

Franklin Residential College Community Garden Pilot Program – Final Report

Abigail Lauterbach and Casey Serrano under the supervision of Chera Jo Watts

Project Description

Include what you did, why you did it, how it contributed to goals in UGA's 2020 Strategic Plan, who was involved, who benefited, and if it is completed or ongoing.

As a living learning community, the Franklin Residential College strives to provide students with new learning and personal growth opportunities outside of our academic, service, and social events. In the past, we have implemented recycling at all events, dorm wide composting, and a compost tumbler outside of Rutherford Hall. Now, the addition of our raised bed garden allows students to engage in personal investment and hands on learning about the food cycle, pollinators, food sustainability, and food justice. The three raised beds that we implemented between Cedar Street and Myers Hall have already yielded amazing student interactions since being planted in late April. At our initial planting event, a dozen students were able to help plant and learn to cultivate tomatoes, Jimmy Nardello peppers, bell peppers, cucumbers, basil, romaine, lettuce, strawberries, and marigolds. Further, over 20 students have been able to help maintain and water the beds! Over the summer, we have harvested produce and shared with FRC members in the Athens community, and we allow members of the Myers Community residing on campus this summer to harvest as they see fit. We are very encouraged by student reactions to the Garden in such a short time and anticipate more positive interactions in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The FRC's on-site compost tumbler was already "expand[ing] Experiential learning opportunities for all students" (Goal 1.1) in Rutherford when it comes to experiencing hands on sustainability practices, but the Garden has expanded these opportunities immensely. Students who helped plant the garden had the opportunity to learn about planting practices, soil testing, and how the necessary amounts of nitrogen for each plant are found and calculated. After that, students were able to learn about the maintenance of the garden as well as the role of different plants, such as pollinator friendly marigolds. This allowed students to experience the food cycle from production to consumption to compost and back again. Additionally, while we were not able to harvest enough food this semester to share with our community, in the coming semesters we predict we will have more than enough food to support the University's goal of "Broaden[ing] opportunities for students to engage with the diversity of communities in Georgia and across the nation and world on locally identified needs and issues" (Goal 3.3).

As the semester winds down, the care of the Garden will transfer over to Chera Jo Watts while students are away for the summer, but we are excited to continue planting and harvesting from the Garden for years to come. Already, we have partnered with UGarden to get plant starts for the beds this semester, and we plan to do the same next semester. With more time to grow, and Georgia's warm weather, we are expecting a bumper crop this fall! The Garden will not only continue physically but will also get its own digital home on the FRC's website where it demonstrates our commitments to community and sustainability to potential applicants.

Project Expenses

List project expenses, delineated into the same categories as required in the grant proposal application: Personnel, Equipment, Supplies / General Expenses

Item	Category	Price	Number	Subtotal
Spigot/Irrigation Installation	Personnel	500	1	500
Beds	Supplies	500	3	1500
Landscaping	Personnel	600	1	600
Sign	General Expenses	130.51	1	130.51
Tools (including: gloves, shovels, trowels, hose and hose head, rake)	Equipment	175	1	175
Soil Test	General Expenses	6	1	6
Strawberry Starts	Supplies	7.38	8	59.04
Total:				2970.55

Academic Impact

While we did not have the chance to interact with any outside faculty this Semester due to the busy schedules of professors in the face of COVID management, we are excited to bring more academic interaction to the Garden next year. Additionally, we are proud that our Garden has opened a new Experiential Learning opportunity for FRC students. In the Fall, the FRC student-elected Executive Board will have a new Sustainability Chair that will be responsible for the continued maintenance of the Garden as well as other FRC Sustainability projects, liaise with UGA Sustainable Housing and the EcoReps, and serve alongside other members of the Executive Board.

Research Value

When we began this project, we set out to answer the question “does student involvement in a community garden at their residence hall with their peers foster a stronger awareness of food sustainability?” Before work on the Garden began, of respondents to a 69-person survey conducted of FRC members expressed at least “slight” interest in learning about sustainable food choices. In order to meet our research goals, University wide goals, and cater to student interest, we held several service events at our Garden. The events were aimed at teaching students how to maintain our Garden so that we would have produce both for our FRC community and to contribute to the larger Athens community. Additionally, 85% of students indicated feeling more connected topics of “food and/or environmental justice” and 100% of students reported being more interested in “general sustainability” after our service events. One student even specifically wrote “I’d love to have a professor or community member come teach the FRC about food insecurity in the country and within the community.” Clearly the Garden is spurring students to think about their roles in sustainability and food justice and gives them a tangible, local outlet to make a positive impact with these issues.

We are excited that even within just a few weeks of having the Garden students are already feeling more connected not only to community issues, but also to each other and becoming confident in their gardening skills. At the outset, 94% of respondents to 69-person survey indicated that there were at least “slightly” interested in “learning about growing food or medicinal plants.” Additionally, 93% expressed at least slight interest in “in tending to raised garden beds with [their] FRC peers.” With this in mind, we fully expected to have students regularly engaging with the garden and learning from it. Our expectations were fulfilled and based on survey data from students who interacted with the Garden: 93% reported feeling “more connected” to their peers after social events at the Garden and 95% felt “more confident” maintaining the garden after service events at the Garden. It is encouraging to see the Garden have such a positive impact on students on several different fronts.

Engagement

a) List partnerships formed or enhanced through this project.

