteria Toolkit for distributers and producers/farmers to fill out to aid in the improvement of local foods program (Skidmore, 2015).

Hamilton:

In 2012, Hamilton senior Lauren Howe spent the fall semester conducting an independent study on the Real Food Challenge. She recorded Hamilton’s food purchasing by utilizing the Real Food Challenge Online Calculator Tool (Foster, 2013). Howe calculated the data from February and October 2011 when the bulk of the food for the semester is purchased in order to get an accurate estimate for the percentage of real food served on campus (Foster, 2013). She also focused just on McEwen and Commons dining hall to narrow the scope of data analysis. Howe toured some of Hamilton’s local food providers to learn about the organic ingredients they use in products such as bagels (Foster, 2013). After Howe completed the data analysis component of her project using the RFC Calculator, she determined Hamilton served 15% real food on campus (Foster, 2013). Howe is also
one of the founders for the Slow Food Hamilton group on campus and has helped create the food systems working group to advance the Real Food Challenge Initiative on Campus.

Hamilton College sent three students to the Real Food Challenge National Summit at Johns Hopkins University in February 2013 (Foster, 2013). During October 2013 four students from Hamilton College attended the Real Food Rising conference at the University of Minnesota (Foster, 2013). At the conference the students attended seminars with farmers and food service workers as well as strategy workshops for holding a successful Real Food Challenge campaign on campus (Foster, 2013). This is the same conference Hobart and William Smith sent Stacey, Mollie and Mekala to. Hamilton College started the Real Food Challenge campaign with already reaching the goal of serving 20% real food on campus. The students are now working with their food provider, Bon Appetit, to serve cage free, local apples, humanely produced beef, local dairy and local lettuce (Hamilton Sustainability, 2015).

Hamilton’s Community ¾ acre Farm is run mostly by students and has an outside classroom for learning sustainable organic techniques to produce food. Produce from the farm is sold to the community and to Bon Appetit to be served in the dining facilities (Hamilton, 2015).

**Colgate:**

Colgate recently hired a Food Service Sustainability Manager, Deb Hanson. She along with the sustainability team developed a local food database of foods Sodexo has purchased in order to determine how to increase the purchasing of local foods (Update on Sodexo Sustainability). One of the local vendors Purdy and Son’s has to know how much food Colgate is going to need a year in advance in order to prepare the farmers to grow enough crops. Colgate Sodexo signed the Taste NY Pledge, which is an agreement to increase New York grown products to at least 10% of the total food served on campus (Update on Sodexo Sustainability). In the dining hall, Sodexo updates a food board each day to list what the local items are and where they came from (Update on Sodexo Sustainability).

Colgate has been working towards making shifts in their food purchases to more local sustainable foods. The following are examples of initiatives and products Colgate has shifted towards. Every Tuesday and Thursday Colgate serves local burgers in the dining hall as well as a new local quesadilla (Adams, 2015). These items were switched to local products because of their popularity and mass quantities that are purchased. Every Sunday a farm to table dinner is served in the dining hall where the meal consists of only local foods. Colgate is working on switching over their coffee to a fair trade brand and will have a student coffee tasting to determine which coffee to start purchasing. The Local Suppliers Colgate
Colgate has committed to using are, Dan Purdy and Sons, Common Thread Community Farm, Mento Produce, Crowley Foods (Dairy) and Fair Trade Coffee (Colgate University, 2015). Colgate also support upstate New York farms through purchasing the following items; beef from Old Farm (Edmonton, NY), juice Red Jacket Orchards (Geneva, NY), Chobani yogurt (New Berlin, NY), organic beans and grains from Cayuga Pure Organics (Ithaca, NY) and organic granola from Upstate Harvest (Chenango County, NY) (Colgate University, 2015).

Colgate has a Food Systems Advisory Group that consists of students, faculty and staff who work with Sodexo to make the food served on campus more sustainable (Adams, 2015). Sodexo also has a sustainability intern who works with the Food Systems Advisory Group. Some of the goals of the food systems advisory group are making the food that is served on campus more transparent when possible, increasing the amount of locally produced food served on campus, and reducing food waste (Adams, 2015, Figure 3). Colgate like HWS, is participating in the RFC but they have not decided to sign the commitment yet.

Colgate has a community garden that is managed by student sustainability interns and volunteers. The garden provides herbs and vegetables to the Hamilton Food Cupboard and the Colgate community through a weekly farm stand (Adams, 2015).

