

## Food systems change and the alternative campus foodscape

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### Abstract

Postsecondary students, staff, and faculty across North America are actively involved in transforming food systems on campuses and beyond. Much of the scholarship documenting these inroads has focused on procurement, production, and pedagogy. While this work is essential, it paints an incomplete picture of the ways postsecondary campuses—and students in particular—are contributing to realizing more just and sustainable food systems. In this paper, we elaborate the

contours of what we propose as the *alternative* campus foodscape in Canada by highlighting campus food systems alternatives (CFSAs), which we define as on-campus initiatives that are motivated by animating structural, practice, and/or policy change through the campus foodscape. We demonstrate how CFSAs are distinct from conventional food systems and argue that they are essential elements of a robust movement for food systems transformation.

### Keywords

Campus Food Systems, Alternative Campus Food Systems, Local Food Systems, Student Movements, Higher Education, Food Systems Pedagogy

### Abbreviations

CFGS: Campus food growing space  
CFSA: Campus food systems alternative  
CFSS: Campus food serving space

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## Introduction

The impact (real and potential) of college and university campuses in the context of broader food systems change has become an increasingly popular scholarly focus. Much of this work can be categorized into one of three categories: alternative forms of *procurement* (Bohunicky et al., 2019; Martin & Andrée, 2012; Stahlbrand, 2019); alternative forms of campus food *production* (Angstmann et al., 2019; Gardener, 2012; Green, 2021; LaCharite, 2016; Parr & Trexler, 2011); or critical food systems *pedagogy* (Anderson et al., 2019; Sumner, 2016; Valley et al., 2018). In aggregate, this growing body of scholarship and practice constitutes a “campus turn” in food systems scholarship and practice. The contributions of college and university campuses, and their actors and initiatives, are being taken increasingly seriously in the broader context of movements for socio-ecological food systems change. The idea of the campus foodscape is useful in conceptualizing the numerous elements that enable and constrain food systems transformation in the campus environment. Fanshel and Iles (2022) define campus foodscapes as “entities that make up food-related learning and practice, encompassing (but not limited to) teaching, research, student organizations, activism, administrative decisions and initiatives, support services, campus gardens, dining services, eateries, and other procurement” (p. 3).

The campus turn in food systems scholarship and activism has revealed a variety of leverage points in the campus environment that are (or can) effect broader food systems change. So far, very little of this work has focused on existing campus-based food systems alternatives—from farms and gardens to student-run food banks and cooperatively run cafés. There is a rich diversity of campus-based initiatives that form an integral part of the pedagogy, practice, and politics of the broader movement for food systems transformation. While there has been some interest in campus farms (see, for example, Barlett, 2017; LaCharite, 2016; Sayre & Clark, 2011/2022), this provides only a partial glimpse into the ways students, staff, and faculty are actively making or imagining food systems solutions on their campuses and beyond.

The work of alternative production, procure-

ment, and pedagogy is a central element of the cumulative impact of campuses on broader food systems prefiguration and change. However, to appreciate the full transformational potential of campus-based movements, we need a more fulsome accounting and understanding of the types of existing campus food systems alternatives (Classens et al., 2021). To these ends, in this article we attempt to bring production, procurement, and pedagogy together into a shared conceptual model that is inclusive of, and goes beyond, this foundational work. Our intention is to lay important analytic groundwork that reveals conceptual linkages between seemingly discrete interventions, while situating these interventions within broader food systems dynamics.

To be clear, the stakes for food systems transformation could not be higher. The colliding impacts of climate change, corporate concentration, and geopolitical instability have deepened the longstanding social inequity and ecological unsustainability of the capital-intensive industrialized food system. Without concerted and immediate action to relocalize, diversify, and decommodify food systems, we are “sleepwalking into the catastrophic and systematic food crises of the future” (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, 2022, p. 2). In response to these crises, social movements and civil society organizations have mobilized to develop myriad program, practice, and policy interventions toward the realization of more socially just and ecologically rational food systems. Postsecondary campuses are actively involved in this work, and yet so far have received scant scholarly attention (beyond production, procurement, and pedagogy, as we discuss below). Campuses and campus actors have made significant contributions in the struggles for socio-ecological justice for decades, from anti-war and civil rights campaigns, to anti-apartheid and racial justice movements. Thus, there is perhaps reason to be optimistic about the role they may play in realizing social and ecological justice through food systems transformation.

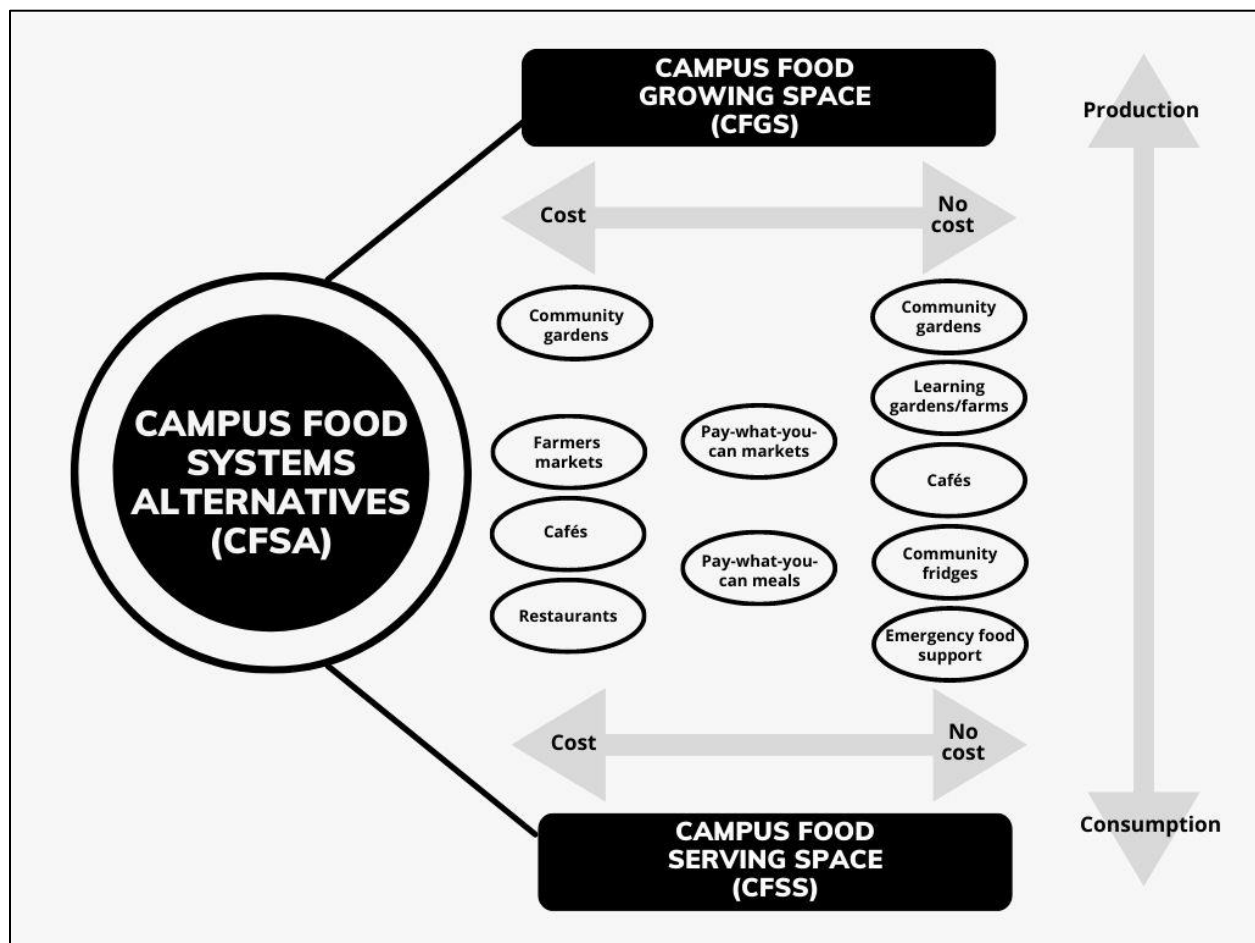
In this paper, we elaborate the contours of what we propose as the *alternative* campus foodscape in Canada, that is, elements and initiatives of the campus that are motivated by animating struc-