- **Housing** – UGA Housing, and Christy Tweedy in particular, have been incredible resources for us. They have been able to provide us with connections to other campus partners as well as being constant sources of information and support for our project.
- **UGArden** – UGArden, and specifically JoHanna Biang, have also provided invaluable support to us this Semester. UGArden has not only provided us with their agricultural expertise, but also starts for many of our vegetables and nitrogen fertilizer for our beds.
- **Abbie Dillon** – Abbie Dillon, the Office of Sustainability’s Urban Agriculture Intern, was very helpful in helping us select an appropriate site for our Garden.
- **Facilities Management Division** – UGA’s FMD, and particularly Chris Swann, made this project possible by installing and filling our beds, landscaping around the beds, and installing our irrigation system.
- **UGAPD** – The UGA Police Department provided us with thousands of water bottles to use for watering our garden. These water bottles would have been thrown away otherwise, and we are glad to put them to good use.
- **Science Library MakerSpace** – The Science Library MakerSpace’s Laser cutter allowed us to create custom plant stakes for our project without having to worry about toxic paint.
- **Farmers Market Friends** – Two of our tomato starts (German heirloom striped) were purchased on campus at the Farmer’s Market Friends market, another grant recipient. Further, the FMF Instagram account and FRC promoted each other’s efforts throughout the spring semester.

b) List beneficiaries of this project.

- **FRC Members:** All FRC members are welcome to take whatever produce they would like from our Garden, so this project has a take-home benefit for all our members. Additionally, approximately 20 members have already gotten the chance to help plant or maintain our garden, and we predict that many more will next year.

- **General UGA Community:** All community members are welcome to enjoy our garden. We had many members from the Myers community share with us in passing that seeing the garden “brightened their days” and made the community more enjoyable.

c) List any outreach events, activities, or media in which your grant project was featured. To the extent possible, include specific numbers of individuals that engaged with your project at these events or activities. Also to the extent possible, include any statistics regarding social media engagement.

- Media:
 - Our project was featured in the Red and Black. [link](#)
 - FRC Instagram [link](#)
 - Posts pertaining to the garden: December 10th (68 likes, 1 comment), March 26th (63 likes), April 18th (78 likes, 4 comments), and in our year-in-review video post April 25th (342 views, 1 comment).
 - Several FRC first-year applicants specified that they saw the Garden on our Instagram and that it was a factor in their decision to apply
 - Sustainable UGA Housing shared our project on their Instagram.
 - The Science Library MakerSpace shared us on their Twitter, and the Tweet received two Retweets. [Link](#)
- Outreach events and activities
 - March 15th: Water reclamation event in partnership with UGA PD, 7 FRC member participants. During our initial planting events, we watered with reclaimed bottled water and recycled bottles after to allow more members to interact with watering the plants.
 - March 28th: Cookie Night Garden Progress Tour, 9 FRC member participants. Sunday evening cookie night is an ongoing staple event of the FRC. During this special cookie night, members of the grants team gave interested FRC members a tour of the garden, on-site composting, and answered questions.
 - April 8th: Pop-up planting, 11 FRC member participants. This pop-up event (not advertised in advance) took place once our soil testing came back and allowed members the first opportunity to get their hands in the dirt! Members planted tomato starts, strawberry starts, and marigolds.
 - April 15th: Pop-up planting, 2 FRC member participants. This second pop-up planting event allowed FRC members to plant the starts donated by Ugarden.
 - April 18th: Outdoor Cookie Night & Garden Tour, 18 FRC members. During our last cookie night of the semester, FRC members walked over to the garden for a tour of the plant progress, watered the plants, and learned about future engagement opportunities for next year.
 - April 22nd: Garden Training Service Event, 9 FRC members. As we approached the end of the semester, we offered one Service Event for members who wished to

earn 10 Service Points towards their FRC good standing status by participating in a short training session and signing up for a gardening shift.

- o April 28th: We showcased our Garden to UGA Housing Eco-Reps and UGA Housing Staff members (9 attendees). At this event, we answered questions and shared our experiences in constructing the garden.

Project-specific Metrics

Our project has reached dozens of members of the UGA community both within the FRC and without. It has also quantitatively improved students' social bonds to UGA, as well as their interest in food justice and sustainability. These improvements were discussed in depth in the Research Value section of the report. While we have not been able to harvest as much produce as we hoped, this is a result of the beds only being installed at the beginning of April, and we hope to have much more produce next year when we can take advantage of the full growing season.

Photo Documentation



The raised beds were installed in late March



FRC members worked together with the UGA Police Department to reclaim roughly 1,425 L of water



FRC members learning about the garden, March 28



FRC members at the initial planting event, April 8



FRC member watering the garden with the newly installed hose/irrigation system



One of our thriving garden beds – strawberries, lettuce, basil, tomatoes, and marigolds

Project Assessment

Assess and reflect on your experiences in developing a Campus Sustainability Grant proposal and implementing your project. Briefly describe new insights you gained related to your personal, professional, or academic development.

Overall, we are incredibly happy with the progress of our Garden. Despite initially planting in our beds on April 8th, the Garden has already become a valuable new part of our community with FRC members watering and maintaining it every day. We are so grateful to our members for immediately jumping at the chance to participate in the care of our Garden, and in their willingness to expand their knowledge about topics of global importance such as food justice and sustainable development. Not only has this semester been productive, but the seeds are planted for us to have an even stronger Garden with more events and produce for the larger Athens community next year.

On a personal level, both student leaders on this project have been able to develop their professional collaborative skills, build new contacts at UGA, and strengthen their knowledge of urban agriculture. We are excited to carry these skills into the next semester with the Garden as well as future projects.