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Joining Forces for Food Justice

In a continued push to address food security on campus, in the community, across the state and around the world, UC Santa Barbara is hosting an open discussion forum centered on the subject.

The Campus Food Justice Forum is the second in an ongoing series of periodic public conversations meant to coalesce the insights and ideas of UCSB students, staff, faculty and community members. It will be held on Wednesday, April 15, from 3:30 to 6 p.m., in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building, on campus. It is free and open to the public.

“The Campus Food Justice Forum is an opportunity for students, faculty and staff to voice their experiences, concerns and ideas about our food system,” said Katie Maynard, campus sustainability coordinator based in UCSB’s Department of Geography. “This event is timed to ensure that the campus community can influence the next revision of the UCSB Campus Sustainability Plan and the implementation of the still evolving UC Global Food Initiative.

“UCSB has recently established a new committee, the Food Security Work Group, which will be focused on addressing food insecurity of UCSB students,” Maynard added.

The forum series is a joint effort of UCSB Sustainability and the Associated Students Food Bank. The food bank played a key role in the inaugural California Higher Education Food Summit held at UCSB earlier this year. The success of that

systemwide conference in fact inspired this new slate of events aimed at centralizing efforts and providing an opportunity for interested parties to united in conversation about food.

The first session in the ongoing series, the Isla Vista Food Forum, saw participants from UCSB, Santa Barbara City College and the greater Santa Barbara area join in a discussion of the larger food movement as it relates to the local community. Meant as a brainstorming session to generate goals for a better food future in Isla Vista, priorities resulting from that session include the creation of a community food center, the growth of additional community gardens and increasing affordable food options.

“With over 2,500 students visiting the AS Food Bank since summer 2014 alone, ideas on how to meet the needs of food insecure students are greatly valued by our own organization in long-term planning,” said Erick Lankey, vice chair of the AS Food Bank Committee at UCSB. “We are excited to be able to provide background information describing some of the underlying reasons why so many students have depended on our service since first opening, and to start working with other attendees on how to further efforts toward achieving food security on our campus.”

The forum is also being held under the umbrella of the broader UC Global Food Initiative (UCGFI), which is designed to coordinate the diverse resources of the University of California to help ensure adequate nutrition — starting with access to food — for all. Unveiled by UC President Janet Napolitano in July 2014, the UCGFI will harness the system’s collective excellence in research, outreach and operations in a sustained effort to develop, demonstrate and export solutions — throughout California, the U.S. and the world — for food security, health and sustainability.

For its part in the larger initiative, UCSB is a key player on systemwide committees looking at issues including sustainable farming practices, better enabling small growers to become suppliers, fisheries research, student food banks and more.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society.

All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.