

**Local Food from Farm to School:  
Investigating the Skidmore Dining Hall's Local Partnerships**

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## ***Abstract***

The growing local food movement in the United States has carried into the educational system, affecting food programs in elementary schools and universities alike. The Skidmore College Dining Hall has joined this movement towards greater food sustainability by forming partnerships with nearby farmers, processors, and distributors. In this study, we investigate the history of these local partnerships, evaluate their effectiveness, and make recommendations on how to expand and improve them in the future. Through interviews with key stakeholders and a student survey, we gauge interest in these local partnerships, and identify the benefits and challenges of local food across multiple perspectives.

## ***1. Introduction***

### **1.1 The Historical Context of Agriculture in the United States**

Over the past hundred years, the process of producing and distributing food in the United States has been significantly transformed. Before the Green Revolution of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, food production was based on small farms, labor-intensive practices, and closed-loop systems that recycled agricultural byproducts (Gopalan 2001). However, with the advent of chemical fertilizers and pesticides following World War II, this network of small farms was converted into a centralized, mechanized system of industrial agriculture that is still active today. Although this widespread network of agribusinesses has increased food production yields in the short term, it has also had many adverse effects on ecological systems, human health, local economies, and social relations (Gopalan 2001, Horrigan et al 2002, Kirschenmann 2009, Lichtfouse 2008).

In response to the myriad negative impacts of industrial agriculture, many people have joined the grassroots movement for sustainable agriculture in the United States. The sustainable agriculture movement recognizes the finite nature of resources and promotes equity in resource

allocation (Horrigan et al 2001). At its most basic level, sustainability is built upon the principle of meeting the needs of the present population without compromising the needs of future generations (Brundtland 1987). Consequently, the primary goal of sustainable agriculture is to foster healthy, interdependent communities of people, animals, plants and soil (Gopalan 2001). Sustainable agriculture doesn't just provide food, it also preserves biodiversity, maintains soil fertility and water purity, recycles natural resources, and ultimately produces diverse forms of high quality nourishment for a growing population (Gopalan 2001, Spiertz 2008).

## 1.2 The Challenges of Defining “Sustainable” Agriculture

The specific techniques that achieve the goals of sustainable agriculture are varied. Consequently, there is not a conclusive set of farming practices that constitute the concept of “sustainable” agriculture as a whole (Horrigan et al 2001). Rather, an agricultural process is considered sustainable when it is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and culturally appropriate (Gopalan 2001). The definition of what is considered “sustainable” agriculture is site specific, and it varies by location, ecosystem, and community. There are, however, certain practices and techniques that tend to increase the sustainability of agricultural systems. These methods include: local food networks, organic farming; permaculture; agroforestry; integrated aquaculture; small-scale farms; crop diversity; crop rotation; cover crops; low-till and no-till farming; soil management; rotational grazing and pasture management; integrated pest management; integrated crop management; integrated nutrient management; water harvesting; and on-farm research (Gopalan 2001, Horrigan et al 2002, Spiertz 2008, Van Hook 1994).

### 1.3 Is Local Food Sustainable?

The phrase “local food” has been used to describe a wide variety of food products and processes, including farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (or CSAs), roadside farm stands, U-pick operations, and local processing plants such as bakeries and breweries (Hinrichs 2000). In some cases, the term “local” describes food that is grown within a particular distance, such as within 100 miles, or within a particular county, state, or even country. This discrepancy in meaning can render the term “local food” as somewhat ambiguous and unhelpful (Edwards-Jones et al 2008) unless it is assigned a specific contextual meaning.

A further complication of local food is that its advocates often assume a correlation between locality and improved taste, safety, nutritional value, environmental benefits, and local economy. These claims, however, are difficult to prove (Edwards-Jones et al 2008) and may not be true for all case studies (Barlett 2011). For example, it is easy to assume that local produce generates lower greenhouse gas emissions due to the shorter distance between producer and consumer. In reality, however, it’s possible that non-local produce transported by train may actually generate lower greenhouse gas emissions than local produce that is transported by truck (DeWeert 2009). Another example where non-local food could have a lower greenhouse gas emission than its local counterpart is the case of non-local tomatoes grown in a warmer climate instead of local tomatoes that are grown in an energy-intensive greenhouse. To understand the true complexities of local versus non-local food, therefore, it would be necessary to perform a full life cycle analysis (LCA) that considers all relevant inputs and impacts, including fertilizers, pesticides, electricity, storage, machinery, transportation, packaging, and disposal (Edwards-Jones et al 2008).

In spite of these challenges with local food, there are still clear benefits as well. One of the advantages to local food networks is improved transparency within the food production system (Cloud 2007). The simplification and proximity of food production, processing, and distribution makes it easier to track the origins and impacts of specific food items. Another benefit of local food is the support for the local economy, since more of the money goes directly to local farmer or processors, rather than to distant agricultural middlemen and corporations (Norberge-Hodge 2002). One final advantage of local food is the opportunity for consumer education (Gopalan 2001). By participating in local food networks, consumers can gain a better understanding of ecological concepts and the impacts of agriculture (Gopalan 2001, Van Hook 1994). Furthermore, a direct consumer-producer relationship often creates a personal, even emotional connection to food and food sources (Hinrichs 2000), whereas there is little opportunity for consumer involvement in the global food system.

#### 1.4 The Development of Farm-to-School Programs

Many K-12 schools, colleges, and universities are taking part in the local food movement by reforming their own cafeterias and classrooms. Educators have begun to use the school environment to link students with local agricultural processes in order to address a variety of environmental, social, and health issues, including carbon emissions, corporate control of seeds stocks, and nutrition (Barlett 2011). One example of this local food trend in schools is the Farm to School Connection in Davis, California, a K-12 local food project which promotes healthy lifestyles in an attempt to curb trends in youth obesity and related diseases (Graham et al 2004). The Farm to School Connection was designed as an innovative and comprehensive school district program that included farm tours, hands-on instructional gardens, the development of compost

systems, a lunchtime salad bar featuring local produce, and integrated classroom curricula focusing on agricultural, health, and nutrition (Graham et al 2004, Brillinger et al 2003). The results of the Farm to School Connection included improved student diet and enhanced communication between parents, teachers, and garden coordinators (Graham et al 2004).

Sustainable food initiatives in higher education have moved beyond a handful of pilot programs to include a wide spectrum of initiatives at both small colleges and large universities across the country. Campus sustainable food projects generally fall into four categories: 1) dining hall innovation in procurement, menus and kitchen operations; 2) academic and co-curricular activities; 3) direct marketing opportunities for farms on campus, and; 4) experiential learning at campus gardens or farms (Barlett 2011).

In the realm of higher education, one of the most successful university programs involving local food is the Yale Sustainable Food Project, founded in 2001 by Yale students, faculty, staff, President Richard Levin, and Alice Waters. Yale's program began with an emphasis on improved food quality, and has since grown to include environmental education through flyers, posters in the dining hall, conversations among students and administration, and campus events (Barlett 2011). Currently, the Yale Sustainable Food Project manages an organic farm on campus, works with dining services on a sustainable dining program at Yale, and facilitates programs that support exploration and academic inquiry related to food and agriculture (YSFP 2010). As a program located in the temperate Northeast, Yale's Sustainable Food Project represents both a strong model and resource for Skidmore to draw from.

Other peer institutions such as Vassar College, located just two hours south of Saratoga Springs in Poughkeepsie, New York, and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, have similarly robust sustainable food programs including student run or supported organic farms on school

property, extensive local food networks and educational opportunities. The strength of these initiatives comes from their ability to weave together an array of social economic and environmental issues and involve a diverse group of student constituencies (Bartlett 2011). As sustainable food programs gain traction among colleges and universities, collectively there is potential for these alternative food systems to be transformative on a national scale (Barlett 2011).

### 1.5 Local Agriculture at Skidmore College

As a school embedded in an agricultural region, Skidmore College is in a unique position to address issues of food sustainability through involvement with local agriculture. Although the number of farms in Saratoga County has fallen from 3,611 in 1910 to 650 presently (New York Census of Agriculture 2007), there is still a wide variety of food goods and other commodities produced throughout the county, including dairy products, meats, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, berries and greenhouse products (New York Census of Agriculture 2007). Local partnerships already exist between Skidmore's Dining Services and nearby farmers, processors, and distributors, though the extent of these partnerships is not made visible to the student body. A few of these local partnerships are promoted at the Dining Hall through the use of signage, but the extent and effect of these local partnerships is largely unknown. On the Dining Services website, the only available information about these partners is their name, a link to their website (if available), and a brief rationale for the local partners program:

“Skidmore's dining services has created several partnerships with local farms and vendors, which reduces CO2 emissions, enhances the bond between consumer and producer, increases local economic benefits while providing the freshest, tastiest and most nutritional food possible.”