tural, practice, and/or policy change through the campus foodscape. We build on work by Classens et al. (2021), who proposed a two-part descriptive analytic of food-focused campus initiatives: campus food system alternatives (CFSAs) and campus food growing space (CFGs). We add to this campus food serving space (CFSS). We propose that the alternative campus foodscape comprises these three elements. CFSA is an overarching category with two constituent parts, CFGS and CFSS (see Figure 1). To develop this more fully, we propose a descriptive typology of each initiative and elaborate on the characteristics of CFSAs that distinguish them from conventional campus food systems, related to (a) governance and leadership and (b) principles and socio-ecological commitments. We ultimately theorize CFSA within the broader context of student/campus movements for socio-

ecological change.

This paper is informed empirically by four principle activities: a systematic scan of postsecondary institution websites for mention of CFGS in Canada ( $n=90$ ), a systematic scan of postsecondary institution websites for mention of CFSS in Canada ( $n=55$ ), a survey of those involved in CFGS to learn more about their experiences ( $n=109$ ), and finally, interviews with students and staff involved in CFSAs ( $n=49$ ). The interview data were coded in NVivo by the first author. All data were further analyzed and interpreted in discussion among all three authors. The work was also informed by ongoing discussions with the Campus Farms Canada network (founded by the first author), composed of students, staff and faculty involved in CFGS across Canada.

**Figure 1. Campus Food Systems Alternatives (CFSA) Model**



## **The Campus Climate and Socio-Ecological Change**

Young people, and in particular, postsecondary students, have been key actors in nearly every significant social movement since at least the post-war period (Rhoades, 2019). However, the history of student activism goes well beyond this, to the 17th century, when students organized for better curriculum, lodging, and food (Burton, 2007; Moore, 1976). Much more recently, students have continued to mobilize for more equitable and inclusive education policy while waging resistance against the ongoing neoliberalization of higher education (Cole & Heinecke, 2020; Wheatle & Commodore, 2019).

Student activism, however, is not only limited to the campus environment. Coincident with the rise of the New Left, student activism substantively shaped the political and (counter)cultural project of the 1960s and 1970s. The campus environment more generally was intertwined with the radical politics of the era, including that of the Chicana/o Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Students for Democratic Society, among others (Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). In other words, student activism has a long precedent of being significantly oriented beyond campus, aimed at addressing and responding to a range of social, political, economic, and environmental issues in wider society (Astin et al, 1975; Linder et al., 2019).

In the North American context, student activists have been central to a wide range of contemporary movements with impact well beyond campus. From #MeToo (Rentschler, 2018), and Black Lives Matter (Hope et al., 2016), through to Queer (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011) and disability activism (Kimball et al., 2016), students are at the forefront of efforts to reshape society. In the international context, meanwhile, students have been instrumental in myriad efforts, including counter-colonial struggles in Kashmir (Pandit, 2019), anti-Extradition Bill movements in Hong Kong (Tong & Yuen, 2021), and online student activism in Zimbabwe (Hove & Dube, 2022).

Students, however, are not the only political actors on campus. While the research is quite thin on the role of “non-student constituent groups” (Agua & Pendakur, 2019, p. 165) in the context of

activism in the campus climate, this work remains instructive. The campus climate is composed of heterogeneous actors in various structural contexts. These contexts can influence the extent to which the actors are able or willing to agitate for change on campus or beyond it. Many college and university staff exist in “a liminal space of political and processional tension” (Agua & Pendakur, 2019, p. 164) given that the privileges afforded to some faculty (with respect to academic freedom and tenure) are not extended to staff and contingent faculty. Student affairs professionals interested in animating change “often walk a tight-rope” (Agua & Pendakur, 2019, p. 164) navigating the socio-political context of the campus climate. Similarly, junior and precariously employed faculty, who make up an increasing percentage of the overall faculty, may feel constrained in their willingness to agitate for structural, policy, or practice change that is seen as bristling against the status quo. Indeed, student activism is often seen as a nuisance by administrators (Bradley, 2015; Joseph, 2003; Rogers, 2012). These dynamics, then, introduce some ambivalence into the broader context of postsecondary campuses as centers of socio-ecological change.

Despite these challenges, the campus climate remains a site of transformation—both real and potential—and one in which food scholars have demonstrated considerable interest. In the context of food systems change, campuses create “spaces of possibility,” according to Goodman et al. (2012, p. 4). With access to considerable financial, material, and intellectual resources, campuses are well positioned to contribute in a variety of ways to more just and sustainable food systems. There is also an inherent kind of resonance with food, particularly among students. As Duncan Hilchey noted in the introduction to a special issue of this journal dedicated to higher education and food systems in 2012,

Food systems has an intrinsic appeal to students, and it offers a powerful lens through which to understand communities, evaluate the human condition, unite behind a common cause—and generally make the world a better place. It is also attractive to a growing cadre of

young faculty who are equipped with the art and skill of interdisciplinary work. (p. 1)

The scholarship focused on capturing the ways that campuses and campus actors pursue food systems change is growing and varied. Immediately below we review some of this scholarship and frame it as attending to a cluster of concerns related to procurement, production, and/or pedagogy. These proposed categories are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, (critical) food systems pedagogy is arguably a feature of most campus-based food systems initiatives (either explicitly or implicitly). Nonetheless, in the remainder of this section, we briefly summarize these three categories as constitutive—though not exhaustive—elements of CFSAs.

