



Cultivate R-Space: Food Justice in Riverside, CA

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Undergraduate Research in the Community University of California, Riverside

How effective are student-led seminars in learning about our food system through an intersectional feminist approach?

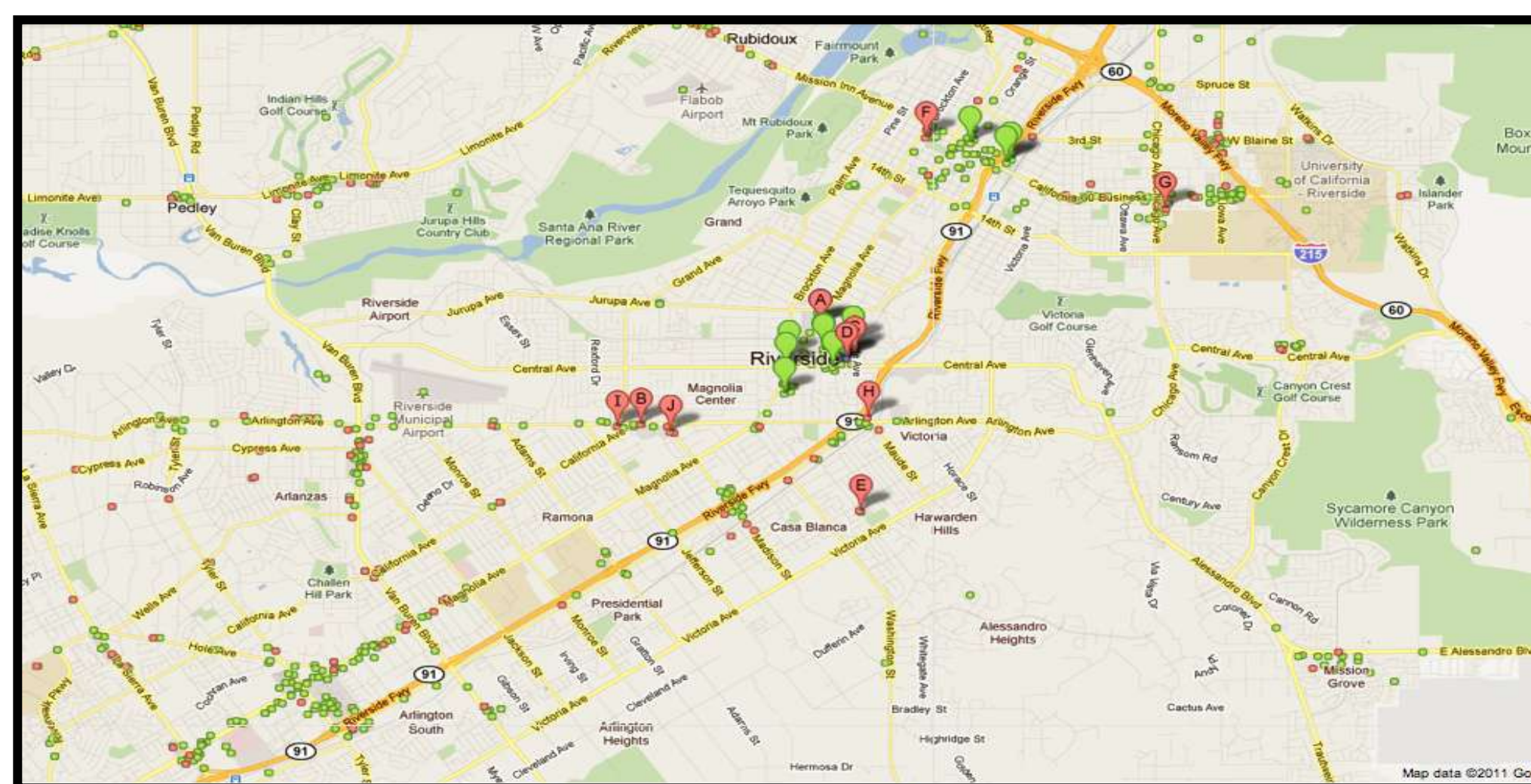
How do we promote dialogue, political awareness, and community development in an introductory seminar in comparison to a standardized university course? What issues arise when creating and implementing a student-led course/seminar through this university? What effective community learning models and changes in UCR Departments and Dining Services are needed to promote food justice at UC Riverside while creating connections with the off-campus community?