The lack of accessible information about these local partnerships led us to the following research questions: 1) How are Skidmore Dining Hall's local partnerships established and maintained? and; 2) How can these local food partnerships be further promoted and expanded in the future?

## ***2. Methods***

### **2.1 Contextual Information**

To familiarize ourselves with the history of the Dining Hall's Local Partnership program and local agriculture, we collected information from Skidmore alumnus Jonathan Greene (Class of 2007), American Farmland Trust, and the USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture for New York.

### **2.2 Needs Assessment Interviews**

We conducted a series of open-ended, semi-structured interviews with individuals from Dining Services staff and current local partners (farmers, processors, and distributors) who do business with the Dining Hall. We used key informants as interviewees, identifying individuals with the most comprehensive understanding of the subjects in question (Tremblay 2009).

Interview questions were modeled after the Needs Assessment primer from Cornell University's Farm To School in the Northeast Toolkit, 2007, which offers guidelines and resources for institutions trying to start Farm to School programs (see Appendix 1-4). The qualitative information we gathered was analyzed to identify emergent patterns (Yin 1994) and prioritized based on emphasis during interviews and the frequency in which specific needs were expressed among different stakeholders.

### 2.3 Skidmore Student Survey

In addition to our Needs Assessment Interviews, we also conducted an online survey of Dining Hall patrons who are current Skidmore Students. The survey addressed students' knowledge of, interest in, and willingness to pay for local, organic, and fair trade food. The survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey software. Our survey questions were reviewed by the campus sustainability coordinator, Riley Neugebauer, and the survey was distributed through a variety of student email lists in order to reach a wide audience (see Appendix 5). The email lists and distribution outlets included: the Residential Life all-student email lists for Residence Halls, Scribner Apartments, and North Woods Apartments, as well as Skidmore Unofficial, Skidmore Ecoofficial, Student Announcements, a public Facebook event, and the Environmental Studies majors, minors, and interest email lists.

### 2.4 Identifying Potential Partners

After researching the needs of Dining Services and our current local partners, we developed the following set of criteria for establishing local partnerships: product type/seasonality, transportation, farming and/or processing practices, and economic feasibility. We then identified potential local partners based on these parameters. Since the majority of our eggs and dairy products are already purchased within Saratoga County, we focused primarily on producers of meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables. In addition to preparing food for the Murray-Aikins Dining Hall, Skidmore Dining Services also sources products for retail and catering events. For this reason, our search included potential partners who sell produce in larger quantities at wholesale prices as well as smaller farmers and processors with more expensive specialty items. Using these criteria we identified 13 farms and processors located within 100

mile radius of Skidmore College Campus: Denison Farm, Farmer John's Produce, Flying Pigs Farm, Garden of Spice Poultry, Ice Cream Man Inc, Kilpatrick Family Farm, Mac Brook Farms, Pleasant Valley Farms, Sap Bush Hollow Farms, Underwood's Shushan Valley Hydro-Farm, Wing Road Farm, and Winter Sun Farms/Farm2Table Copackers. These 13 partners were either suggested through interviews or found on [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org). These individuals were sent a short survey by email (see Appendix 6). We reviewed responses to gauge interest, assess suitability and identify common concerns. Comments and suggestions informed our recommendations for Dining Services.

### ***3. Results***

#### **3.1 Contextual Information: A Brief History of Skidmore's Sustainable Food Initiatives**

Skidmore's partnerships with local farmers developed several years ago through a combination of staff, student, and administrative support. John Neil, Dining Services Director until 2005, had the original vision of partnering with local suppliers (John Batch pers. comm. 2011), but the legwork for establishing those partnerships was pursued by student Jonathan Greene, Skidmore alumnus '07. In his freshman year, Greene started a student club called D-Hall Revolution in support of sustainable food choices at the Dining Hall. Later that year, the club visited two peer institutions with active sustainable food projects: Middlebury and Yale. After these visits, Greene organized a panel discussion at Skidmore with local farmer Nate Darrow from Saratoga Apple, and he met with Skidmore College President Glotzbach and the Vice President for Finance and Administration, Mike West, to discuss the possibility of purchasing more local foods. According to Greene (pers. comm. 2011), the administration was extremely supportive of plans to purchase local food, and a partnership with Saratoga Apple was

established as a result of that initial conversation. The next year, Greene conducted a survey of hundreds of local farmers to see if they had any interest in supplying for Skidmore, and selected the top choices from the survey respondents to make recommendations to John Neil.

Since Greene's efforts in 2007, Skidmore has made other efforts to increase the sustainability of Dining Services' operations. With the construction of the new Murray-Aikins Dining Hall building completed in 2007, the administration decided to shift to trayless dining in order to decrease food waste. In addition, the new building is geothermally heated and cooled, and the leftover fryer oil is picked up as biofuel by Environmental Energy Corporation, a Hudson Falls company (John Batch pers. comm.). Furthermore, the Dining Hall hosts an annual "Harvest Dinner" event through Quandt's Food Service, which showcases seasonal foods from New York State. In the words of Executive Chef Jim Rose, the student response from the Harvest Dinner has been "tremendous" (pers. comm. 2011). Dining Services has also started catering for special events that showcase local food, such as the dinner event in the Tang Museum last fall, served on dinnerware that was hand-crafted by artist Paula Hayes for the "Understory" exhibition. In addition, the Dining Hall has also started receiving produce from the Skidmore Student Garden, which was started by student Laura Fralich in Spring 2009. In the first year of production (Spring - Fall 2009), the student garden produced over 1000 pounds of fresh produce which was sold to the Dining Hall at a price comparable to what Skidmore pays outside vendors (Laura Fralich pers. comm. 2011). Another recent student initiative concerning sustainable food was the recent Farm Spring Break, organized by Anna Graves '14. The Farm Spring Break gave students an opportunity to learn winter farming skills on Full and By Farm in Essex, New York. Further evidence of Skidmore's commitment to sustainable agriculture is the recent funding provided for 20 Skidmore students, staff, and faculty to attend to the NOFA-NY

(Northeast Organic Farmers' Association) Winter Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. Finally, there was a recent opportunity for students to participate in a permaculture workshop on campus to benefit the Skidmore Garden, and the opportunity for a full-day field trip to Whole Systems Design permaculture center in Vermont.

To revisit the categories of campus sustainable food projects mentioned earlier, most higher education initiatives contain a combination of the following four components: 1) dining hall innovation in procurement, menus and kitchen operations; 2) academic and co-curricular activities; 3) direct marketing opportunities for farms on campus, and; 4) experiential learning at campus gardens or farms (Barlett 2011). Fortunately, Skidmore already has already begun projects in each of these categories, giving the school a varied and wide-reaching sustainable food program.

### 3.2 Needs Assessment Results: Dining Services Staff

Our interviews with Dining Services Staff provided essential information about the current state of local food at Skidmore as well as the possibilities and challenges of expanding local food in the future. In terms of the Dining Hall's current function and capacity, we found the following information: Of the 2,674 students currently enrolled at Skidmore, approximately 2,000 have a meal plan, of which 1,200 are Unlimited Meal Plans. The Dining Halls serves roughly 3,800-4,000 meals per day during the academic year, which it tracks by ID card swipes at the register. This number does not include retail items sold at Burgess, the SPA, or the Atrium. During the summer, the Dining Hall serves between 600-2,400 meals per day, depending on programming.

The Dining Services staff has complete control over the Dining Hall menu, within budgetary constraints. The main considerations for menu development are price, seasonality, cook type and time, sustainability, labor, and student preferences. The menu cycle is repeated every 4 weeks, and revised during Summer and Winter break for the upcoming academic semester. Student input from the “napkin comment board” is considered when changing the menu, and new recipes are sometimes offered during the weekends (when the Dining Hall is less busy) to hear feedback (Jim Rose, Mark Miller, and Bill Canney pers. comm. 2011).

The most commonly used fruits and vegetables in the Dining Hall are apples, bananas, oranges, cantaloupes, honeydew, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, potatoes, carrots, onions, zucchini, frozen corn, and frozen peas. The Dining Hall’s main food supplier is Quandt’s Food Service, from which Skidmore purchases the bulk of its commodities, food staples, and chemicals, including sugar, flour, pasta, cereal, juice, meat, seafood, napkins, and cleaning supplies. Skidmore also receives daily deliveries from two other distributors, Carioto Produce and D. Brickman Distributor, which supply the school mainly with fruit, vegetables, and seafood (Mark Miller pers. comm. 2011). In addition, Skidmore also buys produce and meat directly from local farmers and processors.