### *Procurement*

As large institutions that purchase significant quantities of food, one important way campuses can and do shape food systems is through alternative procurement initiatives. At the moment, food services on most campuses are controlled by a small number of for-profit, transnational corporations, including Compass Group, ARAMARK, and Sodexo (Martin & Andrée, 2012). In some cases, campuses have a blended model of food services operations, partly operated by the institution and partly contracted, although in the aggregate about 70% of food services on campuses in Canada are contracted out (Bohunicky et al., 2019). These companies are notorious for a variety of practices that undermine the pursuit of more just and sustainable food systems, from providing energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods to exerting downward pressure on labor costs (Creed, 2001; Martin & Andrée, 2012). As Bohunicky et al. (2019) put it, the “big three” corporate food service providers “are the primary expression of the globalized, corporate, industrial, and neoliberal food system on campuses today” (p. 33).

It is important to note that many students are effectively forced to use the campus foodscape as their primary site of food consumption due either to the isolated nature of campuses, the requirement to buy a meal plan, or both. These issues can be compounded for students who live in residence

halls and do not have access to kitchens to cook their own food (Classens & Systma, 2020). Classens and Systma note that “the lack of supportive amenities on campus channels students to the fast-food offerings, likely reinforcing the corporate food paradigm and contributing to food deskilling and food illiteracy” (p. 12). While post-secondary student food insecurity is relatively under-researched and not well understood, we know that students experience far higher rates of food insecurity than the general population (Bruening et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2018; Nazim et al., 2019). Recent work in Canada suggests that upwards of 40% of postsecondary students experience food insecurity (Maynard et al., 2018). A survey conducted in the midst of COVID-19 found that a staggering 56.8% of postsecondary students experienced food insecurity in the fall of 2021 (Meal Exchange, 2021).

Alternative procurement models on campuses seek to address some of these issues while altering the socio-ecological relations of food systems, through, for example, direct purchasing arrangements, in ways that support more just and sustainable production-consumption dynamics (Attfield, 2014; Lyson, 2004; Peters, 2015; Stahlbrand, 2019). Barlett (2017) suggested that alternative procurement initiatives are an “on-ramp” (p. 189) for campuses motivated to move toward a more just and sustainable food system. This can take a variety of approaches, from “a focus on a particular product (local apples), issue (sustainable seafood), or event (100-mile meal),” and alternative procurement initiatives ultimately constitute “a ‘do something’ approach that begins the conversation towards more substantive purchasing shifts” (Barlett, 2017, p. 189).

While we recognize the limitations of consumption-side, so-called consumer activism, the efforts of the many scholars and activists agitating for more socially just and ecologically rational food services procurement models should not be overlooked. As Bohunicky et al. (2019) argue, “food system transformation can best occur by moving away from corporate food service contracts” (p. 44). This remains much easier said than done. Stahlbrand (2019), for example, wrote about her efforts to integrate more socially and environmen-

tally sustainable practices into food services at the University of Toronto through Local Food Plus, a nonprofit organization she founded. Chef/activist Joshna Maharaj (2020) recounted her efforts as assistant director of food services and executive chef at Toronto Metropolitan University (then Ryerson University) to transform that institution's food system in response to significant pressure from students. Both of these projects, while successful for a time, ultimately failed to be long-term, transformational projects. However, the impacts they had—however temporary—on supporting local food production, developing local foodways, and providing students with increased access to fresh, healthy food cannot be discounted.

### *Production*

The Morrill Land Grant College Act, originally enacted in 1862, established the land-grant university system in the United States. The act was a central piece of the federal government's plan to encourage postsecondary institutions to "teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts" (Morrill Land Grant College Act, as quoted in Sayre, 2011/2022, p. 6). Over the course of the past century and a half, postsecondary farms enabled through the Morrill Land Grant College Act have supported practical teaching and research in support, largely, of corporate industrial agriculture (LaCharite, 2016).

In more recent years, there has been rapid growth in campus food-growing outside of the land-grant model using what we refer to as Campus Food Growing Spaces (CFGs; Classens et al., 2021). In the U.S., the number of CFGs increased from 23 in 1992 to 300 in 2016 (LaCharite, 2016). In Canada, meanwhile, there are upwards of 100 campuses with some kind of food-growing space (see the tables in the Appendix). Importantly, most of the farms that have emerged in the last two decades or so represent a paradigmatic departure from that of the land-grant farms (Barlett, 2011; Classens & Burton, 2022; LaCharite, 2016). This criticism has been long-brewing. Over 40 years ago, Mayer and Mayer (1974) were highly critical of the disciplinarily bounded, narrowly conceived paradigm of the land-grant system. They wrote,

The present isolation of agriculture in American academic life is a tragedy. Not only does it deprive us of the most useful models of the systems approach to human affairs, but it puts us—and the world—in mortal peril. (Mayer & Mayer, 1974, p. 83)

Many CFGs today are not animated by desires to support the conventional food system but rather exist explicitly to challenge it. Scholars have noted that there is a great diversity in these spaces, but that they share the common purpose of animating food systems and broader socio-ecological change.

Scholars have focused on a variety of impacts of CFGs, from their role in sustainability education and farmer training to their interdisciplinarity and their facilitation of student leadership and sense of social responsibility (Angstmann et al., 2019; Gardener, 2012; Green, 2021; LaCharite, 2016; Parr & Trexler, 2011). CFGs, in other words, have impacts quite different from the land-grant model's positivist and productivist commitments to yield increase and the like. Eatmon and colleagues (2015) have referred to CFGs as "integrating contexts" within which complex food systems issues (and the socio-ecological dynamics that compose them) can be struggled with and attended to.

Importantly, the impact of CFGs extends beyond campus. Angstmann et al. (2019) noted that CFGs help students understand their "civic role and its impact to broader society" (Theoretical Foundation section, para. 1) through action-focused and experiential education. Aftandilian and Dart (2013) demonstrated how service-learning in CFGs empowers students to engage with social change and translate their initiative, skills, and service in the garden toward the pursuit of socio-ecological change beyond campus. Barlett (2011) underscored this point, observing that CFGs are "insulated spaces for the growth of new nodes, actors and institutions in the food chain" (p. 103).