Introduction: Access to Healthy Food in Riverside

"The new site for the garden will be a place for students, faculty, staff and community members to grow fresh produce while learning about social, environmental, and economically sustainable developments. People will have an opportunity to create community-based research programs and service-learning opportunities around environmental education and interdisciplinary courses that enhance the students' experience at UCR. R'Garden will act as a hub for sustainability at various levels of UCR" –Chancellor White, January 2012

Intensive research on the western food system shows correlation of exposure and negative health effects including cancers, respiratory diseases, diabetes, and other chronic diseases from contamination throughout our food system (Community Health 2008). Those most affected are people of color, poor people, and other underprivileged groups who are more likely to work, live, and play in more environmentally-degraded neighborhoods with lower access to affordable healthy food access (EPA web). At UC Riverside, we wanted to find out the availability of healthy food access in our city. We knew that it was easier to buy fast-food than obtain fruit or fresh veggies.

In 2009, students from UC Riverside worked with administration to get a community garden on campus. In the spring quarter of 2009, a Food Systems seminar was initiated in order for students to learn about where their food comes from. In 2010, I joined the team with an interest in environmental justice and human health. Through this project, we began to study the food system of Riverside in comparison to other cities in California. From our findings, we are learning how environmentalism must be applied through community-based solutions at UC Riverside and in Riverside in order to promote wellness for all through affordable and accessible good food options and education about where our food comes from while promoting community empowerment.



Food Options

- Red dots represent small markets and liquor stores.
- Letter red dots represent large supermarkets.
- Green dots represent fast-food restaurants.

Results: Fast-food is concentrated along 91 freeway on Magnolia Blvd. in the Arlington neighborhood, on Van Buren/Arlington Blvd. in the Arlanza community (near Riverside airport), in Magnolia Center (near Riverside plaza), and all along University Ave.

Results: Although there are 5 farmers' markets in Riverside, getting to them requires knowledge about time, location, and transportation which is only provided on website and billboards in English, and 25% of residents speak another language at home making it difficult to advertise to non-English speakers (Social, Census 2010). One must also have a flexible schedule, but 75% of employed work for private companies on payroll.

Final Project 2011

10:1 ratio of fast food locations to fresh food markets on University Avenue from UC Riverside throughout the Eastside neighborhood.

Access to Food Justice Education at UC Riverside



Fall Quarter 2011: Preparing for Seminar

- Education: Researching alternative pedagogy and eco-feminism.
- Action: Working with Office of Sustainability, Agricultural Operations, and the Office of Development at UC Riverside to create proposal with cost analysis, goals, and components to create a permanent community garden.
- Finding 1: Bureaucracy is constant barrier to getting garden and seminar forward. The issue is obtaining land, both for gardening and a classroom location.
- Finding 2: Dean from College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences more interested in research over community engagement and food justice in garden.
- Finding 3: UC Riverside, a land grant university, is the only UC without a community garden, no environmental studies degree, and growing movement in Riverside to localize food system.



Winter Quarter 2012: Preparing for Seminar

- Action at UCR: Turned in all documents, written support from the Chancellor, meeting with all Deans (except CNAS) supporting the position of community garden coordinator.
- Finding 1: Chancellor makes it clear that faculty must teach courses during meeting. He does not mention anything pertaining to social or environmental justice in support letter but does voice support to "feed families."
- Finding 2: Fear from student members of making this seminar "political," changing the titles on the syllabus makes it more supported.
- Finding 3: WELL has not hosted environmental wellness events and would like the community garden to be part of the project. Little knowledge of food justice or environmental justice from this and many departments at UCR.
- Finding 4: Community garden spaces: one set to be parking lot, another set to be Environmental Hazards Facility → Costs much greater than off campus due to pursuing the garden as a development project.