The Dining Hall currently uses local milk, bread, eggs, meat, produce, and hard ice cream. They would like to use more local fruits and herbs, since they are of a higher quality than non-local or frozen options, but these are especially expensive. The Dining Services staff estimates that approximately 25% their total food purchases are for local food, though they cannot publicize how much money they spend annually. They have expressed their interest in local food to their distributors, and also begun to purchase directly from some farmers and vendors. The Dining Hall staff expressed that the benefits of purchasing local include fresher product, environmental responsibility, and helping the local economy. Conversely, they named the main limiting factors to

Skidmore's ability to purchase local foods as food safety, cost, seasonality/menu diversity, delivery and transportation, increased labor for food preparation, and the difficulty of purchasing through multiple farmers.

To promote its current local partnerships, Skidmore provides some labeling on eggs and produce from the student garden. According to Dining Services staff (pers. comm. 2011), there also used to be signage for apples, milk, and bread. In addition, Dining Services has advertised its use of local foods at the tremendously successful Harvest Dinner, as well as at certain catering events.

Skidmore is fortunate to have the necessary labor and storage for the local food they currently buy. In terms of labor, the Dining Hall currently employs approximately 60 staff, 327 work-study employees, and 40 student supervisors. For storage, there are currently 3 large walk-in coolers and 2 walk-in freezers, though they are used nearly to capacity. The Dining Hall also owns a wide variety of specialty food preparation equipment, including woks, a tandoori oven, a rotisserie oven, and a pasta machine. Further equipment the Dining Hall is hoping to invest in includes a tilt skillet, a blast chiller, and compost equipment, though there are restraints on available space and funding (Jim Rose, Mark Miller, and Bill Canney pers. comm. 2011).

The Dining Services website currently advertises 24 local partnerships online:

- Antonucci's Produce
- Battenkill Valley Creamery
- Betterbee Farms
- Carioto Produce
- D. Brickman
- H. Childress & Sons
- Green Mountain Coffee
- John Boy's "Mt. View Farm"
- Lakeside Farm Cider Mill Inc.
- Mastroianni Brothers Bakery
- Miki Japanese
- Morning View Farms
- Oscar's Smokehouse
- Parillo Sausage

- “Pride of New York Program” through Quandt’s Foodservice
- Rutkowski Farms
- Saratoga Apple Orchards
- Saratoga Peanut Butter
- Sheldon Farms
- Stewart’s Shops
- Sunset Hill Farms
- Thomas Poultry
- Tillamook of NY
- Willow Marsh Farm

Of these partners, we found that two of the companies have either gone out of business or Skidmore no longer purchase from them (H. Childress and Sons and Willow Marsh Farm). Eight of the listed partners (Battenkill Valley, Betterbee Farms, Green Mountain Coffee, Lakeside Farm and Cider Mill, Miki Japanese, Oscar’s Smokehouse, Saratoga Peanut Butter, and Tillamook of NY) supply retail foods offered at the Atrium or Burgess Cafe (respectively, milk, honey, coffee, apple cider and cider donuts, sushi, deli meats, peanut butter, and beef jerky). In addition, six of the current local partners provide produce or products specifically for catering or special campus events: John Boy’s “Mt. View Farms” (chicken), Lakeside Farm and Cider Mill (apple cider and cider donuts), Morning View Farms (produce), Oscar’s Smokehouse (smoked meat and cheese), Saratoga Apple (apple cider and cider donuts), and Sunset Hill Farms (lettuces and greens). See Table 1 for a summary of local partners published on the Dining Services Website, as well as their partner type (farmer, processor, distributor), location, products supplied to Skidmore, and the frequency they deliver to the school.

*Table 1: Local Partners Published on Dining Services Website*

**KEY:**

Orange = Out of Business or Skidmore No Longer Purchases

Red = Supplies Food Products for Retail Sale at Burgess or Atrium Cafe

Blue = Supplies Food for Catering and Special Events

Black = Supplies Food for the Dining Hall

Local Partner Name	Partner Type	Location	Products Supplied to Skidmore	Frequency of Delivery
Antonucci's Produce	Distributor	Gloversville, NY	Produce and Seafood	Less than once a year
Battenkill Valley Creamery	Farm	Salem, NY	Milk	As needed for retail
Betterbee Farms	Farm	Greenwich, NY	Honey	As needed for retail
Carioto Produce	Distributor	Green Island, NY	Produce	Daily
D. Brickman	Distributor	Albany, NY	Produce	Daily
Green Mountain Coffee	Processor	Waterbury, NY	Coffee	As needed for retail
H. Childress and Sons	Distributor	NY	N/A	N/A
John Boy's "Mt. View Farm"	Farm	Jackson, NY	Meat	Twice a semester
Lakeside Farm Cider Mill Inc.	Processor	Ballston Lake, NY	Apple cider and cider donuts	Daily Sep-Dec
Mastroianni Brothers Bakery	Processor	Schenectady, NY	Bread	4 times a week
Miki Japanese	Restaurant	Saratoga Springs, NY	N/A	N/A
Morning View Farms	Farm	Ballston Spa, NY	Produce and Greens	Once a semester

Oscar's Smokehouse	Processor	Warrensburg, NY	Smoked cheese and meat	Less than once a year
Parillo Sausage	Processor	Saratoga Springs, NY	Sausage	Every week
Quandt's Foodservice (Pride of New York)	Distributor	Amsterdam, NY	Commodities, Staples, Chemicals	Daily
Rutkowski Farms	Farm	Ballston Spa, NY	Butternut squash	Every two weeks, Sep-Jan
Saratoga Apple Orchards	Farm	Schuylerville, NY	Apples and apple slices	Every week
Saratoga Peanut Butter	Processor	Saratoga Springs, NY	Peanut Butter	As needed for retail
Sheldon Farms	Farm	Salem, NY	Potatoes...	Every two weeks
Stewart's Shops	Distributor	Saratoga Springs, NY	Milk and Ice Cream Mix	Three times a week
Sunset Hill Farms	Farm	Newport, NY	Lettuces and greens	Once a year
Thomas Poultry	Farm	Schuylerville, NY	Eggs	Twice a week
Tillamook of NY	Distributor	NY	Beef Jerky	As needed for retail
Willow Marsh Farm	Farm	Ballston Spa, NY	N/A	N/A

As listed above, eleven of the current local partners listed on the Dining Services Website provide food directly to the Dining Hall. We will focus on these eleven local partners in the rest of our paper. These eleven local partners fall into three main categories: farm, processor, and distributor.

### 3.3 Needs Assessment Results: Current Local Partners

#### *Farms*

The farms that directly supply food to Skidmore range in size from 5 active acres (Rutkowski Farms) acres to 250 active acres (Sheldon Farms) and provide Skidmore with a variety of foods, including eggs, apples, potatoes, and butternut squash. Frequency of deliveries for these partners ranges from twice a week (Thomas Poultry) to every two weeks (Sheldon Farms). See Table 1 for a comparison of farms currently involved in the local partnership program.

*Table 1: Comparative Chart of Farms Currently Involved in the Partnership Program*

<b>Farm Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Farm Size</b>	<b>Farming Practices</b>	<b>Products Supplied to Skidmore</b>	<b>Frequency of Delivery</b>	<b>Delivery Amount</b>
Rutkowski Farms	Ballston Spa, NY	5 active acres (out of 48 total)	Uncertified organic, Farmers Pledge program through NOFA-NY	Butternut squash	Every two weeks, Sep-Jan	100 pounds
Saratoga Apple Orchards	Schuyler-ville, NY	40 acres apples, 12+ acres mixed produce	Low-spray, 5-acres are "biologique" (uncertified organic)	Apples and apple slices, plus Farmers' Market in Case Center	Every week (once a month for cider and donuts)	10 boxes apples, 2 boxes apple slices
Sheldon Farms	Salem, NY	250 productive acres (out of 600+ total)	Conventional, Integrated Pest Management	Potatoes	Every two weeks	250 pounds
Thomas Poultry	Schuyler-ville, NY	180,000 laying hens	Conventional cage system	Eggs	Twice a week	10 cases (30 dozen eggs per case)

For farmers, the benefits of supplying food to an institutional market like Skidmore include a steady consumer demand, the ability to sell a large volume of food at once, and receiving dependable payments. Conversely, the challenges include the fragility of a crop in any given year,

the difficulty of transporting produce (a time-intensive activity for a full-time farmer), and the necessity of knowing food orders in advance (since farmers have to create their farm plan for the upcoming season far in advance).

### *Processors*

The two local processors that currently supply Skidmore Dining Hall are Mastroianni Brothers Baker and Parillo Sausage, which supply bread and sausage, respectively. See Table 2 for details about these partnerships.

*Table 2: Comparative Chart of Processors Currently Involved in the Partnership Program*

<b>Processor Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Products Supplied to Skidmore</b>	<b>Frequency of Delivery</b>	<b>Delivery Amount</b>
Mastroianni Brothers Bakery	Schenectady, NY	Bread	4 times a week	80-100 loaves
Parillo Sausage	Saratoga Springs, NY	Sausage	Every week	50-75 pounds

For processors, the benefits of working with an institutional market include steady consumer demand, the ability to sell a large volume of food and receiving reliable payments. Unlike farms, processors do not usually find it as difficult to transport and deliver their goods, since this task is usually already built into their business.

