Project: Sustainable Student Centered Cafe
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VISION

Our vision is a vibrant space that serves diet sensitive, sustainable food options. We aspire to create a café that is a collaboration between different campus units and involve a diverse group of students from all across campus. We want to create a space that celebrates WMU students skills, including art, spoken word, and music. The food served in the collaborative café will be sourced to build sustainability and to support the local economy. Our goal is to use the café as a vehicle to help build and foster a culture of sustainability on campus while having fun.

HISTORY

The work that I am currently doing at the Office for Sustainability is part of a long history of projects including Student Led Campus Cafe Project by Ash Norton (2007), the Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Cafe by Ryan Walters and Matthew Hollander (2008), the Purple Potato by Kristiena Sartorelli, Caleb Oliver and Ian Orawiec (2010) and Internship Options for the Campus Beet by Susie Drust (2011). The Campus Beet evolved from a class project into a registered student organization that serves weekly vegetarian lunches. (2007) Conor Downey, Taylor Sawyer, Marianne Twork and myself analyzed best practices on other sustainable cafes around the United States. We looked at University of California-Berkeley, Eastern Illinois University, The Shakedown Cafe and Lemonade for best practice information and ended the semester with the event “Campus Trends Reimagining” (2014).

We organized an event in the “Campus Trends” space as an open house to gather data on interest and provide students with an opportunity to help reimagine the space as a Sustainable Student Centered Cafe. Our event featured a catered meal, live music, spoken word, and art by WMU students. The April 16th event brought in over 150 interested students and faculty members. We also collected data through a handwritten survey. The results showed that 97% of participants endorsed the Sustainable Student-Centered Cafe and would support it in the future. Recently, I have also been working on sample menu options that take into account of all of aspects that we want to include such as, vegetarian, dairy free, gluten free and local. Programming is also an important aspect that I have been working on, because the space needs to be filled with fun, upbeat programs to peak student interest.
LESSONS IN SUSTAINABILITY

SIGNIFICANCE

AMERICAN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS CLIMATE COMMITMENT (ACUPCC)

President Dunn signed onto the APUPCC in 2009, making a commitment to incrementally move towards climate neutrality by 2065. Having a cafe that serves local food decreases carbon emissions and brings awareness to this goal by promoting conscious sustainable choices.

TALLOIRES DECLARATION

According to the guidelines we have agreed to take action in ten different ways since 2008. Our cafe meets most of the action guidelines. Specifically, we hope to increase awareness of environmental sustainability, create an institutional culture of sustainability, collaborate for interdisciplinary approaches, maintain the movement and with work towards the other goals as well.

FUTURE

Pushing the Sustainable Student Centered Cafe forward is the main purpose of my time spent at the Office for Sustainability.

The immediate next steps include:

- Perfecting material that can be easily disseminated for concise understanding of the project

- Laying the groundwork for a smooth transition into the space including food sourcing, menu, programming and collaborations with student groups on campus

- Gathering and polishing material for an informational webpage

- Directly working with administrators and coordinating interested parties

2009 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES REPORT

Appendix 4: Complete Catalog of Strategic Sustainability Initiatives Section II of the Operations/Inreach Initiatives: “Work with student groups to facilitate the creation of a student-run cafe that emphasizes local and organic foods”