***“Our goal is audacious, and it is far-reaching. It is our intent to do everything in our power to put the world on a pathway to feed itself in ways that are nutritious and sustainable.”***

* *UC President Janet Napolitano*

**Background and Rationale**

By virtue of their charge to lead the nation in agricultural innovation, land-grant institutions have a unique ability and responsibility to tackle the global food challenge. *How will we sustainably and nutritiously feed a world population expected to reach 8 billion by 2025?*

The University of California (UC) has committed to helping the world achieve zero hunger by aligning its resources in a system-wide effort called the UC Global Food Initiative - GFI. It is a bold goal, but one that is vital to the world’s future. We believe that the model developed at UC may provide an organizational model for other educational institutions. Learn more about the Global Food Initiative by viewing this [brief video](https://youtu.be/ajCYEnBO4bM).

**Overview**

UC President Janet Napolitano launched the University of California Global Food Initiative on July 1, 2014. The initiative emerged from widespread interest in the food system at the ten UC campuses, UC’s Agriculture and Natural Resource Division and the Lawrence Berkeley National Labs. Read the GFI announcement [here](http://universityofcalifornia.edu/news/uc-launches-global-food-initiative).

The GFI is harnessing UC’s resources to address what is perhaps the most critical issue of our time: How to sustainably and nutritiously feed a world population expected to reach 8 billion by 2025.

The initiative aligns the university’s research, outreach and operational efforts in a sustained and organized way to *develop*, *demonstrate* and *export* solutions for food security, health and sustainability throughout California, the United States and the world. Read a one-page overview of the GFI [here](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/uc-gfi-1pager-overview.pdf).

The GFI already involves thousands of faculty, students, staff and alumni. It draws on UC’s leadership in agriculture, medicine, climate science, public policy, social science, biological science, humanities, arts and law, among other disciplines.

It builds on work UC already is doing…from breeding new crop varieties (part of its land-grant mission) and improving nutrition to modeling climate change and sharing knowledge that is increasing literacy in food, agriculture and science. The GFI is breaking down the silos that often exist between disciplines and campuses, and is enabling us to focus our collective efforts to do more.

**Goals**

The GFI has four basic goals in support of the overarching vision of putting us on a pathway to sustainably and nutritiously feeding a growing population and achieving zero hunger in the world. An underlying principle has been to closely and authentically examine the institution’s own practices. The specific goals of the GFI are to:

* Work together across the UC system to create solutions that improve food security, health and sustainability throughout California, the U.S. and the world;
* Identify best practices to address food needs and create toolkits to share locally and globally;
* Use the latest UC research to help communities access healthy, sustainable food; and
* Apply UC expertise to shape and drive food policy discussions.

The GFI works beyond UC by partnering with nonprofits, government agencies and others to translate UC’s cutting edge research into policies and programs that help communities in California and around the world eat more sustainably and nutritiously. We have an international fellows program that is facilitating the exchange of information and technology. The GFI is also driving operational improvements across the UC system aimed at using UC’s collective buying power and dining practices to implement best practices for healthy and sustainable campus communities.

**Governance**

The Global Food Initiative involves all 10 UC campuses, UC’s Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the UC Office of the President (UCOP). The work is guided by a system wide steering committee appointed by UC President Janet Napolitano, the chancellors and the vice president of ANR. Interdisciplinary working groups and subcommittees focus on projects; these groups include representatives from the campuses, ANR, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and UCOP.

**Topics and Working Groups**

The GFI currently organizes its work under *five key topic areas* that cover a broad spectrum of food system issues. They include:

* Food production;
* Access and security;
* Sourcing;
* Education and communication; and
* Policy and public impact.

More than *20 system-wide subcommittees and campus-based task forces* are working on numerous vital projects under these *five areas of inquiry*: curriculum, operations, policy, research, and service. Teams consist of students, staff, faculty and partners from outside the University.

Below is a brief description of each area of inquiry, including the research questions, project examples and some success stories. Links to reports and other resources developed by the project teams are included.