Sayre (2011/2022) notes that nearly 50 years later, Mayer and Mayer's 1974 perspective on the land-grant model is deeply prescient:

a powerful indictment of the disciplinary and cultural divisions that were increasingly coming to isolate food producers from the wider food-

consuming public, simultaneously obscuring the political processes affecting the food system on both the global and the local level. (p. 10)

It is worth noting that while many land-grant institutions and conventional faculties and departments of agriculture generally underpin the dominant food system, there are of course exceptions. Additionally, no institution is a monolith; there are internal tensions, differentiations, and dissonances. For example, Michigan State University, a pioneering land-grant university on which many others were modeled, is home to the Center for Regional Food Systems, an innovative hub of action-research committed to equitable and sustainable food systems (Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, n.d.). Similarly, the University of California, Berkeley, another land-grant university, is at the forefront of critical food systems pedagogy work (see, for example, Fanshel & Iles, 2020, 2022). These, and others, are hopeful examples and gesture at the possibility for allyship with and among institutions and units historically supportive of conventional agri-food systems.

### *Pedagogy*

Until relatively recently, food pedagogy as an area of formal study was unappreciated. As Sumner concisely put it not so long ago, “those who study learning have not often turned their gaze toward food, while those who study food have generally overlooked the learning associated with it” (2016, p. xix). As scholars have begun to turn a critical eye on food systems pedagogy, many have found the associated teaching and learning as it exists, on the whole, to be somewhat problematic. Jordan et al. (2014) found that conventional learning about food systems is relatively narrow in scope, unduly beholden to disciplinary boundaries, and abstracted from the broader economic, cultural, political, and ecological contexts that shape food systems in the first place. Valley and colleagues concurred, adding, “Traditional agriculture and food-related curricula often follow linear, cause-and-effect rationalities that focus on a limited range of objectives (e.g., agricultural yield, micronutrient intake, or return on investment)” (2018, p. 468).

In contrast to this conventional perspective, Meek and Tarlau (2016) insisted that food systems educators are confronted with an explicitly political choice to “use education to reproduce the current food system, raise awareness about the inequities of the food system, or *utilize education as a means to form individuals who are determined to transform the food system*” (p. 246, emphasis added). Jennifer Sumner (2016) referred to this as *critical* food systems pedagogy, which is made up of “a range of approaches that are not just concerned with any type of change but with change that addresses power and injustice” (p. xix). This paradigm of food systems pedagogy embraces the inherent complexity and interdisciplinarity of food systems while reckoning with the structural conditions that perpetuate food systems inequities (see also Flowers & Swan, 2012; Meek & Tarlau, 2016; Sumner, 2016; Valley et al., 2018).

Not surprisingly, praxis is proposed as a key component of a critically oriented food systems pedagogy (see, for example, Meek and Tarlau, 2016). This perspective emphasizes teaching and learning in experiential and action-focused ways to affect food systems change on campus and beyond. As Fanshel and Iles (2022) noted, “universities and colleges are fertile foodscapes of action-based education” (p. 1). Eatmon et al. (2016), for example, have written that on-campus food production is well suited to interdisciplinary, change-focused pedagogy (see also Eatmon et al., 2015). Burley and colleagues (2016) demonstrated how undergraduate and graduate students collaborated in a seminar course to support local and sustainably sourced food procurement on campus. Many others, as summarized above, have noted the formal and informal learning opportunities of campus farms (Classens et al., 2021; LaCharite, 2016; Sayre & Clark, 2011/2022). In many other cases, food systems teaching and learning on campus is deployed to effect change beyond it. As an example, Levkoe et al. (2019) highlighted a collaboration between students, faculty, and community practitioners within the context of a community service learning project.

In sum, procurement, production, and pedagogy can be understood as the three sturdy pillars of the campus turn in food systems scholarship

and activism. These three interventions, and the intersections between them, provide fertile ground for students, staff, and faculty to mobilize in the context of food systems transformation. While these elements are essential to the composition of the alternative campus foodscape, they do not constitute an exhaustive accounting of it. In the next section, we provide more elaboration of the alternative campus foodscape as composed of CFSAs, CFGS, and CFSS.

### **The Alternative Campus Foodscape**

In this section, we begin by building on the CFSA schematic proposed by Classens et al. (2021) by providing a brief overview of the initiative type and proposing CFSS as a complementary piece of the CFSA analytic. Next, we elaborate on some of the shared characteristics of the initiatives that compose CFSAs. We categorize these shared characteristics into two elements: (a) governance and leadership and (b) principles and socio-ecological commitments.

The initial conceptual framing of CFSA proposed by Classens et al. (2021) was centrally informed by the notion of informal learning on campus. Classens et al. noted that scholars have pointed to a range of on-campus spaces in which informal learning about food occurs, from wellness centers (Mirwaldt, 2010) and residences (Vetere, 2010) through to campus gardens (LaCharite, 2016) and dining halls (Roberts-Stahlbrand, 2020). This research, while essential to providing glimpses into the alternative campus foodscape, ultimately provides only a partial perspective. The CFSA analytic is intended to provide some conceptual coherence between discrete spaces and initiatives on campus “to theorize the moments all along the campus food system, from production through to disposal” (Classens et al., 2021, p. 3). Classens et al. use a food systems lens “to enable a broader focus in order to highlight the prefigurative and informal pedagogical value throughout the (alternative) campus food chain” (p. 3).

Figure 1 provides an overview of our proposed CFSA model. We understand CFSA as an overarching category meant to capture elements and initiatives that are motivated by animating structural, practice, and/or policy change through the

campus foodscape. This is further differentiated along the production-consumption and cost–no cost spectrums. We emphasize cost–no cost in our model to reflect the extent to which CFSAs are motivated by the desire to increase access to affordable (or free) culturally appropriate, sustainably produced food to students, a disproportionately food-insecure population. In most cases, initiatives we would classify on the cost end of the spectrum are heavily subsidized, providing students access to affordable food and/or food-growing opportunities. Of the over 100 CFSAs we identify (see Figure 2), none is primarily motivated by profit, and the vast majority operate nonprofit models. Our focus on production-consumption dynamics is informed by food systems thinking. We acknowledge that food disposal is not explicitly captured in our model; this represents an area for future research. However, organizations such as MealCare, a national organization with chapters at eight campuses across Canada, divert food waste into emergency food provision streams on campus. We would classify these as no-cost emergency food support within the logic of our model. Finally, we understand pedagogy, either formal or informal, as diffused throughout the model.