### *Distributors*

Skidmore's main distributor is Quandt's Foodservice, a company based out of Amsterdam, NY. Quandt's suppliers include Campbell's, Hershey's, Kellogg's, Land-O-Lakes, Sara Lee, Perdue and Tyson. The Dining Hall buys all commodities and staple foods (sugar, flour, pasta, cereal, sauces, dressings, etc.) from Quandt's, though they still have flexibility in their ability to purchase food from other suppliers (Mark Miller pers. comm. 2011). The other distributors

include Antonucci's Produce, Carioto Produce, D. Brickman, and Stewart's Shops. See Table 3 for details about these distributor partnerships.

*Table 3: Comparative Chart of Distributors Currently Involved in the Partnership Program*

<b>Distributor Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Products Supplied to Skidmore</b>	<b>Frequency of Delivery</b>	<b>Delivery Amount</b>
Antonucci's Produce	Gloversville, NY	Produce and Seafood	Less than once a year	25 cases
D. Brickman	Albany, NY	Produce	Daily	50 cases
Carioto Produce	Green Island, NY	Produce	Daily	20 cases a day
Quandt's Foodservice	Amsterdam, NY	Commodities, Staple Foods, Chemicals, Napkins, Beverages, Meat, Seafood, Produce	3 times a week	400-450 cases, M W F, used to be 5 days a week
Stewart's Shops	Saratoga Springs, NY	Milk and Hard Ice Cream	3 times a week, once a week	28 5-gallon bag-in-a-boxes of milk, 20 3 gallon tubs of ice cream per week

For distributors, the benefits of working with an institution like Skidmore steady consumer demand, the ability to supply a large volume of food at once, ease of delivery, and receiving dependable payments. Distributors usually do not suffer the same challenges as farms and small businesses, since they source foods from a variety of locations and suppliers and can easily adapt if certain local foods are not available.

### 3.3 Skidmore Student Survey

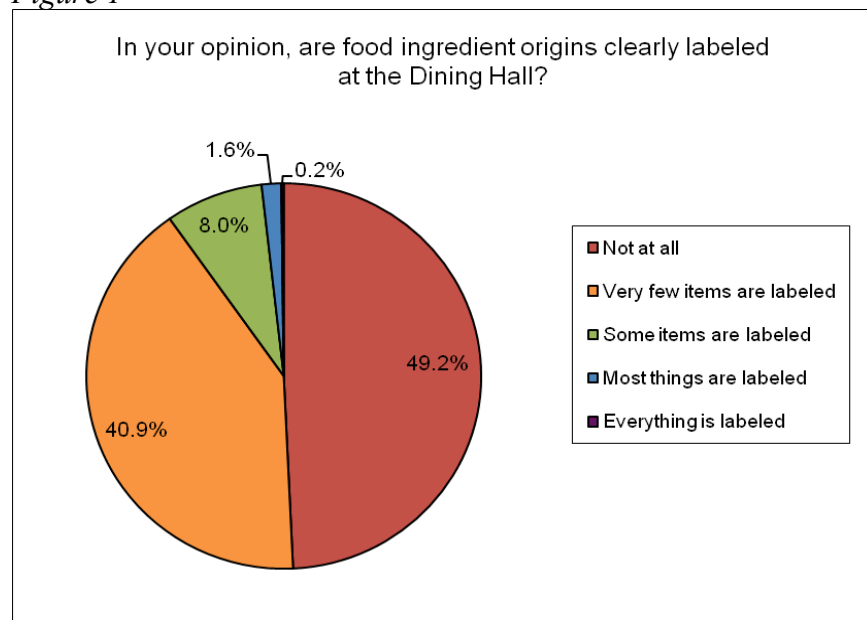
We had 438 responses to our survey, of which 432 were current Skidmore students (representative of 16% of the total current student body). Of these respondents, 25% were seniors (Class of 2011), 12% were juniors (Class of 2012), 31% were sophomores (Class of 2013), and 32% were freshmen (Class of 2014). In addition, 62.5% of respondents had an Unlimited Meal

Plan, 12.4% had the Dining Bucks Plan, 2.5% had the Apartment Plan, 1.1% had the Commuter Plan, and 21.1% had no meal plan.

When we asked our respondents if Skidmore purchases any local food, 72.4% said yes, 2.1% said no, and 25.5% didn't know. When asked which foods specifically that Skidmore buys locally, the most common responses were apples, milk, eggs, bread, potatoes, some vegetables and some meat.

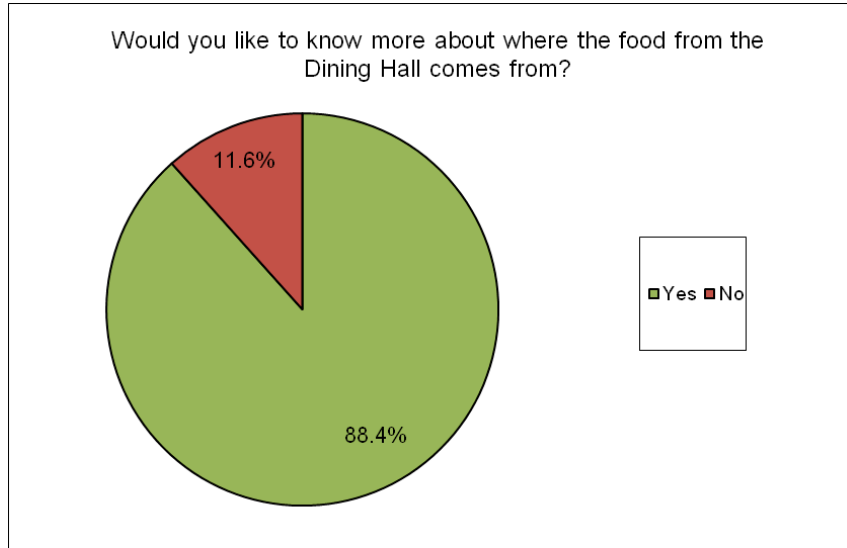
When asked if they thought that food ingredient origins were clearly labeled at the Dining Hall, the majority of respondents replied “not at all” or “very few items are labeled.” Less than 2% thought that “most things are labeled” or “everything is labeled” (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1*



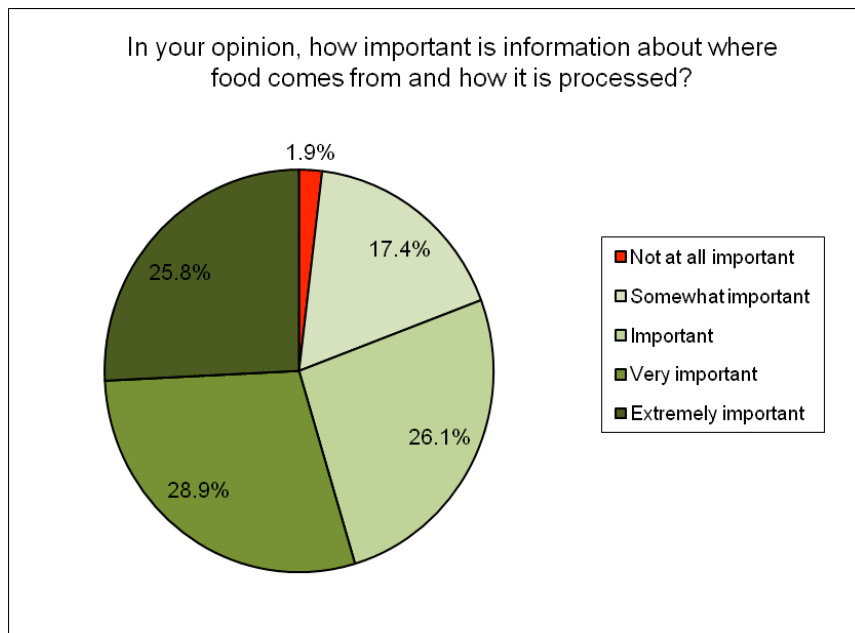
Though the majority of respondents did not think that food ingredient origins are currently well labeled at the Dining Hall, over 90% of our respondents expressed an interest in learning more about where their food comes from (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



