



**Report on the Student Organic Garden located at the Oxford Tract**

By: The Oxford Tract Planning Committee

August 7, 2017

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## I. Background

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- A. The Student Organic Garden is a quarter acre community and educational garden located on the Oxford Tract just one block north of campus. The space is managed by the Student Organic Gardening Association, abbreviated from here forward as SOGA. The garden was established in 1971 by a group of College of Natural Resources (CNR) students who felt the need for a physical space to put to practice what they were learning in the classroom. This need was predated by a long and vibrant history of agriculture education at Cal.
- B. This university was founded as the first land-grant college in California. Under the mission of the federal Morrill Act which established a national system of research stations to foster teaching and research related to agriculture, UC Berkeley became the first state-run Agricultural Experiment Station. Agricultural research is still conducted on the Oxford Tract (the large plot adjacent to SOGA), but the garden, a product of the students and faculty in the CNR, is the only university property where students have complete autonomy in their farming endeavors. The first college in the UC system is the College of Natural Resources, formerly known as the College of Agriculture. For nearly 150 years, CNR (formerly known as the College of Agriculture) has served to increase society's understanding of the earth and the environment, and how humans and nature interact (CNR website).
- C. The garden was once twice its size. In the mid 1990s, the UC Berkeley administration at the time attempted to sell the entire garden space to East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD). However, ten Conservation & Resource Studies students confronted the then-current Dean of CNR demanding the space be preserved for student research and experiential learning. Hearing the demands of the students, a compromise was made, and only half of the land was allocated to EBMUD, with the other half remaining as the SOGA garden.
- D. Today the garden functions as an educational space serving hundreds of students each year, provides job experience and leadership skills to students, serves as a community hub for the surrounding residents, and provides organic fruit and vegetables to the UC Berkeley Food Pantry.
- E. The UC Berkeley Basic Needs Security Committee was formed to address issues of food, housing, financial, and wellness security for students on campus. The Student Organic Garden not only produces food to be donated to the UC Berkeley Food Pantry, but also provides nutrition and food education for students.

## II. Mission Statement

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“The Student Organic Garden Association (SOGA) is a democratic student association of garden stewards and educators committed to sustainable organic gardening grounded in direct experience. Our mission is to provide a space for experiential learning related to agriculture and ecology, promote sustainable food systems and food justice on and around campus, and engage in community building through collaboration.” (SOGA Wordpress, 2015)

## III. Reach

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The SOGA garden offers open hours, workshops, and volunteer events that are open to both UC Berkeley students and local community members year round.

Each year **~2000 UC Berkeley students** and community members use the garden. Each semester, SOGA **donates ~400 lbs of produce** to the UC Berkeley Food Pantry.

In 2016, the Berkeley Food Institute reported 39% of undergraduate and 23% of graduate students at UC Berkeley are food insecure .

- A. Throughout the year the garden hosts **3 courses and nearly 250 UC Berkeley students** across two campus departments.
  - a. 80 students | ESPM 117: Urban Garden Ecosystems | Professor Miguel Altieri
  - b. 80 students | ESPM 155AC: Political Ecology & Sociology of Food Systems | Professor Kathryn De Master
  - c. 100 students | LD ARCH 12: Environmental Science for Sustainable Design | Professor Mathias Kondolf
- B. The leaders of the SOGA garden facilitate **4 DeCal courses with 185-265 UC Berkeley students** enrolled each year.
  - a. 120-200 students | Intro to Organic Gardening and Food Justice DeCal | since 1991
  - b. 30 students | Berkeley Urban Gardening Internship | since 2014
  - c. 15 students | Garden Leadership and Management | since 2014
  - d. 25 students | People & Permaculture | starting 2017
- C. The SOGA garden also provides an on-campus opportunity for **Food Systems Minor students** to complete their Community Engagement requirement by creating, implementing, and managing projects in the garden.
- D. **Over 600 students** and community members attend SOGA’s educational workshop series each year.

- E. Since 2014, **3-4 paid management positions** are offered for students each semester. Students have the opportunity to work in garden operations; event planning; educational programming; grant writing and reporting; and non-profit administration, finance, communication, and HR. As of fall 2017, these paid leadership positions are work-study eligible.
- F. Several on-campus student organizations regularly volunteer at SOGA garden for team building exercises, community service events, and sustainability and food justice education.
  - a. Cal in the Capital, ASUC Senate Leadership Institute, Cal Greeks
- G. The SOGA garden is open year round every Sunday, with expanded Open Hours in the summer. Several summer programs are offered at the garden.
  - a. 4 students | part-time paid leadership positions | since 2014
  - b. 30 students | Agroecology Shortcourse | Miguel Altieri, Professor; Josh Arnold, PhD Student
  - c. 100 high school students | emBARC Summer Design Academy | College of Environmental Design
  - d. 100 8-12 year olds | Sprouts Cooking Club
  - e. 40 high school students | UC Berkeley's Academic Talent Development Program Educational Program
- H. The SOGA garden also partners with several community organizations. The garden is deeply integrated into the larger network of urban gardens and farms in the Bay Area.
  - a. 20 preschoolers | Rose Waldorf School
  - b. 15-20 volunteers | MESA (the Multicultural Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture) Oakland Chapter
  - c. 10-12 volunteers | Core Power Yoga 10-12
  - d. Siemens Health Group
  - e. Suitcase Clinic
  - f. People's Park Garden
  - g. UC Gill Tract Community Farm
  - h. Berkeley Ecology Center

## IV. Funding

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Managers of SOGA are responsible for securing all funding for the SOGA garden. Students gain experience grant writing and reporting, developing annual budgets, and managing a non-profit organization's finances.

