

Executive Summary:

This study looks at the feasibility of establishing an urban, student-run farm at Brown University. First, I look at the value of urban agriculture and campus farms generally; then I examine the experiences of campus farms at 22 other universities, where they are used to create an experiential learning environment and promote sustainability. Interviews with university campus farm managers suggest that campus farming requires a strong commitment, volunteers, paid staff, funding, and a well defined mission statement. Campus farms vary in how they were operated and financed, the destination of the produce raised, and the size of the farm.

I examine the logistics of what a campus farm might entail at Brown, including identification and assessment of candidate sites. I also examine finance and governance issues. I consider possible locations for a farm at Brown based on sunlight, land ownership, and ease of access, size of available parcels. While there is not one large farm site, there are a number of smaller suitable sites for food gardens at Brown that can be integrated into an archipelago of campus gardens, to be known as “The BEAR’S (gar)Den Archipelago”. The sites include: the West House Backyard, the walkway to West House, the front area of the Science Library, the Ratty/Caswell space on Thayer Street, a section behind the V-Dub, the entrance to Hillel, the Swearer Center Backyard, a walkway to the UEL Garden, and Grad Center’s terrace.

I consider the potential costs involved with the creation of campus gardens at Brown and conclude that the direct costs range between \$5,000 and a little over \$560,000. The cost of acquiring the gardens from Brown University would be approximately \$560,000 at prevailing land prices if Brown was willing to sell. This cost represents 97% of the total. At the lower end, the cost of establishing these gardens is \$5,000, which is essentially the cost of labor and soil. The lower end cost assumes that Facilities Management will provide access to the equipment required for farming and that Brown University will provide land free of charge. While there are costs associated with running campus gardens, there are also economic benefits.

I conducted surveys of 40 faculty members and 100 students (20 from the Center for Environmental Studies) to assess interest in the idea of campus-based and run gardens. While only 30% of faculty responded that they would be involved in the

proposed garden sites, 50 % of the faculty respondents think that the gardens could enhance some of the classes they have taught and 80% express interest in the facilities. Moreover, the majority of students (73%) are in favor of establishing such urban agricultural facilities, regardless of their academic concentration. Sixty one percent said they would walk 10-15 minutes to visit the gardens, however only 45% saw themselves involved in the gardens in some way.

I interviewed various Brown administrators about the feasibility of the archipelago idea given the University's *Plan for Academic Enrichment* and ongoing campus planning efforts. Officials in Facilities Management indicate that the archipelago idea is feasible and that they will provide some assistance. In addition, a lead consultant on the Plan 2004/2005 expressed interest in integrating the edible landscape into "The Walk" and the other garden sites involved in the archipelago. Lastly, student-run, farms are blooming on university campuses across the United States, which suggests that the season is NOW for establishing campus gardens; and, ground has already been broken (May, 4 2005). Maintaining this garden and establishing others will build upon the current work that focuses on local food and sustainable agriculture, which has recently cropped up at Brown. Plans for the future of the various garden sites in the Archipelago are already underway and a number of volunteers have already been identified for harvest in the summer and fall of 2005.