Figure 3. An example of a graphic displayed in Colgate’s Dining Facilities.
Union:

Union College is currently not participating in the Real Food Challenge because students have not asked to become involved in the initiative. The sustainability coordinator at Union College is aware of the Real Food Challenge and has informed the students of this opportunity (Haley-Quigley, 2015). The students at Union are participating in sustainable food initiatives in other ways as well as engaging with their food provider Sodexo to make sustainability changes within the dining facilities.

U-Sustain is the student sustainability club on campus who has worked with Sodexo on different sustainability initiatives within the dining facilities (Haley-Quigley, 2015). Union College also has a sustainability student theme house called Ozone, which started serving a locally produced, organic meal once a week from the house starting in 2007 (Haley-Quigley, 2015). This initiative has been taken over by Sodexo who prepares the food and students from the Ozone theme house serve the food at lunch time every Friday (Haley-Quigley, 2015). When dining services is catering an event they work to accommodate what the event wants. For example, whenever there is a sustainability event on campus, dining services works towards serving as much local food as they can depending on the season (Haley-Quigley, 2015). Sodexo also recently hired a student sustainability intern. This past semester the intern created a survey to collect data on student eating preferences (Haley-Quigley, 2015). The survey was very similar to the Real Food Challenge base line survey, which asks students if they want to have more local, organic food on campus and if they would be willing to make any sacrifices within their consumption habits.

On campus, the Ozone Café serves sustainable foods such as organic products, food from the campus garden and local food vendors (Haley-Quigley, 2015). Through the dining halls and the Ozone Café Union works to promote NY Pride food products in an effort to provide transparent, locally grown food items (Haley-Quigley, 2015). Due to the small size of the campus garden, there is a limited supply of food that is sourced from the garden and served on campus. When there is produce from the garden served on campus it is advertised and quickly consumed by the student body (Haley-Quigley, 2015). In the future, Union hopes to expand the size of their campus farm because Union has had committed student, staff and faculty volunteers who have worked to make the garden such a successful sustainable food effort on campus (Haley-Quigley, 2015).
Clark University Case Study:

Clark University was the first Massachusetts school to sign the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment and was the thirteenth school in the nation to sign (Cooley, 2013). The commitment was signed on April 19, 2013 by Clark’s President Angel; Paul Wykes, Business Manager and Heather Vaillette, Sodexo Dining Services Director (Clark University, 2015). The administrative staff at Clark are very excited about signing the commitment. President Angel said, “I want to thank to students, staff, faculty and our colleagues at Sodexo who have moved the Real Food Challenge forward and enabled Clark to take a leadership role in promoting sustainable food systems” (Cooley, 2013). After the commitment was signed in 2013, the Real Food Challenge Working Group was formed with about five students and five faculty and staff members (Gallagher, 2015). The students reached out to professors who they believed would be interested in helping Clark reach its goal of serving 20% real food by 2020 (Gallagher, 2015).

Clark University started working on the Real Food Challenge in 2011 when the student sustainable foods group, Food Truth, started asking Sodexo to serve more local food (Cooley, 2013). Sodexo worked with the student group to develop the Real Food Challenge Base Line survey to send to the Clark community in order to understand the food preferences and needs of the students (Cooley, 2013). The survey also asked students if they would be willing to pay more for a meal plan if there was more real food served on campus and the responses were mixed (Gallagher, 2015). Sodexo at Clark is going to try and make real food procurement changes within the current food budget (Gallagher, 2015). Students in the Food Truth group are fortunate to have such a great relationship with Sodexo. The Sodexo business manager and food purchaser have been on board and working hard to help make sustainable changes (Gallagher, 2015).