* Curriculum
  + *Research Questions*: How do we teach students about food and agricultural systems, and communicate that information with the public? Global Food Initiative curriculum subcommittees are helping prepare the next generation of science communicators, enhance experiential learning opportunities, increase food literacy, catalog existing food-related courses and develop new online introduction courses to food-related issues.[[1]](#footnote-1)
  + *Project Examples*: CLEAR science communication[[2]](#footnote-2); experiential learning[[3]](#footnote-3); food literacy[[4]](#footnote-4); online food courses; UC system wide course catalog listing of food-related courses.
  + *Success Story*: The Experiential Learning Subcommittee developed a report highlighting the best practices, lessons learned and case studies of experiential learning opportunities at UC, along with [“living” online directories](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/best-practices/experiential-learning/directories.html) of those courses and programs.
* Operations
  + *Research Questions*: How do we improve our operations so that we increase access to nutritious and sustainable food? Global Food Initiative operations subcommittees are working to ensure food security among UC students, facilitate small growers’ ability to do business with UC, increase procurement of sustainable food, enhance the availability of healthy choices in campus vending machines, and reduce waste in both residential and retail dining.
  + *Project Examples*: Food security and access on UC campuses (student hunger)[[5]](#footnote-5); procurement: improving the ability of small farmers to sell to the UC system; vending machine policy; and zero waste policies.[[6]](#footnote-6)
  + *Success Story*: A subcommittee composed of members of the UC Merced and UC Santa Barbara committees identified the best practices from their campus dining services in purchasing sustainable local produce from small growers. This information has been shared throughout the UC system.[[7]](#footnote-7)
* Policy
  + *Research Questions:* How do we raise awareness about food issues, help inform food policy and elevate food policy as a priority? Global Food Initiative policy subcommittees have created a clearinghouse and calendar of food-related activities at UC, launched two lecture series (on food equity and on healthy students/campuses/communities), collected policy success stories, and are mobilizing law schools to address food equity and ethics.[[8]](#footnote-8)
  + *Project Examples:* Food law policy clinic; food equity lecture series; translating research into policy.
  + *Success Story:* Helping academics leverage food and agricultural research to inform public policy: publication, case studies, and workshop.[[9]](#footnote-9)
* Research
  + *Research Questions:* How do we raise awareness about UC’s food-related research and explore new frontiers in food and agriculture? Global Food Initiative research subcommittees are working to survey UC students about food security, catalog UC research in sustainable agriculture, share success stories in fisheries and international food issues, explore the impact of climate change on agriculture, and examine urban agriculture’s potential to reduce food disparities.
  + *Project Examples:* Data mining: Current and future impact of changing climate conditions on California agriculture productivity and sustainability; food security (hunger); food from the sea (maritime/fisheries sustainability); urban agriculture and food disparities, etc.
  + *Success Story:* A team of researchers from UC San Diego, UCLA and UC Berkeley is examining urban agriculture and food disparities. In the first phase of the project, they created an initial geo-database using publicly available archives on food and food-related health indicators at the census tract and county level. They are currently developing three case studies on food access and opportunities around urban agriculture (Richmond Urban Tilth); food education and food security (West Oakland Middle School Center for Ecoliteracy, Oakland Unified School District); and community-run greenhouses in Bayview, San Francisco working with Literacy for Environmental Justice). Additionally, the team is examining the nexus of food, climate and water. They have led community workshops, focusing on soil ecology and illustrating basic components of ecosystems, the types and roles of soil fauna, and their functions in creating healthy food plants and environments.
* Service
  + *Research Questions:* How do we improve nutrition at K-12 schools, expand farmers markets and increase student engagement in food issues? Global Food Initiative service subcommittees are working to help establish farmers markets on campuses, expand local food production, maximize the use of campus dining meals, develop healthy and sustainable dining options for K-12 students, and involve students in fellowship programs.
  + *Project Examples:* Edible campuses; farmers markets; K-12 dining; student fellowships (UC campus and international fellowships); SWIPES for meals[[10]](#footnote-10); etc.
  + *Success Stories:* The Swipes program allows students to donate excess dollars on their meal plan to fight hunger. It began at UCLA and has expanded nationwide. A UC team created a guide detailing how to start a campus swipes program.

Reports and toolkits from these areas are available on a [Best Practices](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/best-practices/index.html) portal page on the GFI website.

**Mentoring, Fellowships and Awards Programs**

Students and young people are vital to solving global food challenges. Through a range of awards and fellowship opportunities (both domestic and international), the UC GFI seeks to mentor and support the next generation of food and agriculture leaders.

