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The Future of Food Production at UM: Learning from the Past & Envisioning the Future of Campus Gardens

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Figure 1. The Lommasson garden before campus construction



Figure 2. The Lommasson garden Welsh Harlequin ducks

Background:

From 2010 to 2022, the Lommasson garden was a 3,600 square foot plot of land on the University of Montana's campus in Missoula, Montana. The space produced mixed vegetables, herbs, native plants, a beehive, and seasonal duck occupants. It was used for educational purposes, internships, and employment. In spring 2022, the garden was demolished to make room for a new campus dining hall and the start of a new student life center. At the University of Montana besides the now missing Lommasson garden, there is a garden within and outside of the University Center, the South Ave farm, an ethnobotany garden, and the PEAS Farm.

I researched the connection of on-campus gardens with respect to biodiversity, mental health, food insecurity, inclusion, and food production. On-campus gardens can support high amounts of biodiversity which is beneficial for supporting natural systems and making UM a more sustainable campus. Research has proven that green space and horticultural therapy can benefit one's mental health. A new on-campus garden will decrease food scarcity around the university campus by providing more local food.

Diversity has become a priority for UM to increase and create a more inclusive and welcoming community. At Southern University, a garden was implemented to represent the historically African-American sororities and fraternities to give future students a sacred space to feel connected and celebrate their history. The garden space was an environment where events and statues to the history of the school were embodied to acknowledge and share the values and beliefs of the diverse pockets within the university (Riley & Bogue, 2014). This can be replicated successfully at UM by recognizing the land the university was built upon, ensuring the space is ADA accessible, and those students that identify with diverse backgrounds feel welcomed.

Looking Forward:

Food production and student education should be the two primary goals of the new garden space. The place for the next on-campus garden is where the Lommasson building is currently. The building will be torn down in the upcoming years. This space would be ideal due to its central location of campus, high foot traffic, large size, and proximity to the new dining center and Rise + Rooted café. This space would be about 38,625 square feet stretching from the parking lot behind the current Lommasson building to the main walkway leading to the bear statue at the base of the Oval.

This space illustrated to the right, can support 24 raised beds that are tall enough to accommodate for wheelchair accessibility (15'x4'x24") and 14,250 square feet of row crops. The space can also support a food forest about 7,705 square feet, a composting space, multiple bee-hives, a tool shed, community seating, and a large outdoor classroom. The ducks will be brought back to campus and there will be a variety of food produced to provide students with many opportunities to learn about sustainable agriculture on campus. The community space is necessary to provide inviting spaces to help people reconnect with the food system and create more communities at UM. What needs to be done next is to ensure that student groups, UM dining, and other campus groups show their support of dedicating this space to a new on-campus garden.

Purpose & Motivation:

My research answers three questions related to campus food production and its social and educational impacts:

1. Given the loss of the Lommasson garden space, what can/should the future of on-campus food production look like?
2. How will student engagement and education be designed to accommodate any new garden space?
3. In what ways can future on-campus food production and garden spaces consider equity and justice?

From research on campus farms and gardens and surveys of UM affiliates, I will develop recommendations for the future of on-campus gardens. Having an on-campus garden space is important to *produce food and provides hands-on experience* that benefits the UM community.



Figure 5. The space the Lommasson garden previously occupied



Figure 6. My design for a new on-campus garden that would occupy the space emptied by the Lommasson building, in between the new dining center and Rise + Rooted Cafe

References:

Riley, C. L., & Bogue, P. A. (2014). Commemorative spaces as means of enhancing campus diversity. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 8(3), 179-193. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JME-03-2014-0014>
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 Figure 6. Todd, Elizabeth. 2022. Design proposal for new on-campus garden. Image.
 Figure 7. Klass, Reed. 2016. "Universities new garden sees first harvest." Image from video. http://www.montanakaimin.com/multimedia/videos/university-new-garden-sees-first-harvest/youtube_a83a62d8-793a-11e6-a9a8-bb2fcc7d128.html
 Figure 8. Imadali, Eli. 2019. "University Center gardener speaks for the trees." Image. http://www.montanakaimin.com/news/university-center-gardener-speaks-for-the-trees/article_02ebdb98-396f-11e9-bc2a-dbed9afb8022.html

Materials & Methods:

Through different avenues of research, I was able to get a deeper understanding of my topic of the future of on-campus food production now that the Lommasson garden is gone from the University of Montana. I used methods of literary research, surveying, and interviews. The outcome of my research will illustrate how the University of Montana can create a new campus garden to benefit campus dining and students' overall health and experience at the school. My report will give evidence of why UM should dedicate its limited grounds to a new on-campus garden and what the space should be devoted for.

I choose to interview Stasia Orkwiszewski, Collin Zollinger, Caroline Stephens, Richard Huffman, and Marisela Chávez. I interviewed these individuals because of their experience, knowledge of various subjects, and their role at UM. I administered a survey that was available at all UM dining locations. This survey aimed to understand the knowledge of the previous garden, how people interacted with that space, and if there is a general demand for a new on-campus garden. I also conducted a literature review to understand the different roles an on-campus garden can produce. This helped me become informed and include important information into my research paper.



Figure 3 & 4. The Lommasson garden being harvested and maintained

Findings:

There is support from students, staff, and University Dining to have a new on-campus garden. In the survey I asked participants for why they would want to see a new garden at UM, responses included:

"Make campus feel livelier and inviting"

"It's important to have local sustainable food and an on-campus garden provides that while also providing an educational opportunity for us to learn about food systems."

"It's important to have fresh local food for those that eat on campus and seeing a flourishing garden is a good way to improve campus morale and attract prospective students"

"I love being able to see nature on campus everywhere I look"

"I am displeased with the removal of the old one, the excess of lawn space, and the prospect of removing green space to create more parking lots."

"You can never have too much green space. It is nourishing in more ways than food. It is good for the air, good for mental health. I always enjoy seeing gardens."



Figure 8. University Center that Gammons and Chadwick care for, this is a fruiting fig tree, photo by Eli Imadali



Figure 7. The South Ave Campus garden tomatoes being harvested, screenshot from video by Reed Klass