Clark is in the beginning stages of shifting towards the procurement of real food. Some of the vendors Clark purchases from are, Freshpoint of Connecticut, Horton Farms and Botticello Farms. These vendors provide Clark with local produce and they are known for their commitment towards sustainability (Clark University, 2015). Clark’s New England location has allowed for Clark to locally source sea food from Red’s Best of Boston (Clark University, 2015). Clark is also working with Let Us Be Local which sells local produce. In 2007 Clark worked with Sodexo to purchase cage free shell and liquid eggs by specially ordering the product through SYSCO. This request from Clark helped out other institutions with Sodexo serve cage free eggs on campus (Clark University, 2015). Clark has increased the percentage of real food served on campus to 11% after starting at 9% (Ghallager, 2015).
The students who have inputted Sodexo food receipt data into the Real Food Challenge calculator tool to calculate the percentage of real food have received class credit. Currently there are two students working on the data entry who are receiving class credit (Gallagher, 2015). The curriculum at Clark offers many food studies related courses but there is not an official food studies program. The Food Truth club is working with the curriculum committee to develop a food systems concentration as well as a data calculation course where a class of students can work on data entry and analysis for the Real Food Challenge (Gallagher, 2015). It has been difficult to get funding for students who are working on the Real Food Challenge data analysis but it is something the students involved believe is necessary in order to keep the Real Food Challenge campus commitment on track (Gallagher, 2015). It has been challenging to efficiently calculate the percentage of real food served on campus with only two students which is why the Food Truth group is trying to advocate for a food calculation course (Gallagher, 2015).

**Bard College Case Study:**

Bard College is a liberal arts institution located in Anadale-On-Hudson, NY. One of the majors offered at Bard is Environmental and Urban Studies and, within this program, students can have a concentration in Food Studies. Another way students have become involved in sustainable food initiatives at Bard is through a student led club titled, Bard E.A.T.S. which stands for *Eating Awareness Transforms Society* (Goldstein, 2015). The student club works on Bard’s campus farm, oversees the Real Food Challenge Efforts, and works with Bard’s Sustainability Office to improve the college’s commitment towards sustainable food (Goldstein, 2015).

The Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment was signed by Bard’s President, Leon Botstein, and the Vice President of Finance, Jim Brudvig, in 2013. Prior to signing the commitment Bard had been making sustainable improvements in the dining halls since 2008 (Bard Chartwells, 2015). In 2009 all dining halls went tray-less to save water, food waste and energy. In 2010 local produce purchases increased by 30% and in 2011, over $150,000 was spent on locally produced food items (Bard Chartwells, 2015). After a strong student demand, Bard College had a ground breaking ceremony for a 1.25 acre campus farm in 2012 (Bard Chartwells, 2015).

The Campus Farm is run by a farm coordinator, a farm manager and a bee keeping partner along with significant help from student volunteers (Bard College Farm, 2015). The farm produces organic food, which is sold to the campus dining service Chartwells (Bard College Farm, 2015).
Since 2012 the campus farm has tremendously increased its food production, with 20,486 pounds of food harvested in 2014 (Figure 4). The 2015 harvest is predicted to be even more than the 2014 harvest (Goldstein, 2015). Food that is harvested during the summer is also sold at a farm stand operated by students that is open to members of the Anadale-On-Hudson community. One of the reasons students wanted a campus farm was because the campus garden did not produce enough food to be served in the dining facilities. Chartwells was always on board with sourcing food from the campus farm in the dining facilities (Goldstein, 2015). Chartwells puts a lot of time into working with student needs and concerns and uses Bard as an example of an institution they serve that has made significant sustainable improvements (Goldstein, 2015). Bard College sells the produce grown on the campus farm to Chartwells; however, the prices of this produce have to be comparable or lower than the other vendors Chartwells uses in order for them to be willing to purchase food from Bard (Goldstein, 2015).

The Real Food Challenge Working Group on Bard’s campus is made up of students, faculty and Chartwells’ staff. The students and faculty inform the Chartwells’ staff about what the Bard community wants changed as well as their ideas for what food items should be switched to real food and then the Chartwells’ staff make the final decision (Goldstein, 2015). After signing the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment in 2013, the first large real food procurement shift came from the campus farm.

Another example of the procurement of real food is through purchasing local bread and bagels. Since bread and bagels are purchased in such large quantities, the
Real Food Challenge Working Group decided to research the possibility of locally sourcing these products. They were able to find a local bread bakery that at the time only made bread but after speaking with the RFC working group the bakery decided to buy the supplies to make bagels because of the large profit they would make from selling bagels to Bard College (Goldstein, 2015). This partnership worked out very well for the local bakery as well as Bard College because Bard was able to increase its percentage of real food and the bakery significantly increased its profits. A new food vendor Bard found is called Hudson Valley Harvest that grows local, organic produce and freezes it (Goldstein, 2015). Hudson Valley Harvest has been a great food provider because it has allowed Bard to purchase local, organic produce in the winter. Another new vendor from which Chartwells now purchases food is the Red Barn, which is a local distributor of beans, other produce, and eggs (Goldstein, 2015).

