



## **Overview of the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative**

*Jointly Led by **The Culinary Institute of America** and **Stanford University***

### **The Vision**

To create a dynamic, invitational network of leading university-based scholars, foodservice business leaders, and executive chefs to collaborate on research and education in support of culinary-centric, evidence-based food systems innovation within and beyond universities.

This initiative leverages the unique position of universities to advance healthier, more sustainable life-long food choices among students—who will soon be parents and adult decision-makers—by connecting a diversity of insights from academic programs, dining services, and athletics (performance dining).

### **The Initiative**

In 2012, **The Culinary Institute of America (CIA)** and **Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (HSPH)—Department of Nutrition** launched **Menus of Change** ([www.menusofchange.org](http://www.menusofchange.org)), an ongoing initiative to advance better food choices and menu development at the intersection of health, sustainability imperatives, culinary insight, and next-generation business strategy. With the success of the initiative's third annual Menus of Change (MOC) Leadership Summit and following the release of its 2013, 2014, and 2015 annual reports, "Charting the Future of Food & the Foodservice Industry," the **CIA** and **Stanford University** have launched a complementary initiative: the **Menus of Change University Research Collaborative (MCURC)**.

The MCURC is a working group of scholars and experts from invited colleges and universities interested in accelerating efforts to move American consumers—and college/university students, scholars, and staff in particular—toward healthier, more

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sustainable, plant-forward diets. The collaboration recognizes that a significant amount of energy for food systems transformation today is being driven by concerned university students and forward-looking faculty and administration, and understands that university food systems hold considerable untapped potential to further catalyze existing efforts.

The MCURC will work in tandem with the new CIA-Google Culinary Innovation and World Flavors Lab now in development at Google's Mountain View campus. This new applied research facility will function as a real-world testing ground to evaluate an entire matrix of hypotheses on how best to implement the **Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus** in high-volume foodservice.

We held our first meeting of key MCURC campus dining representatives at the CIA's campus in Napa Valley in November 2014, with the idea of establishing a strong core, and growing the collaborative from there. The message from these university leaders has been clear: There is an urgent need for a network such as MCURC; the time for this change is now; the opportunities are immense.

In January 2015, we brought on board foodservice leaders from several additional colleges and universities around the country, as well as academic faculty from a broad range of disciplines (please see p. 4). To date, the network consists of 118 members representing 41 institutions:

### **Participating Institutions**

#### **The Collaborative Was Founded and Is Jointly Led by:**

- The Culinary Institute of America
- Stanford University

- University of Notre Dame
- University of Southern California
- University of Washington
- Yale University

#### **University Members:**

- Boston College
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Harvard University
- Kansas State University
- Northeastern University
- Oregon State University
- Princeton University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, Office of the President
- University of California, Riverside
- University of California, San Diego
- University of California, San Francisco
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- University of Montana
- University of New Hampshire
- University of North Texas

#### **Academic Members (Participating Faculty):**

- Chatham University
- Colorado State University
- Drexel University
- Hotel Management School Maastricht
- Johns Hopkins University
- Lebanon Valley College
- The New School
- New York University
- Queens College (City University of New York)
- University of California, Davis
- University of Vermont

#### **Ex Officio Members:**

- Google
- Jamie Oliver Food Foundation
- U.S Navy
- U.S. Olympic Training Center

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## **The Research Opportunities**

The study of food—whether focused on the related areas of agriculture, the environment, medicine and public health/nutrition, food science, hospitality, business, psychology, anthropology, history, political science, or law—is often siloed within academia. Furthermore, not all of these disciplines or programs within which they reside are typically engaged with the culinary and business leadership of university foodservice. Food studies programs that are emerging across the U.S. are starting to chip away at these silos. However, it is not yet standard practice for university efforts around food studies to be truly comprehensive, or thoroughly reflected in the food choices, menu development strategies, and procurement guidelines of their respective foodservice operations.

