Western Michigan University prides itself on being leaders in sustainability and on its progressive stances on climate change and the environment. The Office For Sustainability is helping to shape a campus culture of sustainability. One of the oldest standing student sustainability projects is the Sustainable Student Centered Café. This project has been trying to address the issue of the lack of sustainable, local, fresh, healthy food options for students that attend WMU. I began work on the café in Spring of 2014 in Dr. Glasser’s ENVS 4100 course and have been working with the Office for Sustainability ever since. We have been taking steps towards the creation of the café this summer and it is closer to competition that ever before in history of the project.

We have been continuing to meet with administrators who have confirmed that the “Old Campus Trends” space in the basement of the Bernhard Center is allocated to the Café Concept. We have decided that the most economically feasible option is to have a “phase-in” approach that integrates food into the space, with a heavy emphasis on programming. There are still many things that need to happen before its “open date” sometime in the Fall of 2015. The hours of operation will tentatively be Monday and Thursday from 5:00 PM-10:00 PM, with food being served from 5:00-8:00 PM. As organizers of the café, we must set goals and precedents in order to see a successful opening day.

We have been facilitating working group meeting for food, programming, space, the business plan and the group as a whole. Our working groups meet in the café space as needed and are composed of campus leaders that may have a specialty in programming or food. I have been working on promoting the working groups to students, to keep the café truly student centered. Our food working group has been meeting with WMU Catering about the logistics of food for the space. The
programming group has been working to solidify an events calendar with the Bernhard Center. I also created a partnership with the Modern Painters Society (MPS) for student led coordination of art for the space.

Most recently, I worked with students to register and write the constitution for the interdisciplinary, cafe RSO. I have also been working on organizing students to be strong advocates for the café, by facilitating “core student” meetings. I created an asset map of campus departments and RSO’s where we have current representation or where we need to find strong student stewards. We are planning to have robust student representation at Bronco Bash to promote and familiarize students with the café. Students are already utilizing the space with the Haenicke Institute and CELCIS for language and study circles. I partnered with the WSA Sustainability chair and we are planning a “Sustainable Food Panel” for October of 2015. I have been working on coordinating logistics, preparing questions, confirming panelists and securing partners. We hope that the event will be an educational experience for students on the importance of sustainable, local, healthy foods coming from local experts.

In conclusion, the café is going to be a major success if we are able to mobilize students willing to advocate for the café and continue our healthy collaboration with WMU administration and engaged members of our working groups. The café is finally a priority of the university, the Haenicke Institute, many student RSO’s and the Office for Sustainability. The space will soon reflect all of the hard work and time that has gone into the concept over the past 10 years. With the implementation of the café, we will be increasing campus sustainability and boosting the local economy in Kalamazoo. The Café will be not only a destination for students and faculty but also for community members looking for a healthy, delicious food option on campus! I look forward to continuing working on coordinating the café as a post-graduate student employee this upcoming school year.