The data calculation component has been Bard’s biggest obstacle while working on the Real Food Challenge. When the Campus Commitment was signed in 2013 the Bard E.A.T.S. club helped form the Real Food Challenge Working Group (Goldstein, 2015). Bard College had signed the Campus Commitment without having calculated the initial percentage of real food served on campus (Goldstein, 2015). The data calculation was started when two students were hired to work on data calculation and Chartwells’ sustainability efforts. One student was hired by the Office of Sustainability and the other was hired from Chartwells (Goldstein, 2015). At first, Chartwells was overseeing and running the data calculation which was controversial because it is supposed to be a student led initiative (Goldstein, 2015).

Bard currently has a team of about five students who as a team are being paid work twenty hours a week. However it has been a rare occurrence for a week to have twenty completed data entry hours completed. The data aspect of the position is still on a volunteer basis but students get paid when they log in their data entry hours (Goldstein, 2015). It is a very slow process because the students upload the food invoices line by line and get through about one month of data per semester (Goldstein, 2015). Currently the lead calculator student is working with the Real Food Challenge organization to develop a way to upload the data in a more condensed version. Bard College has already surpassed its goal of sourcing 20% real food by 2020 with a real food percentage of 22%. The Real Food Challenge Working Group is going to start to develop a multi-year action plan for the Real Food Challenge initiative in order to continue to be successful (Goldstein, 2015).

**University of Vermont Real Food Challenge Case Study:**

The University of Vermont (UVM) is known for its student activism towards environmental justice and student passion for sustainability initiatives (UVM Office
of Sustainability). Undergraduate students are able to pursue food studies’ courses through a *Food Systems* minor, or an environmental studies concentration in *Food, Land and Community; Environment and Health*; or *Agriculture and the Environment*. Graduate student may food studies’ courses through the Food Systems master’s program (UVM Academic Colleges and Schools). As a result of the food systems academic offerings, student have learned about the importance of farm to table food, and in some instances have become passionate about making changes to the United States industrial agriculture system as well as to the type and source of food served in their dining halls.

In 2009, UVM was one of the first schools to become involved in the Real Food Challenge. UVM was asked by the Real Food Challenge team to be a pilot university in testing the online calculator tool and obtaining student support (UVM Multi-Year Action Plan). A sustainability intern was subsequently hired to complete the RFC calculator audits and initially calculated that UVM served 10% real food (Nihart, 2015). In March 2012, UVM’s Interim President, John Bramley, signed the Real Food Challenge campus commitment, which made UVM the fifth school in the United States to sign (UVM Food Systems Initiative).

Part of signing the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment is establishing a Real Food Working Group in order to successfully meet goals and source 20% real food by 2020. UVM’s real food working group consists of ten student representatives, four administration/staff members, three faculty members and three dining services members (Food Systems Initiatives). It is the Real Food Working Group’s mission to advise UVM dining services on Real Food purchasing, conduct student outreach to increase transparency and student awareness of the RFC, and to produce an annual progress report after analyzing the Real Food Calculator assessments (Real Food Working Group Charter). Although the Real Food Working Group has professional staff and faculty members on the committee, it is still a student-driven initiative. It is crucial to have staff, faculty and dining services representatives on the committee to help to provide institutional knowledge and support (Nihart, 2015). The Real Food Working group has developed a multi-year action plan which is reviewed annually at the end of each spring semester to determine if goals have been met and how to revise the plan for the following year (Food Systems Initiative).

Calculating the percentage of Real Food at UVM has been a challenge due to the large amount of food receipt items that need to be researched and entered, as well as the need for committed student calculator workers. Originally the students who worked on inputting food receipt data did it as part of a credit-based internship (Nihart, 2015). The internship/ independent study method of calculating ended up not being an effective method for data analysis because students spent most of their time crunching numbers rather than learning about the procurement of real food.
(Nihart, 2015). Sodexo hired a sustainability manager, who was a previous UVM student, to head the food receipt calculation. The sustainability manager has hired sustainability interns who are paid to complete ten hours of calculator data entry a week (Nihart, 2015). This method has been effective because students are more willing to dedicate time towards data calculation if they are getting paid. Unfortunately, with only two sustainability interns and the sustainability manager working on food data entry, UVM is still behind in calculating its 2014’s Real Food percentage. This summer a Sodexo sustainability intern will be working at least 20 hours a week on the calculator data entry, which will hopefully put UVM back on track for calculating their most recent real food percentage (Nihart, 2015). Sodexo is seeking to hire more calculator interns for the next school year. The current estimate of Real Food served on UVM’s campus is about 13% (Across the Fence).