Space does not permit a full elaboration of each initiative type. In any case, the variability between initiatives, even those of the same type, complicates the prospect of proposing an archetypal description. As with any conceptual model, the one we propose has limitations. For example, it is worth noting that some CFSAs, such as the University of British Columbia Farm, are in fact made of several discrete initiatives within a shared physical space (in this case, a market garden, an Indigenous garden, and a weekly market, among others). In cases such as this, there is typically still a shared vision and guiding principles within which sub-initiatives must operate (see, for example, UBC Farm, n.d.). Additionally, our model does not reflect the evolution of CFSAs over time in terms of focus, governance, composition, and the like. As discussed in the conclusion, longitudinal, ethnographic, and place-based research will help to refine our proposed model over time. Notwithstanding these limitations, immediately below we propose shared characteristics of CFSAs in an



attempt to better differentiate them from the conventional (campus) food system. We group these elements into two broad categories: governance and leadership, and principles and socio-ecological commitments.

### ***Governance and Leadership***

In contrast to conventional campus food systems, CFSAs are substantively governed by students. In practice, CFSAs include a range of models that provide students with more or less autonomy over decision-making, from a more limited managerial role to full autonomy and decision-making authority. In some cases, this governance role is the result of aspects of an initiative being integrated into the formal operations of the host institution or a specific program or department (for example, through a work study or independent study course). In many cases, student organizers work completely independently of the university's formal structures.

In our survey of those involved with CFGS, 43% of respondents indicated that they had some say over the governance and decision-making of the initiative with which they were involved. Nearly all of the leaders in the CFSS we interviewed noted that their initiatives were student-run.<sup>1</sup> Students (in both the survey and interviews) mentioned a variety of opportunities to help plan and advise the high-level operation of their CFSAs, such as determining the core mission and vision of the initiative, determining desired learning objectives for students, assisting with business models to grow the space, and updating policies regarding COVID-19 safety protocols, among others. Students also inform more tactical decision-making related to a variety of issues, from what to plant in a CFGS, through to what to include on the menu at a CFSS. This engagement—both in quantity and quality—is an important impact of CFSAs on students' experiential learning.

Governance structures vary significantly across CFSAs. Typically, in larger CFGSs, decision-making bodies are composed of staff and faculty,

with students having a lesser role in strategic decisions. This is the case, for example, at the Trent Farm and the University of British Columbia Farm. In other cases, higher-order student bodies (for example, a student's union) provide strategic oversight, and the CFSAs operate as an initiative under this umbrella. The Student Union Pantry at the University of Regina and the Food Collective Centre at McMaster University, for example, operate in such a blended governance (and funding) model. Many CFSAs operate as collectives or co-ops and employ collaborative, nonhierarchical decision-making structures. The BIPOC Growing Collective at Trent University employs collective decision-making, as does the Loaded Ladle at Dalhousie University, which lists "open non-hierarchical decision making" as one of their core values (Loaded Ladle, 2022, para. 1).

Similarly, CFSAs are supported by a range of funding arrangements. In some cases, CFSAs receive funding directly through the administrative infrastructure of the postsecondary institution (for example, through an office of sustainability or central food services). Much more commonly, however, CFSAs are funded through a student levy fee that is either paid directly to the initiative or funneled through a higher-order student body (such as a student union). Many initiatives also rely on donations and fundraising campaigns. Still others adopt a social-enterprise model in which they fund their operations through sales of fresh produce, prepared meals, or branded materials such as reusable bags and t-shirts. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is significant variation in levels of financial stability among CFSAs. While some struggle to remain in operation through a patchwork of very small funding sources and volunteer labor, others (particularly those with support from their host institution) are very well and stably funded.

### ***Principles and Socio-Ecological Commitments***

A defining feature of CFSAs, one that distinguishes them from the conventional elements of food ser-

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<sup>1</sup> We speculate that the lower level of student leadership in CFGSs relative to CFSSs might be a function of land access and tenure. CFGSs, in particular those that are quite large, require land resources, representing a de facto (and in many cases, significant) investment on behalf of the university. Many CFSSs, on the other hand, do not require such a significant investment from their host institution, and as a result, may experience more autonomy.

vices and agricultural education and reveals the transformative action and potential of these initiatives, are the principles and socio-ecological commitments they espouse. We do not mean to suggest that there is uniformity across all CFSAs. However, on the whole, CFSAs are notable in that their work is animated through explicit normative commitments to concerns beyond those typically associated with conventional food service or campus farm operations (i.e., maximization of profit or yield). These features cast in high relief how CFSAs agitate for systems change within and through food systems on campus and beyond. The following section will outline some of the principles and socio-ecological commitments espoused by CFSAs across the country.

Not surprisingly, student leadership in CFSAs results in the initiatives prioritizing student concerns. A student leader at the University of Calgary remarked that they want to communicate with the student body about food issues and then work to address these issues, because this is something that traditional food retail franchises on campus do not often do. Another student leader at McMaster University noted:

We are connected to students, we understand, especially the undergraduate student life-style. . . . The adults I talked to in, like, hospitality services or facility services on campus, they are not always as in tune with what it's like to be a student and what things students might need.

Another student leader at the Soup Bar at Humber College insisted, "We advocate on behalf of students. . . . We make sure that we amplify their voice to the institution. . . . We want to make sure that we're student-centric."

Given the prevalence and depth of student food insecurity on campuses, it is not surprising that many CFSAs prioritize equitable and dignified food access. Embedded in this tactical intervention is a criticism of corporate food service providers that prioritize profit over access. In the corporate model, affordability, variety, the availability of healthy and fresh options, and access to culturally appropriate foods are all squeezed through the

logic of corporate profit (Bohunicky et al., 2019; Martin & Andrée, 2012). Student leaders on campus imagine, and prefigure, different kinds of food systems predicated on values beyond profit. A student leader involved in a CFGS at Trent University shared:

I am involved in meetings to determine goals and planning for the next season. I am part of seed selection and selection of food to be grown based on previous years' successes and advice from previous managers. Part of the planning for this year will be focused on bringing a market to the university to combat food insecurity, selling food at affordable prices for students, and figuring out subsidy options.