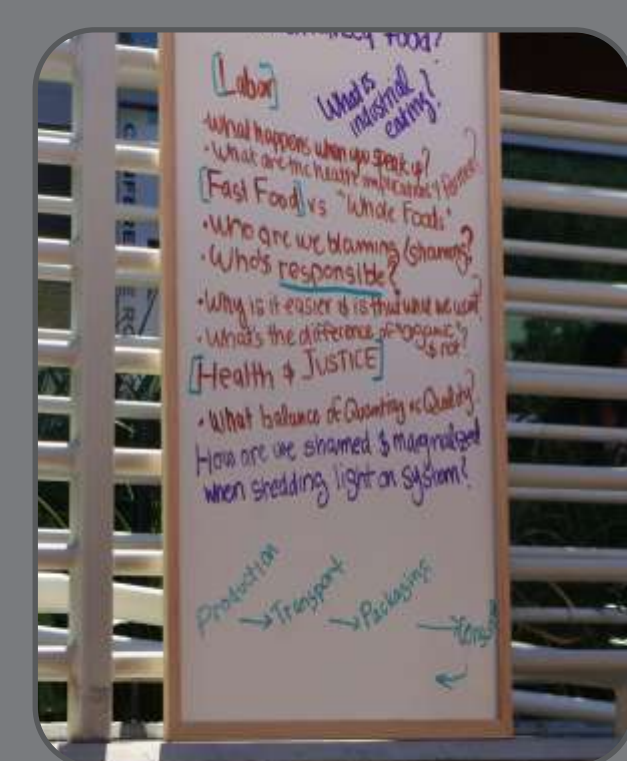
- Results: Tensions within group, much pressure on students to bring in project demands while not having accountability at administrative level. Losing connection to project



Spring Break 2012:

- Education: Well Alternative Spring Break
- Number of Students: 6-9
- UCR Faculty Involved: 0
- Riverside Community Leaders: 0

- Recommendations for WELL
- Need for environmental health education trainings, environmental justice event manual, and more vegan/vegetarian food options.
- Need for integrating intersectional analysis in trainings
- Need for before, during, and post reflection period to address privilege and "volunteerism" in Riverside area.
- Better advertising for environmental events on campus.



Spring Quarter 2012:

- Education: Urban Garden Seminar: T/Th 9:40-11:00am, 10 hours of service learning
- Finding 1: Students are learning about our food system through an intersectional analysis while obtaining introduction to alternate choices to mainstream consuming practices.
- Finding 2: Need for documenting process and creating alternative solutions that do not count on campus for land, resources, or development of garden at moment. Must create community-based solutions.
- Finding 3: Issues within group must be solved through constant communication, meetings with whole group, rotating facilitation, and being passionate for project's education over material product.

Next Steps

Urban Garden Seminar 2012

Seminar Course: 198-1 ANTH, 190 PSC

Seminar Topics:

- Alternative Pedagogy in Classroom
- Environmental Political Thought and Food Justice
- Social Permaculture and Service Learning
- Ethical Research Methods
- Food: Ethno-botany and Culture
- Green Revolution and Globalization of Food System
- Food: Indigenous and Gender Violence
- Southern California: Local Food Movements
- Food: Healing and Community Development

Next Steps: Final Project in Seminar 2012

- Team 1: Health Food Map
- Team 2: Farmers' Market
- Team 3: Creating Zine (documentation)
- Team 4: Photo Petitions
- Team 5: Education about Project (history timeline)

Collective Demands: by Week 4 in Seminar 2012

- Inclusion in the process
- Accountability and Transparency
- Student paid food education positions
- Autonomy/Self Governance
- Permaculture/ Design/ Model (Social Ecology)
- Vegan/Vegetarian fresh options in all restaurants
- Bring back farmer's market
- Purpose: Community Development and Service Learning

References

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6. Well Program at UC Riverside

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