SUMMARY REPORT

UC Carbon Neutrality Initiative and Global Food Initiative Fellows Sustainability Leadership Retreat

JULY 2015
OVERVIEW

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the sustainability leadership retreat was to increase the skill of the Carbon Neutrality Initiative (CNI) and Global Food Initiative (GFI) fellows in transformational leadership, communication about critical food and climate issues, and select organizing tools; to provide a community-building forum for participants to reflect more deeply and critically about the global context in which their fellowship projects take place; to provide a platform for participants to engage in dialogue and peer learning to enhance their current carbon neutrality and food sustainability practices and projects; and to formulate collective reflection and input for broader sharing and impact. This first 2.5-day sustainability leadership retreat was conducted with 15 fellows representing 6 campuses in July 2015 in San Francisco, and was led by the UCI Sustainability Initiative, Global Sustainability Resource Center, and community partners from SERES and Soul Cocina.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

It was expected that participants in this program would:

- Develop sustainability, food, organizing, and climate leadership skills relevant to their projects and engagement post-fellowship
- Deepen understanding and improve capacity to articulate the CNI and GFI objectives and the global context in which their fellowship projects take place
- Gain clarity about student engagement role in the Carbon Neutrality and Global Food Iniative, and create shared understanding of how to strengthen it in coming years
- Gain understanding of how to become involved with other student leaders to increase campus and system-wide innovation on climate and food action through existing UC mechanisms
- Develop a network and strong sense of community with peers across issue
- Deepen understanding of and generate new thinking about further involvement and commitment to these issues at their home campus, with UC, and beyond after the close of their fellowship year
EVALUATION

PROGRAM TEAM

“Thank you SO MUCH for a fantastic retreat. Everyone asks me how the SF [retreat] was and I say it was one of the best things I’ve done since moving to California. Thank you for putting so much effort into it and also being adaptable and flexible and letting people speak and have their voices heard.”—Ryan Dowdy

SUMMARY

When asked about their overall level of satisfaction with how the Program Team facilitated the workshop, all 13 attendees who completed evaluations indicated the highest level of satisfaction.

COMMENTS

“Corrina and Kim were extremely engaging and adept at helping participants find their own path in the exercises. I really appreciated their ability to read the energy in the room and alter the curriculum accordingly while still ensuring that we had a full and diverse weekend.”—Sally Geisler

“I feel inspired to move forward as a positive, passionate, and engaged leader. For that, I thank you all!”—Amelia Unsicker

“They were the most impactful and wonderful group I have ever had the opportunity to work with.”—Alden Phinney

“I think the facilitators did a great job incorporating their passion and personal experience into this retreat. The stories and lessons that were being told have encouraged me to pursue similar challenging events to help me grow as an individual and leader. Thank you!”—Robert Penna

“This weekend has been absolutely amazing. The life lessons and knowledge that came out of this week from the facilitators was fantastic but the real beauty of this workshop was the space that was created. I was able to connect with so many passionate peers and the conversations that came out of them were truly inspiring.”—Thi Dang

“Words cannot express how grateful I am for all your hard work this weekend. I learned so much about what it means to be a leader from the ways in which each of you interacted with others.”—Sanna Alas

FACILITATORS
Corrina Grace (left), SERES and UCI Sustainability Initiative
Kim Serrano (right), UCI Sustainability Initiative

COOKING TEAM
Marvin Alvarado (left), San Francisco-based chef
Bryant Terry (middle), Chef-in-residence, Museum of the African Diaspora
Roger Feely (right), Soul Cocina and UCI Sustainability Initiative

Credit: Robert Penna
“My favorite experience was the reflection and journaling activity. It helped me visualize how far I have moved forward in my life and to see what I need to do for my future, and the future of those around me.”—Amelia Unsicker

SUMMARY

Overall, attendees appreciated the introspective tone of the retreat with several evaluators pointing to the future visioning and free-writing activity as a highlight. According to the 13 evaluators, other retreat strengths included:

1. Helping connect with other fellows from across the UC system regarding critical food and climate issues, and
2. Providing space to engage in meaningful dialogue and peer-to-peer learning that will enhance fellows’ future carbon neutrality/food activities.

Future retreats could be improved by adding or augmenting components that help attendees reflect more deeply and critically about the global context of their work and how their fellowship relates to future decisions and career choices.

COMMENTS

“I really enjoyed the activities we participated in to strengthen our understanding of ourselves and others and how we fit in the grand span of social change and what we can do to make our world a better place.”—Robert Penna

“One of my favorite memories was the movement exercise with the line and the following discussion afterwards. It was a very visceral experience of reflection on my own leadership style and I was able to realize some places that I would want to further develop as well as some of my strengths. This activity and the discussion on different kinds of leadership helped me realize some of the assumptions I had made about what makes a powerful leader and the way in which I was continually breaking myself down. This realization was essential in then developing my vision in the following exercise. It was a pivotal moment in the experience.”—Sanna Alas

“One of the most awakening moments was the vision stance, appreciate leadership, and learning about reform, resist, recreate, and reimagine and how our actions fit into and flow through these ways of changing our world.”—Sally Geisler

