

Going Full Circle; Developing a Campus Community Garden Linked to a Campus Food Pantry

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Campus community gardens are established and operated to bring a diverse group of individuals from within the community together to work towards a common goal. Using the best management practices as determined by a qualitative assessment of North American campus community gardens in a previous project, University of Arkansas (UA) students created a community garden as a co-curricular student activity. The garden was initiated, planned, and developed as a component of an individual capstone project requirement for the Minor in Sustainability degree program. The UA community garden is accessible for students, staff, and faculty to learn and grow a variety of plants and is also intended to provide fresh produce and flowers to the UA Campus Full Circle Food Pantry. The availability of fresh produce and flowers gives a unique aspect to the food pantry and their customers of the university community who might not otherwise have access to these items. Soil amendments for the garden are partially derived from composted food waste from the dormitory complex where the garden is located closing a loop from food consumption to production. The campus community garden provides an educational service learning opportunity allowing classes and students from many fields of study to use the garden for direct or indirect education, and become involved within the campus community. It will provide a venue for students obtaining the new Sustainability Minor to actively participate in continued operation of the project. The UA campus community garden has potential to increase engagement in

the educational and social community of campus and to provide healthy fresh produce to those in need at the food pantry and volunteers in the garden.