UVM has developed a great relationship with Sodexo and believes Sodexo will do all they can to reach the goal of serving 20% real food by 2020 (Across the Fence). Alison Nihart who is the Assistant to the Food Systems Initiative at UVM believes Sodexo has an incentive to help UVM with the Real Food Challenge because Sodexo uses UVM as their “shining star” example of the sustainable, local food work they have accomplished (Nihart, 2015). The Sodexo managers at UVM have all gone through a Real Food Challenge training to teach them what the initiative is and how to be successful in sourcing 20% Real Food by 2020 (Nihart, 2015).

In order to make a change in the procurement of a food item, students with the help of the Real Food Working group, provide Sodexo with a list of items they want to change sometimes with another vendor or brand in mind (Across The Fence). Currently, students involved in the Real Food Challenge are working on converting popular food items that students consume every day such as yogurt, bananas, coffee, grilled cheese sandwiches and more (Across the Fence). A large portion of UVM’s dining budget is spent on these everyday items. Therefore, if these items are switched to count as real food, the percentage of money spent on real food will increase more rapidly. Sometimes the Real Food Working group has to make difficult decisions about what real food category is more important to fulfill for certain foods. For example, they decided it was more important to have beef that qualifies under the humane category rather than grown locally especially because it would be challenging to get enough local beef to serve the student body (Across the Fence). There has also been a push by students to serve as much produce as possible that is grown on UVM’s campus farm.

UVM’s Catamount campus farm is run by a farm manager and student volunteers. UVM offers a summer farm experience where students take courses such as, Soil Fertility and Climate Change, Sustainable Orchard and Vineyard Management, Sustainable Food Systems Marketing and Sustainable Farm Practicum. Those who enroll in the summer farm program are an essential component in
maintaining and managing the farm during the growing season (UVM Catamount Educational Farm). Students have the opportunity to sign up for the community supported agriculture program through the Catamount Campus Farm. The food from the farm can be served in UVM dining facilities once Sodexo has purchased the food from UVM. The Catamount Campus Farm has a food growing agreement with Sodexo to provide food that is in high demand on campus or that may be more challenging for Sodexo to source from a vendor (Nihart, 2015). This agreement is updated every year based on the needs of the students and Sodexo. A large portion of the food grown on the farm is served in dining facilities during the summer because of the seasonality of the food grown and because UVM has a large portion of students who stay on campus during the summer to take courses, work or conduct research (Nihart, 2015).

The Real Food Challenge Working Group is facing a few obstacles including student skepticism of Sodexo dining initiatives. In order to change this the Real Food Challenge Working Group, in coordination with Sodexo, is going to continue to improve transparency through signs in the dining halls and real food events on Campus. The UVM Vermont Food Festival hosted in the fall has been a successful way to showcase the real food that is being served on campus such as Vermont cheeses, apples, maple products and eggs, and they hope to start hosting more events such as that (Nihart, 2015). It has also been challenging to switch over some of their food items to Real Food products due to an insufficient supply of local baked goods, pork and nitrate free meats (Across the Fence). UVM is continuing to develop strategies to increase the percentage of Real Food while collaborating with the student body and Sodexo.

7. Community Outreach Campaign:
In order to inform the student body at Hobart and William Smith Colleges about the Real Food Challenge and its importance, members of the Sustainable Foods Club and I tabled in Scandling Center during the hours of 11:45-2:00pm with the help of the a few eco reps from April fourteenth through April seventeenth. We handed out Real Food HWS buttons for students to put on their backpacks as a way to advertise the initiative on campus. We also had a banner with the Real Food Challenge emblem on it along with 400 lines for student signatures to show that we had student support behind HWS signing the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment (Figure 5). We were able to gain almost 500 student signatures within four days of tabling in Scandling and one day tabling at the Reclaiming Real Food event on the Quad. At the Reclaiming Real Food event, we continued to educate the HWS community about the Real Food Challenge initiative, passing out buttons and asking for student support by signing our banner (Figure 6). The feedback we received while tabling was overwhelmingly positive. Many students were eager to share their unsatisfied opinions with us about the food served in our dining hall. Students also raised questions such as, “Does this mean we will not be able to eat meat every
day in Saga?” We listened to these students’ questions comments and concerns while tabling and hope these students participated and shared their comments with the HWS Food Values Base Line Survey created by the Real Food Challenge Task Force. As students shard their concerns and excitement about the Real Food Challenge with us, we encouraged them to take the HWS Foods Values Survey. The survey was sent out to the student body by email and through Facebook from Caroline Demeter, Kelly Mauch, Sarah Meyer and Adam Mauer. We now have over 500 student participants in the survey and the data will be analyzed by Kelly Mauch and Stacey Davis.