**30 Under 30 Awards**

The inaugural [30 Under 30 Award winners](https://30under30.universityofcalifornia.edu) were announced on June 14, 2016. The awards recognize individuals – both inside and outside the UC system - under the age of thirty who have made significant contributions to a wide array of food-related fields, including food production, food access and security, food sourcing, food education and community, and food policy and public impact. The 30 Under 30 Awards provide a unique and important opportunity to acknowledge student activism and early career work.

**Global Food Initiative Fellows**

In 2014, 54 UC students were awarded UC Global Food Initiative fellowships. The $2,500 fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students have funded projects that address issues ranging from community gardens and food pantries to urban agriculture and food waste. The students have also had opportunities to convene. While the bulk of the Fellowships came from the GFI fund, some campuses augmented and supported additional fellowships through matching and private donations. Learn about the Fellows [here](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/student-involvement/2015-gfi-fellows/index.html).

**UC-USAID Fellows**

UC and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have partnered to expand a fellowship program that addresses pressing agricultural development challenges around the globe. Graduate student fellows spend two to six months helping partner organizations solve scientific, technological, organizational and business challenges. USAID’s Global Development Lab launched this program last year with six universities, including UC Berkeley and UC Davis. The UC Global Food Initiative is co-sponsoring fellowships to help expand the program at UC Berkeley and to help UC Davis to extend its program to include fellowships at UC Riverside and UC Santa Cruz. Learn more [here](http://universityofcalifornia.edu/news/going-global-graduate-student-fellows-tackle-international-development-projects).

**Communications Strategies**

There has been explosive growth in the attention being paid to food and agricultural issues by any number of audiences, including the general public. Food is a leveler: everyone eats and everyone is a stakeholder. Food issues transcend borders and bring into play the environment, human health, social justice, politics, public policy, national security and more. A lesson learned from the GFI has been that there is a unique opportunity for land-grant institutions to take a lead in communicating about the important issues surrounding the food system. It is a rich content environment for communicators.

The GFI initiative also provides an opportunity to communicate science information to a range of audiences. With research indicating a [widening gap](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/29/5-key-findings-science/) between what scientists know about critical food-related issues and what the public believes, there has never been a more important time to increase science literacy.

The GFI team has developed a range of communications tools and strategies to capitalize on this interest and to provide a public service through education.

**GFI Landing Page and Portal**

A GFI [**landing page and portal**](http://universityofcalifornia.edu/global-food-initiative)facilitates communications around the initiative, for both internal and external audiences. The landing page enables site visitors to quickly delve into the GFI’s work through links to news stories, research, programs, people, multimedia pieces and more. There is also an events calendar that communicates the vast array of opportunities for the public to engage with UC on the initiative. The landing page connects to each UC campus, UC ANR, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and UCOP.

**The UC Food Observer**

As part of the GFI, UC launched the [**UC Food Observer (UCFO)**](http://ucfoodobserver.com) in January 2015. UCFO is a unique flagship communications and public service project that provides curated news/original content through a blog, website and linked social platforms (such as Twitter and Facebook). UCFO highlights important news about the broad topic of food and agriculture and adds value to the varied discussions occurring about how to sustainably and nutritiously feed the world.

*The intention of the brand is not to serve primarily as a channel for UC news, but rather to provide a platform that gathers and convenes conversations.* The brand provides a balanced perspective on complex issues, to *educate, connect and provide a public service*.

Another important goal for UCFO is to *increase literacy* around important topics in food and agriculture (and science literacy in general). The content is produced and curated by a Cooperative Extension academic, who enjoys editorial freedom. To date, more than 715 [blog posts](http://ucfoodobserver.com) have been produced, there are nearly 7,000 [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ucfoodobserver) followers, a growing presence on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/UCFoodObserver/%255D), and growing presence on Instagram and Pinterest. Audiences include the general public, educators, academics, legislators and media. A podcast and video content will be added in Fall 2016. The fast growth of the UCFO brand affirms the broad public interest in the food system.