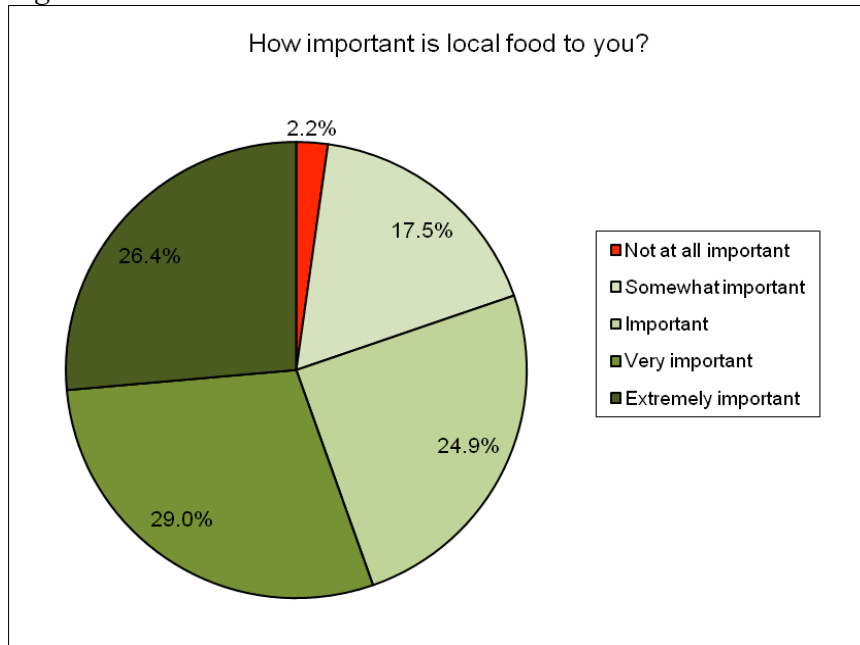
In addition, over 75% of our respondents thought that information about where food comes from and how it is processed is either “extremely important,” “very important,” or “important.” Less than 2% thought that this information was “not at all important” (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



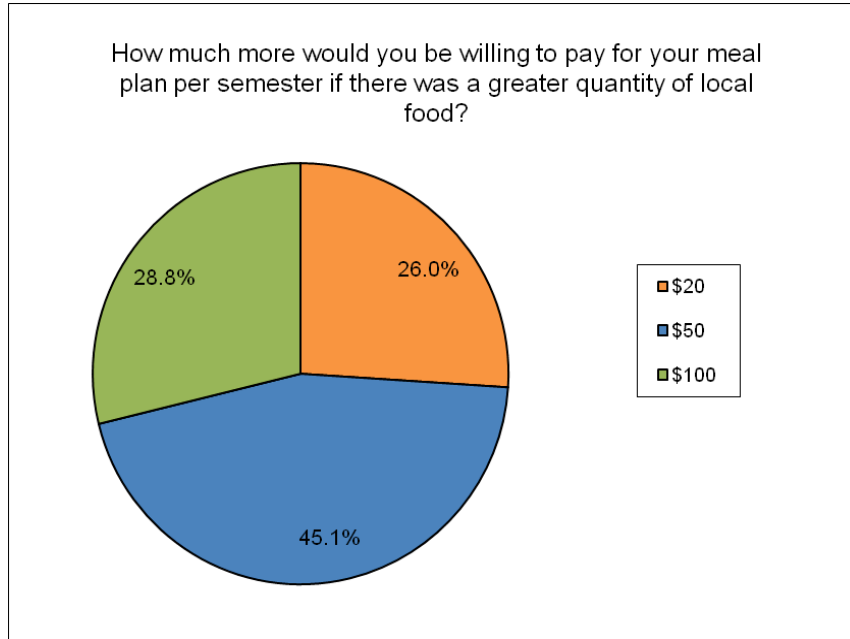
Similarly, over 75% of our respondents expressed that local food was either “extremely important,” “very important,” or “important.” Only 2.2% thought that local food was “not at all important” (see Figure 4).

*Figure 4*



When asked how much more they would be willing to spend for their meal plan per semester if there was a greater quantity of local food offered at the Dining Hall, almost half of our respondents replied that they would spend \$50. About 25% each suggested that they would be willing to spend \$20 or \$100 per semester for more local food at the Dining Hall (see Figure 5). In addition, a few respondents clarified that they would be willing to pay more depending on the quality of the food. A few others expressed the opinion that the cost of the meal plan is already too high, and a few mentioned that they didn’t care because their parents are paying for their meal plan.

Figure 5



### 3.4 Identifying Potential Partners

Of the 13 potential partners we contacted, eight responded and seven indicated that they would be interested in developing a business relationship with Skidmore College Dining Services. Common concerns and considerations for developing a partnership with Skidmore included the following:

#### *Wholesale and Pricing*

Scale was a primary concern for farms selling meat products. Two of the beef and pork farms contacted do not raise a large number of animals, and those customers buying in bulk (usually restaurants) tend to order a half slab of beef or pork rather than large quantities of a single cut. Beyond the high cost, this represents logistical issues for cafeteria style food. Dining Services faces limitations with uniformity of food, preparation time and storage.

Small fruit and vegetable farms expressed similar concerns with scale. Some small farms have the opportunity to sell at one or several farmers' markets throughout the year, which allow farmers to sell goods at a premium retail price. Because these farms have access to a strong market with a large customer base, selling wholesale to an institution like Skidmore is not appealing. Premium meat, fruit and vegetable products may, however, have a place as part of themed dinners and catering events where menus and budgets are more flexible.

There are local farms that operate at a wholesale scale and can offer substantial quantities of vegetables. Pricing was expressed as concern for these farms, despite higher production these farms still cannot compete with large scale distributors and conventional growers.

Farm to Table Co-Packers is a sister business of Winter Sun Farms and has processing capacities for meat, fruit and vegetable value added products. They are not a distributor but can offer a network of locally sourced and processed goods and the opportunity for the school to process its own products. Ice Cream Man is a local ice cream processor and retail business that has the capacity to sell both wholesale and retail. Retail options at campus venues were appealing to many of the small scale farms selling processed or packaged goods.

### *Seasonality*

While production decreases at many farms during the winter, almost all respondents produced winter greens and root vegetables and other hearty species between November and March. Some farms use greenhouses which allow for year round production of a variety of fruits and vegetables. Winter Sun Farms is a cooperative that sources local produce and freezes and packages fruits and vegetables on site. This business is uniquely able to supply wholesale

quantities of local produce year round. Currently, Winter Sun Farms provides frozen vegetables to Vassar Collage through a CSA system and directly to Dining Services at SUNY New Paltz.

#### *Consistency, communication and maintaining relationships*

Farms are interested in establishing business partners which will provide a steady source of income. Inconsistent purchasing was a concern voiced by both current and potential partners. Some farms are interested in selling to Skidmore, but would only enter an arrangement if purchases were made on a regular basis. A partnership with these farms would entail bi-monthly to weekly purchases of consistent quantities.

#### *Transportation*

Most of the farms and business are within Albany County and transportation was not expressed as a primary concern. Many potential partners offer delivery services or have established sites for distribution in Saratoga Springs.

### **4. Discussion**

#### **4.1 Areas for Improvement Within Skidmore's Local Partnership Program**

Skidmore has accomplished much in terms of buying and promoting local and sustainable foods. From direct local partnerships with small-scale farms, to the yearly Harvest Dinner event, to agricultural field trips and experiential learning at the Skidmore Student Garden, the College has pursued multiple avenues and initiatives that support local agriculture. As John Batch, the current Kitchen Supervisor and past Dining Services Director of the Dining Hall expresses, "Sustainability is on the agenda. We're all on the same path, it's just figuring out how we get

there together” (pers. comm. 2011). Our research has documented the College’s current use of, interest in, and capacity for local foods.

Through our interviews and surveys with key stakeholders involved in Skidmore’s Local Partnership Program, we have identified the following major areas for improvement:

### *Greater Strength of “Partnerships”*

Some of the current partners we spoke with expressed that Skidmore only orders from them once a semester or once a year. While these purchases do still support local food, we believe that true “partnerships” should demonstrate greater commitment in terms of purchasing frequency and volume. Many of the current partnerships also expressed they had never visited the Skidmore campus aside from making deliveries to the Dining Hall, and that no representative or students from Skidmore had visited their facility. Since one of the benefits of local food is a closer relationship between producer and consumer, we believe that local “partners” should be in closer contact with the Skidmore community.

### *Increased Transparency*

Skidmore students eating primarily at the dining hall have little information at their disposal concerning the production of their food and the origin of ingredients used. Readily available information about food served at the dining hall and greater transparency in respect to food production would help students to make informed decisions as consumers, and could help engage students with local agricultural processes.

As revealed in our student survey, most students do not think food ingredients are clearly labeled at the Dining Hall, yet the majority of students believe that it is important to know where

food comes from and how it is processed. This discrepancy suggests that the Dining Hall could use more labeling and promotional materials to highlight their use of local foods. Another finding from our survey that further demonstrates the need for increased or improved labeling and promotional material is the fact that over 25% of our survey respondents did not know if Skidmore sourced local food, and 2% thought that we didn't buy any local food at all.