Part and parcel of increasing food access and supporting student food security for many CFSAs is the notion of community-building through food. Many CFSS leaders emphasized that they prioritized building safe and inclusive spaces for students. A leader with a campus food bank said that their efforts were animated by their desire to provide "food to the most in need without providing them shame or stigma." A leader with another CFSS reflected on their efforts to offer "a non-intimidating space, a space created by students, for students." A leader with the McEown Community Garden at the University of Saskatchewan reflected on their efforts to create a welcoming space, particularly for newcomer students:

The beauty of this garden is it's located literally right outside the front door of many of our residence buildings, so it's typically on their [students'] commute to and from campus. . . . It's a lot of what I've already mentioned, just providing opportunities for community-building, interaction, getting to know one another, especially because a lot of people who decide to garden are international students who know next to nobody when they moved to the country or move to the city.

A leader with The People's Potato, a collectively run, pay-what-you-can soup kitchen at Con-

cordia University, insisted that community-building was one of their greatest strengths:

Everyone goes there feeling that in some way it's their space [which] is the strongest thing, . . . and the fact that they can feel like they're contributing because they're not just going there to eat, . . . they can go there and they [can] actually help make the food. And then the next day, [they can] come back and just eat, they don't have to come in and help but it's just feeling like they're a part of something.

Similarly, a coordinator with the Trent Vegetable Garden (TVG) reflected:

I would say the greatest strength is the community that we've been able to cultivate, and the energy and love and effort and blood and sweat that that community puts into this space. It's certainly not just me, it's a ton of people coming together to make this space productive, and I don't see that on a traditional or commercial farm. You don't walk into a cafeteria and feel all of those good community feelings.

As this TVG member implies, the kind of community many CFSAs are building models socio-ecological relations that depart dramatically from those favored by the conventional campus food system. Some CFSAs across the country espouse a radical politics premised on anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, and anti-oppression commitments, and this shapes and determines their food work. Much of this work also challenges the instrumental, productivist commitments of conventional agriculture. For example, a leader with the Brescia University College Community Garden insists that their work allows people to see the connections between people, food, and the land right in front of them, which is important because we are often unaware of these connections. Moreover, the leader at Brescia uses food as a way for people to connect to the land and to one another. One leader with the EMBARK Learning Garden at Simon Fraser University said

that their work is grounded in “justice, equity, decolonization, diversity, and inclusion,” and that these commitments inform “everything that we do.” Across the country, a leader with the BIPOC Growing Collective at Trent University expressed a similar sentiment: “we ground ourselves in abolitionist and decolonizing frameworks rooted in the sacredness of all life, respect, reciprocity, accountability, and mutual aid.”

It is worth noting that not all CFSAs operate within a radical anti-oppression/anti-colonial/anti-capitalist framework, at least not openly. Some CFSA organizers may not share these politics, and others may not be willing to share them publicly for fear of either personal or organizational reprisal. However, what is clear is that a vast majority of CFSAs are motivated by various critiques of the dominant food system.

In many cases, these critiques are animated by commitments to sustainable and regenerative food systems. A leader with the People's Republic of Delicious, a food rescue and redistribution initiative at the University of Ottawa, described their organization's approach to fusing social and environmental justice:

We rescue produce that would have been thrown away by grocery stores or restaurants or food processing plants, and then we serve them up for free to the campus community. . . . What we're interested in is a mixture of social justice and environmental sustainability.

A coordinator with the Simon Farm Project at the University of Calgary explained how they think about regenerative food systems:

Waste is simply a resource you haven't thought about how to capture. . . . We always need to be thinking about how the outputs we create, and the externalities need to be accounted for [so that the] system [can] continually function without eroding its ability to provide services we need from it.

These commitments also clearly resonate with many CFSSs, which prioritize food waste redistri-

bution, organic foods, vegan or vegetarian meals, using local food (often in partnership with a CFGS, when available), using sustainable food packaging, and managing waste more sustainably through composting.

Finally, empowering and engaging students in socio-ecological change is a commitment shared among most CFSAs across the country. In some cases, this involves student leaders sharing knowledge with and building the capacity of other students on campus. For the leaders of DigIn!, a CFGS-coordinating organization at the University of Toronto, this means supporting students in navigating the administrative bureaucracy required of introducing a new garden on campus:

We don't necessarily control all of the different gardens, but if a group of students wants to start a new garden, we will help them navigate all of the administrative issues that come—provide them with some information, some advice, some resources.

In other cases, the motivation to engage and empower students derives from a deep, explicit dissatisfaction with student disempowerment. A student leader at the University of Calgary, in the process of launching a student-run food co-op to address student food insecurity and the lack of access to healthy and culturally relevant food on campus, observed:

We feel that students in general, not just at the University of Calgary, are a group, especially right now, [that] feels very apathetic and feels very much like they're without power. And so, by developing a good co-op that's democratically organized, it would allow students to get a little bit of that power back and be included in conversations about food on campus.

While more research is required to understand the full impact and implications of CFSAs on student engagement and empowerment, it is clear that these spaces do create meaningful opportunities for students. These initiatives create an integrating context (Eatmon et al., 2015) within which both

personal and community transformation can occur. As a student CFGS volunteer at Trent University put it, "volunteering or working at a local garden/farm and helping food grow is transformational in many ways. Individual, community, and environmental health issues seem a lot less daunting." Another student, reflecting on their experience volunteering at the same school, remarked, "It was very valuable time for me in first year to meet like-minded people and get a break from the classroom/studying to spend time doing something I love. So I learned about myself through the campus farm."

A student with the Lakehead Farm Club at Lakehead University explained how their experience as an organizer leading an effort to save a CFGS on their campus affected their approach to community organizing more broadly:

I learned to approach community organizing from a more patient and understanding perspective—rather than assuming those in positions of leadership are malevolent for their failure to lead amid a complex global crisis, but are rather simply ignorant to the problems and solutions. Being patient and understanding rather than annoyed and combative has helped to bridge differences and engage in more meaningful discourse (hopefully).

### **The Alternative Campus Foodscape and the Prospect of Transformation**

On any given day, dedicated students on campuses across the country are struggling to prefigure more just and sustainable food systems on their campuses and beyond. The inroads they are making, while yet to be fully quantified, qualified, or understood, are nonetheless inspiring. In many cases, this success comes despite many challenges, from unstable funding and year-to-year continuity, to outreach and an overreliance on volunteer labor. In many cases, a key barrier to success is a lack of support from allied staff and faculty. As one student leader put it,

The real challenge is not . . . students collaborating with each other. . . . [They] have networks. . . . The big challenge . . . is finding

allies in the administration and finding allies in the staff.

Scaling a CFSa up on campus, and out beyond it, holds genuine promise as a strategy for realizing food systems transformation. This work, in part, necessitates challenging existing power hierarchies and decentering centers of knowledge production. It involves faculty allies taking seriously the expertise of students and young people as agents of change, and focusing resources (time, money, research, and the like) on learning from and with them. In an era of acute socio-ecological, political, and economic upheaval, there is profound power in collective action. History has shown time and again that students have an impressive record of catalyzing such collective action, in some cases with world-defining impact.