**“California Matters” Video Series with Mark Bittman**

UC partnered with former New York Times journalist and celebrity chef Mark Bittman to produce a 10-part video series called “California Matters,” which focuses on highlighting a range of complex food and agricultural topics impacting California and the world. The videos feature UC researchers whose work is compelling. For example, one video shares the work of a UC ANR researcher who studies the cultural and ethnic dimensions of food security among Hmong farmers in California’s Central Valley. The public has received the videos with enthusiasm. The videos range in length from 3 to 5 minutes. Access the video series [here](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCl-FXGBB36Yd4xOFWSKc0Dg).

**Student-Produced Videos**

The Experiential Learning Subcommittee commissioned the development of a series of student-produced videos. One video explores composting at the UC Berkeley campus, another shares information about a pepper-breeding project at UC Davis, and yet another discusses food insecurity at the UC Riverside campus. There are ten videos in total; view them [here](https://vimeo.com/user40724442/videos).

**Contact Information**

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1. The UC GFI has produced a [one-page resource and information sheet](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/uc_gfi_1pager_outreach.pdf) on school and community outreach. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The CLEAR Project – [Communication, Literacy & Education for Agricultural Research](https://clear-project.org) - is composed of a group of young scientists at the University of California, Berkeley who want to find better ways to communicate science at the forefront of discovery. The project is co-led by ANR specialist (also Berkeley faculty member) Peggy Lemaux and Dawn Chiniquy, a postdoctoral researcher at the Lawrence Berkeley National Labs. The goal of CLEAR is to communicate fact-based information grounded in scientific evidence to feed the growing world population, address the new demands of the changing climate, and decrease our environmental footprint. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Experiential Learning Subcommittee published this report – [“Learning from the Ground Up: Experiential Learning in Food and Agriculture Systems at the University of California”](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/best-practices/experiential-learning/learning-from-the-ground-up.pdf) – in February 2016. Kate Kaplan, UC Berkeley Food Institute; GFI Student Fellow Damian Parr, UC Santa Cruz; Jennifer Sowerwine, UC ANR and UC Berkeley; Lori Ann Thrupp, UC Berkeley Food Institute; and Mark Van Horn, UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute and Student Farm wrote the report. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Read this UC Food Observer [blog post](http://ucfoodobserver.com/2016/02/04/agriculturalfood-literacy-from-orchard-to-campus-were-engaged/) for one academic’s observations about the importance of GFI’s food literacy efforts. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The GFI has produced a [one-page resource sheet](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/uc_gfi_1pager_increasing_access.pdf) that provides resources and information to help campuses address food security and nutrition in their campus communities. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This one-page resource sheet provides resources and information to make campuses healthier through operations. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A [report](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/small_growers_best_practices_final.pdf) was produced by the Best Practices Subcommittee on Facilitating Small Growers’ Ability to Do Business With UC. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A subcommittee produced a report – [“Food Equity, Social Justice, and the Role of Law Schools: A Call to Action.”](http://law.ucla.edu/centers/social-policy/resnick-program-for-food-law-and-policy/publications/food-equity-social-justice-and-the-role-of-law-schools/) It explores the opportunity for law schools within UC and across the country to more visibly and holistically address food system injustices. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The GFI Policy Subcommittee issued a report entitled [“Linking Food and Agriculture Research to Policy.”](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/leveraging-research-for-food-and-agriculture-policy.pdf) The report was compiled by Ann Thrupp, PhD (UC Berkeley Food Institute); Nina F. Ichikawa, MA (UC Berkeley Food Institute); Josette Lewis, PhD (UC Davis World Food Center); Laura Schmidt, PhD, MSW, MPH (UC San Francisco) and GFI student assistant Pallavi Sherikar. The Policy Subcommittee pivoted off the report and convened a [workshop](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/research_to_policy_workshop_report.pdf) for more than seventy food, agriculture, and public health researchers and university staff. This workshop showcased [successful research-to-policy cases,](http://food.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Case-Studies-Final-WEB.pdf) included keynote speeches from California State Senator Bill Monning and U.S. Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, and brought in university government relations experts to equip researchers to engage effectively with policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This publication – [“Swipe Out Hunger: A Guide to Creating Your Campus Sustainable Meal Sharing and Recovery Program”](http://www.ucop.edu/global-food-initiative/_files/Swipe%2520Out%2520Hunger%2520Guide_Final.pdf) – was produced by the GFI Swipes for Meals Subcommittee. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)