“I liked the focus on the self and introspection, but I also would like to ground that new knowledge more completely in specific actions that I will take into the future.”—Austin Park

“I liked the introspection, [but] would have liked to have concrete connections for how to apply this learning.”—Parker Wells

ACTIVITIES
CNI and GFI Fellows engaged in a leadership exercise

COMMUNITY-BUILDING
CNI Fellows Austin Park, Asiya Natekal, and Linda Tong connecting between activities
“The food was like nothing I had experienced. I felt like I was actually eating from the Earth for once, and not from the supermarket. I loved hearing the story of my meal before I ate, and I am so appreciative for the incredible, informed work that Roger performed for us.”—Austin Park

**SUMMARY**

The 13 evaluators were unanimous in their assessment that the retreat food was adequate and met expectations, and all reported a high degree of satisfaction with the accommodations.

**COMMENTS**

“The facilities were incredibly unique and provided a space in which we could explore new ways of thinking and new ways of moving in space (together). I was especially grateful for working in the Red Victorian as it connected us to a long tradition of organizing, movements, and people working for change in their communities. At every turn, each day, I was reminded of the history in this building, in this space, that we are now a part of. The food was so much aligned with the vision and purpose of the weekend—that kind of integrity is crucial and much appreciated. Roger was incredibly knowledgeable about the meals, the ingredients, and the sources of the incredible meals he prepared for us. His connection to the farmers and the local foraging really brought an unanticipated level of integrity to the event. I also appreciated that he drew on his connections to other eco-chefs for us to learn from and connect with.”—Sally Geisler

“The co-housing hostel was an inspirational space to hold our work in, and the people we met were interesting and unique! The food was 1) The best food I’ve ever eaten, and 2) an amazing exploration experience in sustainable practices and cultural, human storytelling.”—Alden Phinney

“The facility was a very unique space and allowed for great conversations to be had at the heart of the city. The food was very interesting and the idea about learning the stories behind the food is a new process I had never been exposed to before.”—Thi Dang

“I was blown away by both the food and the accommodations!”—Amelia Unsicker

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND MEETING SPACE**
The Red Victorian coliving hotel and community gathering space. 1665 Haight St., San Francisco, CA.

**FOOD**
A. Dinner and food justice presentation with Bryant Terry
B.-D. Foodscapes meals prepared by the cooking team
“I think one of the greatest realizations I had was that I was not in this alone. Being able to talk to like-minded peers and having that space where authentic dialogue occurred was easily the best part about this retreat. I have grown so much in the past two days and it is because of the experiences of those who I was able to talk to helped me gain new perspective.”—Thi Dang

SUMMARY
Throughout the retreat and evaluation, participants consistently affirmed the retreat’s value for connecting with other students across the UC system and forming a community of scholars working on similar food and climate issues. These connections energized attendees and minimized feelings of isolation. All 13 evaluators indicated that they would enthusiastically recommend this retreat to future fellows. When asked whether future retreats should occur at the beginning or end of the fellowship, half of evaluators preferred having a retreat at both the beginning and end, while the other half thought a retreat at the start of the fellowship would be best.

COMMENTS
“[My favorite experience was] connecting with others. I often feel isolated and alone in my experiences and viewpoints. This workshop connected me with a new community.”—Ryan Dowdy

“[My favorite awakening was] discovering that there are people all around me that share my goals, aspirations, and aren’t afraid to work hard and stand out.”—Adriana Gomez

“I am grateful for the opportunity this retreat provided to ask uncomfortable questions. I found holes in myself that I wasn’t previously aware of.”—Austin Park

“The importance of interpersonal relationships is often understated. Often times I’ve found it hard to connect with other students on my campus because that kind of space isn’t carved out, unless we carve it out ourselves. Knowing there is a community engaged around these issues outside my institution has empowered me to pursue this work and has given me a new frame to perceive opportunities for engagement.”—Cody Lee

“[This retreat] has given me so much knowledge for the future and what I want to do with my life.”—Thi Dang

OVERALL RETREAT ASSESSMENT
Words offered by attendees to describe the overall retreat experience

MOST VALUABLE ASPECTS
Evaluator responses regarding the 3 most valuable aspects of the retreat

Community/Connections
Appreciative Leadership
One-on-one discussions/world cafes
Passion
Lessons Learned
Sharing (about projects and in general)
Reflection (with a lens to the future)
Food and location (an active practice of our work)
Fun Games/Group Activities
Compassion
Creativity
Authenticity
Partnership
PROGRAM

SATURDAY, JULY 18

2:00-3:30  WELCOME: FRAMING AND CONTEXT

- Framing; introduction of team and overview of program
- Activity: Diversity circle
- Check-in
- Appreciative Interview #1 – What has been the highlight of your Fellowship? What did you do? What was the impact? Why was this a highlight for you?
- Activity: Spectrum

3:30-4:00  BREAK

4:00-6:30  FOCUS

- Training: Building authentic relationships
- Deep listening survey
- Interviews: “why do you care?”
- Project presentations

6:30-7:00  BREAK

7:00-8:30  FOODSCAPES DINNER

8:30-9:30  OUR WORK TOGETHER: WORLD CAFE

- Appreciative Interview #2: What have been some of the biggest learning moments of your Fellowship? Personal growth? Interpersonal?
- World Café: What was the biggest impact you saw in your Fellowship? What would you improve about the Fellowship?