8. Next Steps and Recommendations:

The founding leaders of the Real Food Challenge will be graduating this year while the one remaining leader will be studying abroad in the fall, leaving the initiative without leadership. However, I have been able to recruit two leaders, Liam Brooks and Elizabeth Knorr, who are willing and excited to take over the Real Food Challenge initiative at HWS in the fall. The Sustainable Foods Club also has students who are very interested in promoting the Real Food Challenge initiative on campus; however, I recommend the Sustainable Foods Club and the Real Food Challenge initiative act as two different groups. After speaking with Kelly, Stacey and Mollie, they all agreed that it would be best for the RFC initiative to be led by different leaders from the Sustainable Foods Club as well as operate separately from the club. Mollie notes that the purpose of the club is to bring students together who have similar interests in sustainable food and work to put on events for the school and participate in different activities together (Kenerson, 2015). Stacey believes the purpose of the club is to focus on the garden and organizing fun local food events and activities for the HWS and Geneva communities (Davis, 2015). The newly elected club leaders for the 2015-2016 school year did not sign up to also run the Real Food Challenge. Kelly Mauch admits that she over extended herself this past year and that was partially due to trying to run the Sustainable Foods Club and lead the Real Food Challenge initiative on campus (Mauch, 2015). There are students who are engaged in the Sustainable Foods Club, The Real Food Challenge and some students who want to participate in both next year (Mauch, 2015). The Real Food Challenge is too much for a club effort to take on, on top of tending to the garden and hosting its own events throughout the year. The tasks of the Real Food Challenge include; data calculation, data analysis, food brand research, food procurement research, community outreach, analyzing the survey results and making important decisions on food procurement while working with Sodexo. These tasks do not fall under the purpose of a student club. These responsibilities are for a task force, a committee, a working group or an internship but are too extensive for a student club. The Sustainable Foods
Club and the Real Food Challenge will inevitably collaborate on future events and sustainable foods efforts, which is great and happened this semester. The Sustainable Foods Club helped the Real Food Challenge initiative by tabling in Scandling to promote the Reclaiming Real Food event while educating students about the Real Food Challenge, obtaining student support signatures and asking students to take the Base Line Food Survey.

Another recommendation I have is to have at least two paid student interns to complete Sodexo receipt entry and data analysis. Having two students will allow them to work as a team to split up the work, it would be a lot of responsibility and less efficient if only one student worked on the data calculation. This is a huge task that requires students who are patient, detail-oriented, enjoy working with excel and like conducting food research. Schools have been most successful and efficient in data calculation when they have been able to pay students (Case Study Research). Currently Sodexo has two sustainability interns, like at other Sodexo schools, it is possible the Sodexo sustainability interns could complete the food receipt calculation work. The real food percentage needs to be recalculated each year in order to stay current while food procurement changes are being made. The calculation can continue to be an estimate using just using the months of September and February.

I would recommend starting in the fall semester, the new Real Food Challenge student leaders work to form a Real Food Challenge Working Group. The Real Food Challenge Working group should consist of the student leaders of the Real Food Challenge, faculty, staff and Sodexo managers. I would reach out to professors who teach food related courses such as Professor Ramey, Professor McNally, Professor Lewis and Professor Hayes-Conroy to name a few and see if they would be interested in being a member of the Real Food Challenge Working Group. The group should develop an action plan moving forward to set goals towards incrementally increasing the percentage of real food served on campus.

Finally, HWS now has the amazing Fribolin Farm with wonderful agricultural land to grow produce on. The Real Food Challenge Working Group should do everything it can to work with Sodexo to source food from the farm in our dining facilities. All NY6 schools have been able to source food from their campus gardens and farms into their dining halls as well as UVM, Bard and Clark.

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