

The Purple Potato Café

A student-led café initiative

Kristiena Sartorelli, Caleb Oliver, and Ian Orawiec

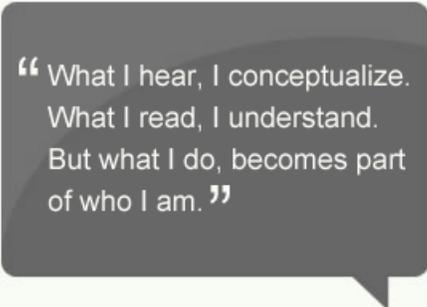
“The Purple Potato seeks to provide fresh, healthy, enjoyable and ecologically sound food in a socially responsible manner to build local economy and strengthen the WMU community.”

The vision: a student-led cooperative café to serve as an on campus healthy food alternative and a place for students to learn and grow from their direct involvement in its management and operation. The structure of the café would be built upon a consensus-based model where students work collectively to manage and operate all aspects of the café together. The café would focus on locally sourced, seasonal, and organic food options to stress the importance of building partnerships with local farmers and to increase the availability of nutritious, whole food meals on campus. Sharing food

in this manner is a way to educate through stewardship and the café serves as a common place to increase academic integrity. It would also expand space for student culture by showcasing art, music, poetry from students and hosting speakers, think tanks, panels, and other community events. This café will allow the students and university to showcase its stewardship to the principles of sustainability by recognizing the importance of incorporating the ecological means of growth, production and transportation when sourcing food on campus.

Our goals:

- Establish a student-led café managed and run by student managers.
- Provide food that is local/organic at a reasonable price.
- Create student jobs and internships that are interdisciplinary.
- Illustrate the potential success of consensus based organizations with sustainable business practices.
- Build student culture space by showcasing art, music, poetry from students. Institutionalize the café with support of university administration and campus dining services to ensure long term success of the Purple Potato Café.



“What I hear, I conceptualize.
What I read, I understand.
But what I do, becomes part
of who I am.”

To address the support of the student body of our vision of this café, we formatted a survey regarding the satisfaction and met/unmet needs with the current on campus cafes. From our survey data:

When asked to rate importance in uses of a café, of the students surveyed:

- 45.6% said a café with a place for students to gather is important.
- 36.9% said a place to showcase their art is important.
- 30.7% said a place for students to showcase their music is important
- 39.4% said it was very important for students to have a place to study
- 27.3% said it was important for a café to have student leadership and governance (the majority vote on this was neutral, with 32.5%)

When asked to rate different types of food options, of the students surveyed:

- 35.5% said it was very important to have organic food:
- 52.0% said that having local (within 100 miles) food available was very important
- 30.3% said that having vegetarian food was very important
- 20.1% said that having vegan options very important (the majority were neutral with 33.9%)
- 29.5% said it was important that there be allergy sensitivity food options offered

“Buying local and organic would be powerful proof of WMU's commitment to the health of its students and employees, and something that I would be truly proud to support and publicize.”

–WMU Student survey response when asked how to improve campus eateries.

“More university students call for organic, 'sustainable' food.”

–USA Today

“As a living laboratory institution, Dickinson students are able to use the buildings, grounds, operations, utilities, natural resources, culture, and community of the college as places and objects of inquiry and experiential learning.”

– Kate Consroe, Dickinson College