Almost 90% of our survey respondents wanted to know more about where the food from the Dining Hall comes from. This interest could be addressed through a variety of ways, from panels or workshops with the farmers who sell directly to Skidmore, to site visits to the distribution centers, to classes based on local agriculture. Most students who responded to our survey believe that local food is important, and they would be willing to pay more for it.

### *Improved Pre-Planning and Ordering*

Buying food directly from local farmers and vendors requires the College to be in close contact with the grower or producer. Farmers cannot provide the same flexibility as a large-scale distributor, and they need to know orders far in advance to plan their season of planting, growing, and harvesting.

## 4.2 Our Recommendations

Based on our understanding of the needs of various stakeholders in the program (Dining Services staff, farmers, processors, distributors, students), as well as the logistics of purchasing and regional agriculture, we developed the following recommendations to improve and expand the Skidmore Dining Hall's Local Partnership Program. Our recommendations range in scope; some

projects could be implemented by student groups, while others are larger systemic changes which will require institutional support, input and funding.

### *Seasonal Menus*

Seasonality is perceived as one of the largest limitations by dining services, current partners and potential partners. In the Northeastern United States, peak residency at colleges (September through May) does not align with peak agricultural production (May through October). Despite this discrepancy, effective seasonal menus have already been implemented by other schools in temperate regions, such as Yale (YSFP 2010). A seasonal menu is synchronized with local agriculture, making use of produce when it is available. This approach has the economic benefits associated with purchasing in-season produce and the advantage of using fresh produce even during the winter months. A consistent local entrée option is a good way to display our use of local goods and would help to link students to the cycles of regional agriculture. This local entrée could be served weekly at a consistent location (such as the Diner).

### *Labeling and Signage*

A weakness in our current program is the lack of promotion and labeling for local products. Simple, reusable labels can be used to notate local, organic or naturally grown, or seasonal ingredients. Transparency with this type of information should be viewed as an opportunity to showcase the Dining Services efforts, help students to make informed decisions about the food they consume, and to link students to the phenology of regional agriculture.

### *Consumer Education in the Dining Hall*

Possibilities for consumer education about local food and specifically Skidmore's Local Food Partnerships include posters, pamphlets, tabling, and taste tests or demos by local farmers. One possibility is a "Meet Your Farmer" Poster Campaign that showcases the farms and farmers who sell directly to Skidmore.

### *Updated Dining Services Website*

The current partners list on the Dining Services website should be updated with expanded content to more accurately reflect the partnerships. A greater amount of information on purchasing and program policy would be a valuable resource for students. Other changes might include partner profiles that list location, farm/business history, products supplied to Skidmore, a description of growing practices, and the frequency and volume of delivery to Skidmore.

### *Site Visits and Volunteer Programs*

Skidmore already provides opportunities to visit and volunteer with farms, the next step for this initiative is to specifically visit the farms and businesses that supply the Skidmore Dining Hall. Encouraging student volunteers at these farms is a possibility as well.

### *Workshops, Lectures, Panels, Film Series, and Academic Classes*

Over 60% of our survey respondents expressed that they would be interested in taking a class or attending a workshop about agriculture. Therefore, to disperse information about Skidmore's local partnerships and about local/sustainable food in general, we recommend more

workshops, lectures, panel discussions, films, and academic courses concerning food and agricultural issues.

### *Expansion and Integration of the Skidmore Student Garden*

In order to engage a broader audience and encourage more students to support the local food initiatives, we encourage the expansion of the student garden and the development of more visible agricultural areas on campus, such as fruit trees or a section of edible forest in the North Woods. In order to extend the growing season of the garden and increase student involvement for more of the year, we recommend the construction of a greenhouse to supplement the Skidmore student garden. A section of the greenhouse could be dedicated to herbs, since the Dining Hall Administration expressed that they want to use more local herbs, but they are considerably more expensive than their non-local counterparts. Furthermore, we support the incorporation of the Skidmore Student Garden into more classes and campus activities, such as Admissions tours.

### *Clear Definition of A “Local Partner”*

The terms “local” and “partnership” carry environmental, economic and social connotations. Currently, the only publicly accessible explanation of or rationale for Skidmore’s local partnerships is on the Dining Services Website:

“Skidmore's dining services has developed several partnerships with local farms and vendors, which reduces CO2 emissions, enhances the bond between consumer and producer, increases local economic benefits while providing the freshest, and most nutritional food possible.”

Beyond this mission statement little to no information is given about the growing and processing practices of our partners, the extent of the relationship and most importantly the criteria used to select partners. What does a sustainable local partnership mean to Skidmore College?

To improve the legitimacy of this program it is necessary to define the parameters of a sustainable local partnership and the purchasing policy that informs the way we obtain goods from these partners. A practice can be considered sustainable if it can be continued indefinitely without degrading the systems and resources upon which it relies. It is important to remember that a product that is produced locally is not always produced sustainably, and it is necessary to have an understanding of these two terms in order to make educated purchasing decisions.

**Local:** The definition of “local” will vary depending on location and what is available.

Institutions often define “local” as sourced from within 200 miles (YSFP 2010). Fixed definitions using state borders, county borders and mileage limits can be arbitrary. The most important point to consider when thinking about local purchasing is minimizing transportation distance and associated fuel emissions from the source of the food to the school.

**Sustainable:** Sustainable agriculture refers to the ability of a farm to produce food indefinitely, without causing irreversible damage to the health of the ecosystem. Sustainable agriculture practices may be regenerative, improving long-term health of the soil and surrounding native biota. Organic certification is often used as a blanket standard for institutions, though there are other options. Farmers may use sustainable or regenerative growing practices even if they are not organic certified. Oppositely, some certified organic growers may implement the bare minimum required to obtain organic certification.

**Partnerships:** The partnership title should be assigned considerately. Implicit in the term is a notion of longevity and that these sustained transactions are beneficial to all involved parties. A single purchase from a local business does not qualify that as a “local partnership.” If the goal of the Local Partners program is to improve the environmental, economic and social sustainability of Skidmore’s food consumption, then a “partnership” must address each of these fields.

An example of a strong Local Partnership is our relationship with Saratoga Apple. This farm sources a significant amount of our whole and sliced apples; deliveries are made on a weekly to bi-weekly basis. Saratoga Apple is located less than ten miles from Skidmore College. The relationship has been sustained for 6 years. Dining Services staff have expressed that they are happy with the high quality of the product, and Nate Darrow of Saratoga Apple considers these sales as a substantial and consistent source of income. While Saratoga Apple does apply synthetic chemical fungicides, they are exclusively for cosmetic purposes and the application is categorized as low spray. They have shifted to the use of organic fertilizers and have demonstrated an awareness of the impacts of agriculture and a strong interest in reducing their environmental impact.

### *Purchasing Policy*

Deciding whether a farm or producer is sustainable requires care and attention. We are often forced to look at complicated systems on the continuum of sustainability, where a “good” or “bad” labeling is not appropriate nor is it realistic. Still, it is important to have goals and the better we understand the ecological, economic and social implications of food production and consumption, the better we will be able to make responsible purchasing decisions. Purchasing practices may be developed in conjunction with Dining Services using models from peer

institutions and Skidmore specific criteria. The purchasing policy for local farmers, processors, and distributors should include clear expectations for all aspects of food production, including growing practices, packaging, food safety, insurance, transportation, delivery, and pricing.

The Local Partners Program's foremost goal for purchasing is to obtain food that is local and sustainable when these options are economically feasible. When a local, sustainable option is not available, we recommend looking for locally for farmers to help build that supply. When an item cannot be grown locally—bananas or coffee, for example—we recommend ingredients that are certified fair trade or certified organic. See Appendix 7 for an example of Tiered Purchasing Guidelines that Favor Local Food. Each institutional food purchasing decision is meant to foster practices that sustain the health of the soil, the environment, communities, and the people producing and eating food (YSFP 2010).

#### *Farm-to-School Internship or Local Foods Manager*

The work required to manage a local food system does not fall within the current jurisdiction of the Production Manager. For this reason, we recommend the creation of a Farm-to-School student internship or full time Local Foods Manager. For the internship, students would research and contact potential local partners and assist in establishing relations with them. The goal of this internship would be to increase the quantity of locally-grown and processed sustainable food purchased at Skidmore. As expressed in our interviews, communication is essential to establishing and maintaining successful partnerships, therefore, interns would help maintain dialogue with partners on a regular basis. Interns would take on archival and clerical responsibilities specifically associated with local purchases. The development of a local partner directory and invoice archiving from local purchases would help to improve the organization and

efficiency of the program. Interns would work with Dining Services and the Sustainability Coordinator, local farmers, processors and distributors to broaden our local food supply, maintain existing local relations and contact potential partners. In the long-term, we recommend the creation of a permanent Local Foods Manager position to procure local foods and work with other staff to make ensure the continuation of the program.

