



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**, 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 annual Menus of Change (MOC) Leadership Summit and following the release of its annual report, “Charting the Future of Food & the Foodservice Industry,” the **CIA** and **Stanford University** launched a complementary initiative: the **Menus of Change University Research Collaborative (MCURC)**.

The MCURC is a working group of scholars and campus dining leaders 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 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.

At the foundation of the Collaborative are the 24 **Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus**, and central to the work of this network is a research agenda that uses campus dining settings as real-world testing grounds to evaluate an entire matrix of hypotheses on how best to implement these principles in high-volume foodservice. In doing so, MCURC is developing and scaling a new methodology for behavioral research around food choices that uses campus dining halls as living laboratories.

We held our first meeting of key MCURC campus dining representatives at the CIA's campus in Napa Valley in November 2014, establishing a strong core, and soon after, we brought on board foodservice leaders from several additional colleges and universities around the U.S., as well as academic faculty from a broad range of disciplines (please see p. 5). We held our first annual meeting in October 2015 at Stanford, our second annual meeting in October 2016 at Harvard, and our third annual meeting in October 2017 at UCLA. 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.

To date, the network consists of 178 members representing 51 institutions:

Participating Institutions

The Collaborative Was Founded and Is Jointly Led by:

- The Culinary Institute of America
- Stanford University

University Members:

- Boston College
- College of the Holy Cross
- Columbia University
- Cornell University
- Duke University
- Harvard University
- Kansas State University
- North Carolina State University
- Northeastern University
- Ohio State University
- Oregon State University
- Princeton University
- Rutgers University
- Tufts 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 Colorado, Colorado Springs
- University of Connecticut
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- University of Montana
- University of New Hampshire
- University of North Texas
- University of Notre Dame
- University of Southern California
- University of Washington

For more information, please visit: www.moccollaborative.org

- Vanderbilt University
- Yale University

- of New York)
- University of California, Davis
- University of Vermont

Academic Members

(Participating Faculty):

- Colorado State University
- Drexel University
- Hotel Management School Maastricht
- Johns Hopkins University
- Lebanon Valley College
- The New School
- Queens College (City University

Ex Officio Members:

- Airbnb
- EAT Foundation
- Google
- U.S Navy
- U.S. Olympic Training Center
- World Resources Institute

For more information about all member institutions, please visit [our website](#) to read through the individual member profiles and learn about the many innovative initiatives and programs these leading-edge schools and organizations are implementing to advance healthier, more sustainable food choices.

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.

Early examples of the kinds of research we hope MCURC can inspire:

- In Fall of 2016, R&DE Stanford Dining and the Stanford Mind & Body Lab partnered to conduct multiple experiments, spanning 48 days of data collection with over 600 diners per day, to demonstrate that labeling and presenting healthy foods in more flavorful and indulgent ways, compared to using healthy descriptors, enhances diner choice of vegetables. Using the dining halls as living laboratories, this study found that labeling vegetables with indulgent and appealing descriptions increased the number of people choosing them by as much as 41 percent compared to when the vegetables were labeled as healthy. This research is currently being replicated at six MCURC universities as part of the DISH (Delicious Impressions Support Healthy Eating) Study.
- 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

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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 percent reduction in food waste per student across one semester, keeping over 25,000 pounds of food out of landfills.
- 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 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.

For further examples of the exciting work MCURC has been advancing within and across member institutions, please read the [special feature in the 2016 Menus of Change Annual Report](#).

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 Menus 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.

Universities, Schools, Divisions, and Departments Represented in 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 to be considered as appropriate*

Organizational 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.

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.

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.

Leadership Council:

Composed of a small number of members from both foodservice and academia, and from across professional committees and working groups, this council of MCURC chairs serve as the drivers of project work and strategic goals and objectives, as well as advisors on the MCURC research agenda at large.

Advisory Council:

This collection of invited MCURC members, both operator advisors and academic advisors, bring unique subject matter expertise and skills to effectively advise the Collaborative leadership on Collaborative-wide decisions, key priorities and objectives, and the overall strategic direction of the Collaborative.

In addition, networks of both registered dietitians and sustainable food program managers from member institutions were brought on board in February 2017. They lend technical expertise, research support, as well as guidance to professional committees and working groups on best practices for marketing and educating campus communities about the work related to Menus of Change principles in campus dining settings.

Finally, the work of MCURC is supported by a representative from the All-Member Meeting host institution—to connect planning for the annual summit with the year-round work of the Collaborative—and by a Communications Chair, who helps guide strategy for press outreach and equips members with the tools and training to tell the individual and collective stories of the great work taking place in the Collaborative.

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.

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.

Sponsors:

The work of the MCURC would not be possible without the generous support of its sponsor organizations. For a full list of both founding sponsors and annual sponsors, please see the [MCURC website page](#) featuring profiles of all 22 organizations:

Meetings

- **All Member Meeting 2018** | October 8-9, 2018 | Princeton University
 - Member universities take turns hosting the all-member meeting each October.
- **6th Annual Menus of Change Leadership Summit** | June 19-21, 2018 | CIA in Hyde Park, NY