Elements of the alternative campus foodscape gesture at the horizon of movements for food systems transformation, yet much more work is required to understand the impact, both realized and potential, of CFSAs. Our primary intention here was to propose a model that brings disparate campus-based, food-focused initiatives into a shared conceptual space. The work of quantifying

the impact of these interventions largely remains. Deep ethnographic, action-based research is sorely needed in this respect. Future work in this area will enable a more in-depth understanding of the potential and actual effectiveness of CFSAs to effect socio-ecological change. Similarly, research that investigates the contextual particularities of place, focused on discrete campuses and their surrounding communities, will help to refine thinking on the movement-building role of campus actors in the context of food systems transformation. This work could include, for example, exploring the tensions that may exist between and among student leaders and groups, and network mapping to illustrate how and with whom CFSa leaders are working on campus and beyond. This is a crucial point: to the extent that campus movements have historically contributed to socio-ecological change, they have done so through allyship with actors beyond campus. Most importantly, future work must center the experience and expertise of the students and their allies who are at the forefront of prefiguring anti-colonial, anti-oppressive, equitable, and sustainable food futures.

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## Appendix. Working Lists of Campus Food Systems Alternatives (CFSAs) in Canada

Note: We title this figure in acknowledgment of the fact that the list is not exhaustive. This is partly a function of not all CFSAs having an online presence, and partly in recognition of the fact that our internet scan might not have found all CFSAs, even if they are online.

### Abbreviations

CFGs: Campus food growing space

CFSA: Campus food systems alternative

CFSS: Campus food serving space

**Table A1. Initiatives Initiatives Included in the Interviews**

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>Alberta</b>			
University of Alberta	Edmonton	Green and Gold Community Garden	CFGs
University of Alberta	Edmonton	Campus Foodbank at the University of Alberta	CFSS
University of Calgary	Calgary	Campus Community Garden at uCalgary	CFGs
University of Calgary	Calgary	uCalgary Simon Farm Project	CFGs
University of Calgary	Calgary	uCalgary Food Co-op (currently only in the planning phases)	CFSS
<b>British Columbia</b>			
Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)	Surrey	Westerman Campus Garden	CFGs
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby	Embark Learning Garden	CFGs
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	AMS Food Bank at UBC	CFSS
University of Victoria	Victoria	University of Victoria campus community gardens	CFGs
<b>Manitoba</b>			
Brandon University	Brandon	Brandon University Gardens	CFGs
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>			
Memorial University (Labrador Campus)	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	Pye Centre for Northern Boreal Food Systems	CFGs
<b>Nova Scotia</b>			
Mount Saint Vincent University	Halifax	The Mount Community Garden	CFGs
University of Kings College	Halifax	The King's Galley Café	CFSS
<b>Ontario</b>			
Brescia University College	London	Brescia University College Community Garden	CFGs
Durham College (Whitby Campus)	Whitby	Barrett Centre of Innovation in Sustainable Urban Agriculture	CFGs
Humber College	Toronto	Humber College Food Learning Garden	CFGs
Humber College	Toronto	Soup Bar	CFSS
McMaster University	Hamilton	Food Collective Centre at McMaster	CFSS
Mohawk College	Hamilton	Mohawk College Community Garden and Farm Stand	CFGs/CFSS

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
Queen's University	Kingston	The Tea Room	CFSS
Ryerson University	Toronto	Ryerson Urban Farm	CFGS
Seneca College	Toronto	Seneca College Urban Farm	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	BIPOC Growing Collective	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Bric-à-Brac Café	CFSS
Trent University	Peterborough	Peterborough Community Medicine Garden	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Trent Apiary	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Trent Market Garden	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Trent Oxfam Garden	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Trent Vegetable Gardens	CFGS
University of Guelph	Guelph	The Guelph Centre for Urban Organic Farming	CFGS
University of Ottawa	Ottawa	People's Republic of Delicious (PRD)	CFSS
University of Toronto	Toronto	Caffiends	CFSS
University of Toronto	Toronto	Diabolos' Coffee Bar	CFSS
University of Toronto (Mississauga Campus)	Mississauga	UTM Community Food Garden	CFGS
University of Toronto (St. George Campus)	Toronto	Dig In! Campus Agriculture Network	CFGS
University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)	Scarborough	Campus Teaching Farm	CFGS
University of Waterloo	Waterloo	UW Farm Market	CFSS
University of Waterloo	Waterloo	WUSA Food Support Service	CFSS
Western University	London	EnviroWestern Community Garden	CFGS
Western University	London	Food Support Services at Western University	CFSS
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo	LSPIRG Garden & Foodbank	CFGS/CFSS
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo	Wilfrid Laurier University Gardens—Northdale Garden	CFGS
York University	Toronto	Maloca Community Garden	CFGS
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>			
University of PEI (UPEI)	Charlottetown	St. Dunstan's Gardens	CFGS
University of PEI (UPEI)	Charlottetown	Soup for the Soul	CFSS
University of PEI (UPEI)	Charlottetown	UPEI Food Bank	CFSS
<b>Quebec</b>			
Bishop's University	Sherbrooke	Educational Farm	CFGS
Concordia University	Montreal	Hive Café Solidarity Co-op and Hive Free Lunch	CFSS
Concordia University	Montreal	The People's Potato	CFSS
McGill University	Montreal	The McGill Farmer's Market	CFSS
McGill University (Macdonald Campus)	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Macdonald Student-run Ecological Garden (MSEG)	CFGS

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>Saskatchewan</b>			
University of Regina	Regina	Student Union Pantry at the University of Regina	CFSS
University of Regina	Regina	University of Regina Green Patch Garden	CFGS
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon	McEown Community Garden	CFGS