*Examples of the kinds of research we hope MCURC can inspire:*

- The CIA and UC Davis conducted a meat/mushroom sensory study to explore strategies to reduce meat and sodium on menus by substituting mushrooms in meat-based dishes. This research was published in 2014 in the *Journal of Food Science*. Chefs and foodservice operators nationwide have since taken inspiration from the finding that blending meat with umami-rich mushrooms can improve the nutritional quality of certain dishes without compromising—and in fact, enhancing—flavor.
- At Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania, a professor of philosophy teamed up with Metz Culinary Management to turn the dining hall into a research laboratory. Their student-centered research program, Engage, Analyze, and Transform (E.A.T.), generates data that the campus dining team can act on to improve both operations and student experience. One project resulted in a 19% reduction in food waste per student across one semester, keeping over 25,000 pounds of food out of landfills.
- In the fall of 2013, the Berkeley Food Institute announced its first Request for Proposals for seed grants available to all faculty at UC Berkeley, with the specific aim of supporting projects that are systems-oriented, innovative, and likely to effect change in policy and practice. A stunning 24 projects requesting over \$750,000 in total were submitted for just \$89,000 of initial funding. These are two of the five winning projects:
  - A joint workshop developed by the schools of public health, law, and public policy is testing the effects of restricting food purchases among participants of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), with the intention of influencing California’s negotiations with USDA regarding SNAP policies.
  - A partnership between the statistics and integrative biology departments is studying the prevalence and distribution patterns of weeds like dandelion and purslane, crowdsourcing data through a mobile app to identify barriers and opportunities for increased consumption.
- Finally, as an outgrowth of the Stanford Food Summit, health promotion researchers at Stanford University conducted a cluster-randomized study before and after a healthy eating marketing campaign was introduced at two dining halls, while two other dining halls served as controls. The post-intervention data collection was timed for the week of final exams—a period of high-stress for students, often associated

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with an increase in unhealthy eating habits—and the results, which were published in 2013 in the *Journal of American College Health*, showed that students in the intervention dining halls maintained healthy eating levels, whereas students in the control group ate more poorly during finals week.

Examples like these speak to the remarkable amount of interest in developing research among different departments, between campus dining and academia, and between different colleges/universities. In addition to opening up new avenues of research, working with other universities through studies conducted at multiple sites presents the opportunity to increase sample sizes and therefore chances for grant funding. These examples also illustrate that the potential for this type of collaborative work is tremendous—and that the results can extend well beyond the sum of initial parts.

The MCURC initiative is meant to break new ground in terms of how scholars, foodservice experts, and business leaders interact around opportunities to advance successful food systems transformation within universities. An early priority for MCURC is to discuss and plan how university students will gain access to the resources of the MCURC to help advance their passion for better food choices and food systems, as well as further their food-focused professional interests.

Beyond this, MCURC works to cross-pollinate academic research that addresses the Menu of Change research agenda and that reaches beyond university communities to global opportunities for change. The MCURC is a culinary-centric initiative that seeks to bring chefs, food experts, and key academic leaders and innovators around a table of enhanced vision, dialogue, and sharing.

***In short, the MCURC recognizes that, in order to advance critical food issues, systems-level solutions are required that integrate academic, business, culinary, and consumer insights. One of the best ways to advance such thinking is by incubating novel collaborations in university-wide academic and foodservice settings—and innovative collaboration among universities.***

#### **University Schools, Divisions, and Departments Represented in the MCURC:**

- Dining services divisions
- Athletic departments and performance dining divisions
- Business and management schools
- Design schools
- Schools of agriculture/departments of food science
- Schools of engineering
- Schools of government and policy
- Schools of law
- Schools of medicine
- Schools of public health/departments of nutrition
- Schools of liberal arts—American studies, anthropology, history, psychology, sociology, and others
- Schools of journalism
- Schools of environment and natural resources
- Schools of food systems and food studies
- Select interdisciplinary programs such as intra-university food studies centers
- *Note: Other schools will be considered as appropriate*

## **Committee Structure**

The initiative aims to work toward measurable impact, leverage new research findings in actionable ways, and develop concrete tools and resources to support the implementation of Menus of Change principles. As such, MCURC relies on committees and working groups, led by chairs responsible for organizing and facilitating dialogue among the committee or group, setting goals, and establishing priorities for action.

### **Executive Committee:**

Composed of a small number of members from both foodservice and academia, and from across professional committees and working groups. The charge of the Executive Committee is to serve as the decision-making leadership group for the MCURC network.

### **Finance & Development Committee:**

This committee consists of a small number of members with a track record in fundraising and sponsorship who oversee the plan and budget with corresponding support goals, and priority and aspirational needs, with full transparency toward members.

### **Professional Committees:**

Divides all members into four committees grouped by professional affiliation:

1. Executive Chefs & Culinary Directors
2. Senior University Administration
3. Directors of Dining Programs
4. Academics

These committees facilitate cross-university collaboration, providing professional groups an opportunity to connect and delve deep into issues relevant to their work.

### **Membership Committee:**

Handles membership inquiries, guides the growth strategy and consideration of new candidates, and makes key decisions about the meaning and terms of membership.

### **Working Groups:**

The Education Working Group is responsible for leveraging key research findings to create resources and strategies in support of health and sustainability imperatives. These may include toolkits, trainings, recipes, menu strategies, as well as educational programming for the annual member meeting. The Research Working Group is responsible for establishing research questions to pursue, stimulating the design of new studies, and developing a next-generation, culinary-centric national research agenda.

## **Meetings**

- **Menus of Change Leadership Summit** | June 14-16, 2016 | CIA in Hyde Park, NY
- **All-Member Meeting** | October 13-14, 2016 | Harvard University in Cambridge, MA
  - Member universities take turns hosting the all-member meeting each October.

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