UCI Sustainability Initiative and SERES design the content of this kind of program by drawing upon tools and practices from multiple sources including: Appreciative Inquiry and Design, Strategic Questioning, Social Transformation Project, Movement Strategy Center, Rockwood Leadership Institute, Youth Lead the World, Foodscapes, SERES, and the Work that Reconnects.
SUNDAY, JULY 19

7:30-8:30  BREAKFAST

8:30-10:00  EXPLORING OUR WORK

- World café: What is your greatest hope for this work in the world? What is the change we most need and want?
- Play for Peace
- Theory of Transformation – Reimagine, reform, resist, recreate: Where is your work?

10:00-10:30  BREAK

10:30-12:30  WORKING EFFECTIVELY

- Activity: Future visioning
- Work space: Personal action plans and partner sharing

12:30-2:00  FOODSCAPES LUNCH

2:00-3:30  THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE

- Training: Understanding power
- Power in action: Play for Peace

3:30-4:00  BREAK

4:00-6:30  BUILDING MOVEMENTS AND NETWORKS

- Training: Appreciative Leadership
- Work space: Vision stance

6:30-7:00  BREAK

7:00-8:30  FOODSCAPES DINNER

- With guest eco-chef Bryant Terry

8:30-9:30  THE INTERSECTION OF FOOD JUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Presentation from Bryant Terry and group discussion
MONDAY, JULY 19

7:30-8:30  BREAKFAST

8:30-10:00  TAKING IT FORWARD
• Final conversations
• Closing presentations
• Check-out
• Evaluations

CA HIGHER EDUCATION SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

12:00-4:30  UC GLOBAL FOOD/CARBON NEUTRALITY INITIATIVE FELLOWS SYMPOSIUM
ATTENDEES

Adriana Gomez
UC Merced, Undergraduate
CNI Fellow

Alden Phinney
UC Santa Cruz, Undergraduate
CNI Fellow

Amelia Unsicker
UC Irvine, Graduate
CNI Fellow

Asiya Natekal
UC Irvine, Graduate
CNI Fellow

Austin Park
UC Los Angeles, Undergraduate
CNI Fellow

Cody Lee
UC Irvine, Undergraduate
CNI Fellow

Linda Tong
UC San Diego, Undergraduate
CNI Fellow

Nicole Cuevas
UC Irvine, Undergraduate
GFI Fellow

Parker Wells
UC Los Angeles, Graduate
CNI Fellow

Rebecca Quinte
UC Merced, Undergraduate
GFI Fellow

Robert Penna
UC Los Angeles, Undergraduate
GFI Fellow

Ryan Dowdy
UC Davis, Graduate
GFI Fellow

Sally Geisler
UC Irvine, Graduate
GFI Fellow

Sanna Alas
UC Los Angeles, Undergraduate
GFI Fellow

Thi Dang
UC Merced, Undergraduate
GFI Fellow
“This is a MUST for future fellows. You HAVE TO DO IT!!!—Adriana Gomez

PROGRAM DESIGN

SERES is an organization based in Central America whose mission is to empower young leaders to build sustainable, healthy and thriving communities through education and transformative leadership. SERES leaders facilitate empowering opportunities for young people that engage them as the principal agents of change, connecting their skills and passions with the most pressing community needs, and helping them to develop a skill set that allows them to start creating positive social change where they are. SERES principal Corrina Grace is a Visiting Scholar in Sustainability Leadership at UC Irvine.

http://seres.org

Soul Cocina is pioneering Foodscapes programming, which incorporates culture, tradition, seed-to-plate systems thinking, and sustainability to create a holistic shift in beliefs and habits to invite a new culture around food that celebrates the rich bio-cultural diversity and interdependence of people, place, and food. Soul Cocina principal Roger Feely is a sustainable food-systems educator, curator of food-related cultural events, and a Visiting Eco-Chef at UC Irvine.

http://www.soulcocina.org

The Global Sustainability Resource Center at UC Irvine unleashes youth leadership for community resilience to a changing climate. This pursuit informs students’ academics, career choices, and ways of life. The GSRC is a hub for students and community partners to co-create and experience an integrated, holistic resilience framework that addresses the root causes of sustainability crises and deepens understanding of the interdependence of all life.

http://sustainability.uci.edu/studentinvolvement/gsrc/

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

UC Irvine Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Thomas Parham, Chair, Student Engagement Working Group of the UC President’s Global Climate Leadership Council

UC Irvine Vice Chancellor of Administrative and Business Services Wendall Brase, Co-Chair of the UC President’s Global Climate Leadership Council

UC Chief Operating Officer Rachel Nava, Co-Chair of the UC President’s Global Climate Leadership Council

UC Office of the President

UC Irvine Sustainability Initiative

Bryant Terry

The Red Victorian, San Francisco

Credit: Robert Penna