

Amanda Missimer, Nutrition and Food Sciences

URI Free Farmers' Market: A Campus Initiative to Improve Food Access and Food Insecurity

A recent survey of the University of Rhode Island (URI) community found one in four students face food insecurity which can result in decreased academic performance, increased anxiety, health and nutrition issues. The URI Free Farmers' Market (FFM) is a campus initiative to mobilize produce grown at URI farms to a centralized location on campus, all produce is grown and harvested less than one mile away and less than 24 hours before it's distributed to students. The FFM has been scaling for three years by increasing produce production, mobilization efforts and access across campus. The project supports a multidisciplinary effort of faculty, staff and student experiential learning. The preliminary data suggests that repeat visits to the FFM is correlated with improved skin carotenoid score, a measure of fruit and vegetable intake, along with ~1700 kcal of nutrient rich produce each week. The sustainability of serving URI students with fresh, local produce free of charge is paramount to this program to reduce stigma and increase accessibility for all, but cannot be accomplished without required farming equipment and market supplies. We hypothesize the delivery of weekly, local free produce will support and improve the health and well-being of URI students.

Award: \$10,000