### *Identifying More Potential Partners*

We have identified and contacted 13 potential partners, but there are hundreds more within Saratoga County and within New York State. More research is needed to identify and contact more potential partners of all three types: farm, processor, and distributor. Ideally, these could be compiled into a local partner directory, webstie, or other document. Information could also be gathered about the various types of produce readily available by location and season. The following resources can be used to identify more potential partners: [localharvest.com](http://localharvest.com), Cornell Cooperative Extension Saratoga and Washington County Buyers' Guide 2010.

### *Capital Investment*

To accommodate a larger volume of local food and processing capacity, additional infrastructure may be necessary at the Dining Hall, such as greater freezer space, etc. More research needs to be done on the feasibility and cost of the needed equipment. These are large scale projects that would involve significant investments. Alternatively, there are local options for small to medium scale processing and freezing.

### 4.3 Project Continuity

In a College with an average four-year student turnover rate, information may not transfer between successive graduating classes, and awareness of past local food initiatives can easily disappear. Alumnus Jonathan Greene suggests (pers. comm. 2011) that the momentum of the initial local food movement at Skidmore was lost due to a lack of institutional longevity and student leadership. There have been a number of local food and food sustainability projects in the past years, but many are not pursued in subsequent years. For example, Greene conducted and conducted a local farm survey in 2005, similar to the potential partner survey we included in our research. Greene was compiling information about local farmer's capacity and interest in selling to Skidmore College. Greene's survey, however, was neither used by Dining Services nor properly archived, so the information was mostly lost over time.

In order for the Dining Services Local Partners Program to be successful and grow, there must be a formal commitment on the part of both institutional policy, administration, Dining Services staff, and the student body. For students, this means integration of local food initiatives into permanent student groups like the Environmental Action Club and the Eco-Rep program. The recent establishment of the Sustainability Coordinator position as a permanent part of the administrative structure will also help build project continuity for local food and other sustainability initiatives. It is important to have: 1) clear, measurable goals for projects that can be tracked and picked up by new students, and 2) readily available documentation of these projects for reference and to avoid redundancy. The use of measurable goals can help track progress and keep the Local Partners Program oriented, and publicly-accessible information holds the program accountable to ensure the strongest possible partnerships.

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## *Appendix 1*

### **Interview Questions for Dining Services Administration**

#### Basic Information:

On average, how many students participate in Skidmore's meal plan?

How many meals does the dining hall provide per day during the academic year?

How many per day during the summer?

Approximately how many meals total are provided each year, and how is this calculated?

#### Food Service Facility

How much flexibility do you have in designing the dining hall menu?

Do different dining venues on campus make separate orders, or is ordering coordinated centrally?

What kind of equipment does the dining hall currently use for food preparation?

Is there any machinery or equipment for food preparation that you're hoping to invest in for the future?

Is your cold and dry storage space currently used to capacity? (When you are able to get an excess of fresh produce, can you find space for it?)

What is the approximate cost of adding an additional walk-in freezer or cooler, and is there room for something like this?

#### Food Service Staff Skills, Experience, and Interest

Number of dining service staff?

What are the different staff positions, and how are they organized?

Are dining services employees part of a union?

How many student work-study employees are there?

How many student supervisors?

What kind of training or certifications are in place for those who prepare and cook food, or manage those who do so?

How often are you inspected each year, and who does these inspections?

What, if any, are the time constraints on food preparation and menu development? Please describe:

What machinery or training would be necessary to decrease the time spent prepping fruits and vegetables?

Are there any whole fruits or vegetables that you do not use because of the amount of prep time required?

Do you have enough labor hours available during off-season times of the year that would allow time to package fresh fruits and vegetables for use later in the season, or would additional labor be required? In other words, could local food use be integrated into the existing jobs, or would there need to be special labor dedicated to local produce purchasing, packaging, and processing?

If additional labor is required, have you looked into grants to fund these efforts or purchase extra equipment?

#### Menus and Recipes

Do you have full control over menu development?

If yes, what are your main considerations for developing your menus?

Do you develop different menus for different dining venues on campus?

Do you have a menu cycle, and if so, how long is the time period?

How often are your recipes reviewed and revised?

Is there any opportunity for student input when modifying or introducing recipes?

If so, how do you gather information about preference?

How are new items or recipes introduced to the students?

What fruits and vegetables do you use most frequently? Please list.

Are there any fruits and vegetables you don't currently use, but would like to?

How many suppliers do you have for fruits and vegetables?

What flexibility do you have in your delivery schedule?

Would it be possible to put together a calendar of foods used over the course of the academic year, and their quantities?

#### Local Food Practices

Which foods does the Dining Hall currently purchase any food from local sources?

Approximately what quantity per year (pounds) is locally sourced?

How do you determine this?

What percentage is this of the Dining Hall's total annual food purchases?

Approximately how much does the Dining Hall spend on local food purchases compared with the amount spent on total food purchases?

Are there any fruits and vegetables that you would like to get from local or regional sources?

Have you let your supplier or distributors know of your interest in locally produced foods?

Have you purchased produce directly from a farmer?

Have you featured local food in a dining event, such as a harvest dinner?

Have you developed any seasonal menus or recipes specifically featuring local foods?

When buying directly from a local farmer, processor, or vendor, does a dining hall representative visit the farm or facility?

In your opinion, what barriers are there to Skidmore's ability to purchase local foods?

Have you taken any steps to increase your use of organic or fair trade foods?

Does the dining hall discriminate between certified organic and farmer-stated organic?

How do you market or promote local foods currently?

#### College Community

What has the consumer response been to the use of local foods in the dining hall?

What was the reception like for the Harvest Dinner?

How would you describe administrative and community support for purchasing local products?

#### Your Farm to College Vision

Would any of the following help you with the process of using more locally grown foods in the dining hall?

- Assistance in identifying local foods and potential sources
- Meeting with local farmers, suppliers, and processors
- Training for staff about the importance and sustainability of local foods
- Education for students about the importance and sustainability of local foods
- Improved labeling for local foods
- Taste test plan
- Student "forager" to manage local relationships

Thank you! Is there anything else you would like to add or ask?

*Appendix 2*

**Interview Questions for Current Local Partners: Farm**

What size is your farm?

What are the primary foods that your farm produces?

Which foods do you supply specifically to Skidmore?

Approximately what quantity of these foods do you supply to Skidmore?

How often do you make a delivery?

How do you determine your price for these foods?

When and how did you first start providing food for Skidmore?

What has been your experience providing food for Skidmore?

Do you deliver the food to the school yourself?

What are some of the benefits of working with an institutional market?

What are some of the challenges working with an institutional market?

Is there anything that would improve your partnership with Skidmore?

What are your company's criteria for working with a school or another institutional market?

Did you have a flexible farm plan that allowed you to devote a section of your farm to Skidmore foods?

Please describe the various consumer markets for your food products.

How would you describe the demand for local foods at these various consumer markets?

Do you sell any food through a distributor?

Do you sell any food to a processor?

Do you sell your food to other institutions?

Do you sell any food at a farmer's market?

Other venues?

Please describe your farming practices.

Has a representative from Skidmore ever visited your farm?

Have you ever visited Skidmore to represent your farm?

Have you ever participated in any consumer education at Skidmore, and would you be interested?

Thank you! Is there anything that you would like to add or ask?

*Appendix 3*

**Interview Questions for Current Local Partners: Distributor**

Approximately what percentage of the food that you distribute is locally produces? (And how do you define local?)

Approximately what volume of local foods do you work with every month?

Which foods specifically do you purchase locally?

When marketing these foods, are they sold specifically as local foods, or are they mixed in with other produce and products?

How would you describe the consumer demand for local food?

Is there a way in which you can track products that are grown or produced within the state?

What kinds of seasonal restrictions do you face when supplying local foods?

Do you work directly with farmers?

What is the range of sizes for the farms you work with?

What size are most of the farms you work with?

What are the benefits for farmers to sell their produce through your business or another distributor?

What has been your experience working with farmers?

What are some of the benefits of working with farmers?

What are some of the challenges working with farmers?

What are your company's criteria for working with farmers?

How much do you know about the farmers' growing practices? (conventional, organic, certified organic?)

Which foods do you supply specifically to Skidmore?

Approximately what quantity of these foods do you supply to Skidmore?

How often do you make a delivery?

How do you determine your price for these foods?

When and how did you first start providing food for Skidmore?

What has been your experience providing food for Skidmore?

What are some of the benefits of working with an institutional market?

What are some of the challenges working with an institutional market?

Is there anything that would improve your partnership with Skidmore?

What are your company's criteria for working with a school or another institutional market?

Has a representative from Skidmore ever visited your company?

Have you ever visited Skidmore to represent your company?

Have you ever participated in any consumer education at Skidmore, and would you be interested?

Thank you! Is there anything that you would like to add or ask?