- A. From 2014-2017, paid internships at SOGA were funded by the The Green Initiative Fund (funded by student tuition fees). SOGA has received **\$40,000 to support 19 paid student** leadership positions from TGIF over six semesters.
- B. In 2016, **the UC Global Food Initiative** granted SOGA and the UC Gill Tract Community Farm **\$40,000** for collaboration efforts aimed towards increasing UCB campus food security for low income students.
- C. In 2016, **\$11,300 was granted to SOGA by the Bank of the West**, one of UC Berkeley's top donors, for operational and infrastructure costs.
- D. In 2017, SOGA received **\$2,500** from the Basic Needs Security Committee, and **\$10,000** from a grant written by the Berkeley Food Institute.

## V. Sustainability

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SOGA's focus on sustainable management achieves quantifiable resource and cost savings that coincide with multiple campus sustainability initiatives, including Zero Waste 2020 and Climate Neutral 2025.

- A. On site composting system processes approximately 25 cubic yards of waste annually.
- B. Local food production → decreases carbon output for campus food provision.
- C. Stringent water conservation
  - a. Drip irrigation → 50% reduction in water needs
  - b. Rainwater catchment infrastructure → collects 550 gallons of water when full
  - c. Greywater system → diverts water from sewer system and reduces potable water needs for plants

In contrast, the utilization of Oxford Tract and SOGA garden as the site for a large development defies the campus Sustainable Land Use Goal that states: "Plan every new project to serve as a model of resource conservation and environmental stewardship". Not only would resources such as irreplaceable carbon-sequestering topsoil, urban wildlife habitat, and local food production land be lost, but the subsequent development taking its place would be hard pressed to match the high level

of sustainability and beneficial ecosystem services that the SOGA garden currently provides. Urbanized land produces 70 times the greenhouse gas emissions as farmland<sup>1</sup>, underscoring the importance of maintaining urban agricultural spaces as such while locating new, sustainable developments on already developed spaces (i.e., parking lots) for a *net lowering* of greenhouse gas emissions.

## VI. Important Considerations

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- A. The single block proximity to campus is most important to students and stakeholders of the SOGA garden, as shown by a recent survey produced by Professor Gordon Frankie.
- B. SOGA has for decades served as a highly developed educational space, with 40 years of programming in place that make the numerous DeCals, lecture partnerships, internship opportunities and student research possible. SOGA serves a very specific and unique role for students in the UC Berkeley farms and gardens network. SOGA has the most developed hands-on education and student leadership opportunities of the UC Berkeley gardens and farms.
- C. SOGA is an active part of the UC Global Food Initiative (launched by Janet Napolitano and all UC chancellors in 2014) receiving fiscal support and recognition from the GFI administration as well as the UC-wide food system.
- D. The UC Berkeley Food Pantry relies on donations from the SOGA garden as a main source of fresh produce for food insecure students. SOGA garden provides more produce to this on-campus resource than any of the other UC Berkeley gardens, second only to the UC Gill Tract.
- E. The UC Berkeley administration will receive push back from both City of Berkeley residents and City Council. Upon news of the proposed Oxford Tract development, community members and city council members have come out in heated opposition to a large scale development in the neighborhood, not because those stakeholders are anti-housing, but because SOGA garden is as much a community space as it is a student space.
- F. The stewards of the SOGA garden have been amending and building up viable crop-growing soil for the past 45 years, with inputs including vast amounts of labor and resources. Replicating this elsewhere would be very expensive and time consuming.

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<sup>1</sup> Hayden et al., 2015. Use of local greenhouse gas inventories to prioritise opportunities for climate action planning and voluntary mitigation by agricultural stakeholders in California. *J. of Environ. Planning and Management*, 56:553-571.

## VII. Core Program Needs

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1. SOGA must have a productive garden space that is on or near campus so that students can have easy access to and from their other classes. It should not be on a roof top, in Strawberry Canyon, at the Gill Tract, or in some other remote location that would make it inaccessible to students.
2. The SOGA garden also needs access to facilities that are currently offered by the buildings at the Oxford Tract, that is: facilities for storing garden tools; lath houses for starting crops; trucks for transportation of compost and soil; industrial waste bins for trash, compost, and recycling; and ADA accessible restrooms.
3. The SOGA garden also needs adequate security (such as fencing, lights, etc) and that must be provided by the University.
4. The SOGA garden is an education oriented garden. This mission is achieved by the physical areas created to facilitate learning and discussion in the garden such as the current lecture amphitheater and various seating areas throughout. The garden must accommodate lectures and gatherings of 20-60 people at a time.
5. The SOGA garden needs full and direct sunlight. There cannot be a large building on the southside of the block that would shade the garden space during the daylight.

## VIII. Viability of alternate locations

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*See "Alternative Housing Sites" document.*



IX. Faculty Endorsement Signatures

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Name (printed)	Signature	Date
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