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CSUMB students push for healthful foods



CSUMB student Stephanie Yee won a \$75,000 prize for the Real Food Challenge. (Amy McDermott - Monterey Herald correspondent)

By Amy McDermott, newsroom@montereyherald.com, [@AmyGMcDermott](https://twitter.com/AmyGMcDermott) on Twitter

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Seaside >> Student activists at CSU Monterey Bay are demanding more healthful local food on campus. With the help of administrators and staff, they are navigating the bureaucracy to rethink the CSU food system.

The group of 10 undergraduates, organized through the student activism network Real Food Challenge, hopes to shift 20 percent of university food spending to locally sourced, environmentally sound options by 2020, explained CSUMB founding member Stephanie Yee. Last May, Yee and her peers lobbied for CSU's new sustainable food policy, which allocated over \$100 million to the CSU system to meet that goal. She also won a \$75,000 prize for the Real Food Challenge.

Now, the students are collaborating with administrators and staff to decide exactly how to spend the money.

"It's a really daunting process," said CSUMB Sustainability Director Lacey Raak. "We don't even know what our percent of real food is right now."

Audits are a first step. Yee is working with another student on a two-month assessment of food in the dining commons, asking, "how much of it is actually local?" and "how much is ecologically sound and fair trade?" she said. At this point, students and administrators are still finding their baseline.

Students and staff are in the dark because most universities hire outside companies to source their food. Sodexo holds CSUMB's food service contract, but accessing records to figure out what students are eating, and where it comes from, has proven challenging because it is a private company. The information is available, Yee said, "but it's harder to find than it should be."

In addition to audits, students are also contributing opinions and time through a series of meetings with administrators and staff. A new President's Sustainability Committee, organized by Raak, includes five

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undergraduates, as well as faculty and staff. It's a forum for student policies to be evaluated and heard, she said.

Patti Hiramoto, associate vice president in the office of Inclusive Excellence, co-chairs the sustainability committee. She supports student involvement in the campus food system.

"If we can facilitate a conversation between students and contractors or local community members, we will try to do that," she said. "We include students as much as possible because they are our major stakeholders on campus."

This year, Raak is managing about \$25,000 for sustainability projects on campus. Evaluating funding proposals is the next step, she said. Students could propose to bring a farmers market or food pantry to campus, for example. "There's so much that could be done," said Raak.

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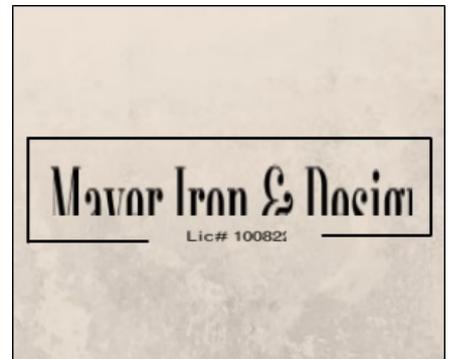
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