#### *Appendix 4*

##### **Interview Questions for Current Partners: Processor**

What are the primary food products that your business produces?

Approximately what volume of these products does your business produce?

What are the main ingredients for these food products?

From where do you purchase your ingredients?

Do you know the origins of your food ingredients?

Approximately what percentage of the food that you produce is local? (And how do you define local?)

Do you work directly with any farmers?

If so... What is the range of sizes for the farms you work with?

What size are most of the farms you work with?

What are the benefits for farmers to sell their produce through your business or another distributor?

What has been your experience working with farmers?

What have been the benefits and challenges of working with farmers?

What are your company's criteria for working with farmers?

How much do you know about the farmers' growing practices? (conventional, organic, certified organic?)

Please describe the various consumer markets for your food products.

When marketing your foods, are they sold specifically as local foods, or are they mixed in with other products?

How much consumer demand is there for local food?

Which foods do you supply specifically to Skidmore?

Approximately what quantity of these foods do you supply to Skidmore?

How often do you make a delivery?

How do you determine your price for these foods?

When and how did you first start providing food for Skidmore?

What has been your experience providing food for Skidmore?

Do any distributors help get your product to Skidmore, or do you deliver the food items yourself?

What are some of the benefits and challenges of working with an institutional market?

Is there anything that would improve your partnership with Skidmore?

What are your company's criteria for working with a school or another institutional market?

Has a representative from Skidmore ever visited your business?

Have you ever visited Skidmore to represent your business?

Have you ever participated in any consumer education at Skidmore, and would you be interested?

Thank you! Is there anything that you would like to add or ask?

## *Appendix 5*

### **Student Survey Questions**

#### Personal Information

Class Year (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, Other, I am not a student)

Where do you live while attending Skidmore? (Residence Hall, Scribner Apartments, Northwoods Apartments, Off-campus, Other)

What kind of meal plan do you currently have at the Dining Hall? (Unlimited, The Apartment Plan, The Dining Bucks Plan, The Commuter Plan, None)

#### Food at the Skidmore Dining Hall

To what extent do you know where the food served at the Skidmore Dining Hall comes from? (I know almost nothing, I know very little, I know a moderate amount, I know a lot)

Would you like to know more? (No, Yes)

In your opinion, are food options at the Dining Hall clearly labeled in terms of ingredients? (Not at all, Very few items are labeled, Some items are labeled, Most things are labeled, Everything is labeled)

In your opinion, are food options at the Dining Hall clearly labeled in terms of ingredient origin? (Not at all, Very few items are labeled, Some items are labeled, Most things are labeled, Everything is labeled)

In your opinion, how important is information about where food comes from and how it is processed? (Not at all important, Somewhat important, Important, Very Important, Extremely important)

#### Skidmore Food Purchasing

To your knowledge, does Skidmore purchase any food locally? (Yes, No, Maybe)

If so, which foods? (Please list.)

To your knowledge, does Skidmore purchase any organic food? (Yes, No, Maybe)

If so, which foods? (Please list.)

To your knowledge, does Skidmore purchase any fair trade food? (Yes, No, Maybe)

If so, which foods? (Please list.)

#### Your Personal Food Preferences

How important is local food to you? (Not at all important, Somewhat important, Important, Very Important, Extremely important)

How important is organic food to you? (Not at all important, Somewhat important, Important, Very Important, Extremely important)

How important is fair trade food to you? (Not at all important, Somewhat important, Important, Very Important, Extremely important)

#### Food Cost

Approximately how much money do you currently pay per semester for your meal plan at the Dining Hall? (If you're not sure, please enter your best guess) (actually 2,245)

Would you be willing to pay more for your meal plan if there was a greater quantity of local food? (No, Yes, Maybe)

If so, how much? (\$20, \$50, \$100, other)

Would you be willing to pay more for your meal plan if there was a greater quantity of organic food? (No, Yes, Maybe)

If so, how much? (\$20, \$50, \$100, other)

Would you be willing to pay more for your meal plan if there was a greater quantity of fair trade food?

(No, Yes, Maybe)

If so, how much? (\$20, \$50, \$100, other)

In addition to your meal plan at the Dining Hall, how much food do you buy each semester? (Not much,

A little bit, Quite a bit, A lot)

Approximately how many meals is this per semester?

In addition to your meal plan at the Dining Hall, how much money would you say you spend each semester on food?

#### Farming Practices

How much do you know about the impacts of conventional farming practices? (I know almost nothing, I know very little, I know a moderate amount, I know a lot)

How much do you know about sustainable farming practices? (I know almost nothing, I know very little, I know a moderate amount, I know a lot)

Would you be interested in taking a class or attending a workshop about agriculture? (Yes, No, Maybe)

Have you ever visited a farm? (Yes, No)

Have you ever worked on a farm? (Yes, No)

Did you know that Skidmore has a student garden? (Yes, No)

Have you ever participated in an activity at Skidmore involving the garden? (Yes, No)

#### Food Markets

Have you ever been to a Farmer's Market? (Yes, No)

Do you wish you could attend the Saratoga Springs Farmer's Market on Saturdays, but don't have reliable/convenient transportation to get there? (Yes, No, Maybe)

Do you know what a food cooperative is? (Yes, No)

Would you be interested in buying food from a local food cooperative in Saratoga Springs that offers mainly local items, as well as some bulk items? (Yes, No, Maybe)

*Appendix 6*  
**Potential Partner Survey**

What are your primary outlets for distribution or direct customer sales?

Is wholesale pricing a viable economic option for a farm of your size? Would wholesale pricing be possible order sizes were large enough and if purchases were made on a regular basis (2 or more purchases a month)?

Describe your farming practices and list certifications (i.e. low spray pest control, integrated pest management, range fed livestock, cage free poultry, hormone or antibiotic free animals, certification etc.)

Do you provide food to any businesses or restaurants? If so, what obstacles, if any, have you faced establishing and maintaining this relationship?

Would you be willing to deliver your goods to a specific drop of point or customer? What is the maximum distance you would be willing to travel?

Do you store products after the growing season has ended? Do you dry or process any products?

Would you be interested in building a business relationship with Skidmore College Dining Services?

In the following chart, please place an X next to products you carry. Include seasonal availability and price if possible.

<b>Product</b>	<b>Seasonal Availability</b>	<b>Retail Price</b>	<b>Wholesale Price</b>
<b><i>Produce</i></b>			
Apples			
Berries			
Broccoli			
Cabbage			
Carrots			
Celery			
Corn			
Cucumber			
Garlic			
Herbs			
Lettuce			

Melons			
Mushrooms			
Onions			
Peppers			
Potatoes			
Pumpkin			
Squash			
Zucchini			
<b><i>Meat and Poultry</i></b>			
Beef			
Chicken			
Lamb			
Pork			
Turkey			

Thank you for your time and input,  
Maranda Duval & Jesse Moy

## *Appendix 7*

### **Example of Tiered Purchasing Guidelines That Favor Local Options**

Buying guidelines are based on a tier system. A hierarchy of purchasing choices is developed for the following three categories: Vegetables, Fruit and Meat and Poultry (YSFP 2010).

#### **Vegetables**

##### **First Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- Hudson Valley organic/ecologically-grown
- New York organic/ecologically-grown
- Regional organic/ecologically-grown
- New York conventional (small-scale operation)
- Regional conventional (small-scale operation)

##### **Second Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- New York conventional (medium-scale operation)
- Regional conventional (medium-scale operation)
- U.S. organic (small-scale operation)
- New York conventional (large-scale operation)
- Regional conventional (large-scale operation)
- U.S. ecologically-grown (small-scale operation)

##### **Third Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- U.S. organic (medium/large-scale operation)
- North America organic
- U.S. ecologically-grown (medium/large-scale operation)
- International organic

#### **Fruit**

##### **First Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- Hudson Valley organic/ecologically-grown
- New York organic/ecologically-grown
- Regional organic/ecologically-grown
- New York conventional (small-scale operation)
- Regional conventional (small scale operation)
- New York conventional (medium scale operation)

##### **Second Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- Regional conventional (medium scale operation)
- U.S. organic (small/medium scale operation)
- U.S. IMP (small/medium scale operation)
- New York conventional (large-scale operation)
- U.S. organic (large-scale operation)
- U.S. IPM (large-scale operation)
- International organic
- U.S. Conventional

## **Meat and Poultry**

### **First Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- Hudson valley free-range/pasture-fed
- New York free-range/pasture-fed
- New York organic
- Regional free-range/pasture-fed
- Regional organic
- Regional conventional (small-scale operation)

### **Second Tier** (ranked in order of preference)

- U.S. free-range/pasture fed
- U.S. organic (small/medium scale operation)
- Conventional (small/medium-scale operation)
- U.S. organic (large-scale operation)
- U.S. conventional (large-scale operation)