**Table A2. Other Initiatives Identified Through Internet Search**

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>Alberta</b>			
MacEwan University	Edmonton	MacEwan Garden	CFGS
University of Alberta	Edmonton	Campus Community Gardens	CFGS
University of Alberta	Edmonton	Indigenous Teaching and Learning Gardens	CFGS
University of Alberta	Edmonton	Prairie Urban Farm	CFGS
University of Alberta	Edmonton	University of Alberta Farmer's Market	CFSS
University of Lethbridge	Lethbridge	Campus Garden – Campus Roots	CFGS
University of Lethbridge	Lethbridge	Nourish	CFSS
<b>British Columbia</b>			
Capilano University	Vancouver	Campus Community Garden	CFGS
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Surrey	Grassroots Café & Lounge	CFSS
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby	Food Rescue (Embark)	CFSS
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby	SFU Pocket Farmers' Market	CFGS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	Agora Café (previously called Roots)	CFSS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	Foood	CFSS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	Roots on the Roof	CFGS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	Sprouts and Seedlings Café/Eatery	CFSS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	Tu'wusht Garden Project	CFGS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	UBC Farm	CFGS
University of British Columbia	Vancouver	UBC Farmers' Market	CFSS
University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George	University Farmers' Market	CFSS
Vancouver Island University	Nanaimo	The Campus Community Garden	CFGS
<b>Manitoba</b>			
Assiniboine Community College	Brandon	Assiniboine Community College Gardens	CFGS
Brandon University	Brandon	Brandon University Food Bank	CFSS
Canadian Mennonite University	Winnipeg	Canadian Mennonite University Gardens	CFGS
University of Manitoba	Winnipeg	UMSU Garden	CFGS
University of Winnipeg	Winnipeg	Diversity Food Services	CFSS
University of Winnipeg	Winnipeg	Langside Learning Garden	CFGS
Wesley College	Winnipeg	Wesley College Gardens	CFGS

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>New Brunswick</b>			
Mount Allison University	Sackville	Indigenous Gardens Project – the Three Sisters Garden	CFGS
Mount Allison University	Sackville	Mount Allison University Farm	CFGS
University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	UNB Free Food Planters	CFGS
University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	University of New Brunswick Gardens	CFGS
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>			
Memorial University	St. John's	Campus Foodbank at Memorial University	CFSS
Memorial University	St. John's	Memorial University Gardens	CFGS
University of New Brunswick	St. John's	UNB Community Garden	CFGS
<b>Nova Scotia</b>			
Acadia University	Wolfville	Acadia University Community Farm	CFGS
Cape Breton University	Sydney	Cape Breton University Community Garden	CFGS
Dalhousie University	Truro	Chef's Garden	CFGS
Dalhousie University	Halifax	Dalhousie Farmer's Market	CFSS
Dalhousie University	Halifax	Dalhousie Urban Garden Society	CFGS
Dalhousie University	Halifax	The Loaded Ladle	CFSS
St Mary's University	Halifax	St Mary's University Community Garden	CFGS
University St-Anne	Pointe-de-l'Église	Café Bric-à-Brac	CFSS
<b>Ontario</b>			
Algoma University (Main Campus)	Brampton	The People's Garden	CFGS
Brock University	St. Catharines	Brock Community Garden	CFGS
Brock University	St. Catharines	Food First Program at Brock	CFSS
Carleton University	Ottawa	The Garden Spot / The Carlton Food Collective	CFSS
Conestoga College	Cambridge	Conestoga College Gardens	CFGS
Conestoga College	Cambridge	Conestoga College Indigenous Food Garden	CFGS
Georgian College	Barrie	Georgian College Garden	CFGS
Laurentian University	Sudbury	Laurentian University Garden	CFGS
Loyalist College	Belleville	Loyalist College Garden	CFGS
McMaster University	Hamilton	Bridges Café	CFSS
McMaster University	Hamilton	Food for Thought	CFSS
McMaster University	Hamilton	McMaster Community Garden	CFGS
McMaster University	Hamilton	McMaster Teaching and Community Garden	CFGS
Niagara College	Welland	Nourishing Minds Fund	CFSS
OCAD University	Toronto	grOCAD's Community Garden Project	CFGS
OCAD University	Toronto	Hot Lunch	CFSS
Ontario Tech University	Oshawa	Ontario Tech University Gardens	CFGS
Queen's University	Kingston	Common Grounds Coffee House (and "The Brew," which is their other location)	CFSS
Queen's University	Kingston	Community Gardens at Queen's	CFGS

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>Ontario (continued)</b>			
Queen's University	Kingston	Good Times Diner	CFSS
Ryerson University	Toronto	Good Food Centre at Ryerson (previously known as the Community Food Room)	CFSS
Sheridan College	Trafalgar and Davis Campus	Sheridan College Gardens	CFGS
Trent University	Peterborough	Trent Farm	CFGS
University of Ottawa	Ottawa	University of Ottawa Community Gardens	CFGS
University of Toronto	Toronto	The Sky Garden	CFGS
University of Toronto	Toronto	UofT Global Kitchen	CFSS
University of Toronto (St. George Campus)	Toronto	Regenesys Youth Food Centre	CFGS
University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)	Scarborough	Grow the Roof – UTSC IC Rooftop Garden	CFGS
University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)	Scarborough	U of T Scarborough Farmers' Market	CFSS
University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)	Scarborough	University of Toronto Scarborough Gardens	CFGS
University of Waterloo	Waterloo	Environmental Studies Coffee Shop	CFSS
University of Waterloo	Waterloo	University of Waterloo Gardens	CFGS
University of Windsor	Windsor	University of Windsor Campus Community Garden	CFGS
Western University	London	King's Community Garden	CFGS
Western University	London	Western University Friends of Gardeners	CFGS
York University (Keele Campus)	Toronto	YUM! Market	CFSS
<b>Quebec</b>			
Concordia University	Montreal	Campus Potager	CFGS
Concordia University	Montreal	Concordia University Greenhouse (part of Concordia's City Farm School)	CFGS
Concordia University (Loyola Campus)	Montreal	Concordia University City Farm School	CFGS
Concordia University (Loyola Campus)	Montreal	Concordia University Loyola gardens (part of Concordia's City Farm School)	CFGS
Concordia University	Montreal	Mother Hubbard's Cupboard	CFSS
Concordia University	Montreal	Le Frigo Vert	CFSS
L'Université du Québec à Montréal	Sherbrooke	Le Crapaud	CFGS
McGill University	Montreal	Urban Gardens / Campus Crops	CFGS
McGill University	Montreal	Midnight Kitchen	CFSS
McGill University	Montreal	Student-Run Cafe (The Nest)	CFSS
McGill University	Montreal	AUS Snax	CFSS
McGill University	Montreal	The Coffee Co-op	CFSS
Université de Montréal	Montreal	En Vrac	CFSS
Université de Montréal	Montreal	Université de Montréal Gardens	CFGS

Province / Institution	City	Name of Initiative	Classification
<b>Quebec (<i>continued</i>)</b>			
Université de Sherbrooke	Sherbrooke	Des Campus Nourriciers	CFGS
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	Chicoutimi	Université du Québec à Chicoutimi Campus Food System	CFSS
<b>Saskatchewan</b>			
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon	Horticulture Club Community Garden	CFGS