To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to confirm the operations of the Campus Kitchen at WFU's Produce Rescue Initiative and to discuss further its innovative components as well as its contribution to the overall sustainability of both our program and the university. Through our partnership with The Fresh Market, we are able to rescue between 100-150 pounds of food a day from going into the dumpsters and redistribute that food to members of our community in need. This partnership is innovative within our national network and in our local community both as a waste reduction mechanism and as a facilitator of community engagement.

Although CKWFU is part of the national network of the Campus Kitchen Project, our partnership with The Fresh Market is unique both in scale and regularity. One of the primary goals of CKWFU has always been to reduce waste and reuse it for hunger alleviation. With the addition of the Fresh Market partnership in 2010, we were able to dramatically increase the amount of pounds of waste we were rescuing from 9,913 in the 2008-2009 school year to 16,779 in the 2009-2010 school year. Furthermore, this partnership is unique in its regularity. While many other kitchens secure one-time large scale donations at different points during the year, we are a consistent presence at both The Fresh Market and the agencies that we serve because we pick up and redistribute every afternoon M-F. This schedule was created in response to both donor and agency needs for regularity and is a main contributing factor to the long term viability of the Produce Rescue Initiative. Fresh Market employees are more likely to think before they dump because they know we are coming and low-income families and the agencies that serve them can build community around and depend on the food we deliver.

The Produce Rescue Initiative is not only innovative as a waste reduction mechanism, but also as a facilitator of community engagement. This program has allowed us to create long-term, meaningful partnerships with community agencies and low-income community members who we did not previously interact with. Because of the structure of our regular meals, CKWFU did not previously interact with many low-income and homeless residents of the city who were not already being served by group homes and other more formalized community agencies. Through this program we are able to make contact with other members of our community who may not be receiving services elsewhere. Furthermore, we are able to provide viable and dependable resources to community agencies that help them form richer and deeper relationships with their clients. Finally, this initiative has allowed us to diversify our client pool. The three agencies that we serve through this initiative, El Buen Pastor (EBP), The Shalom Project, and The Potter's House are all situated in three different and unique areas of the city and the demographics of their clients represent the distinctness of these neighborhoods. EBP serves recent immigrants predominately from Mexico and Central America, The Shalom Project serves a variety of low income families with children, the so-called "working poor" in our city's downtown area, and The Potter's House serves an almost exclusively African-American population in one of our city's traditionally low-income and historically black neighborhoods. This partnership allows us to interact with these community members where they are, in the communities where they live. It also allows us to break down food deserts in low-income neighborhoods, drastically altering residents' perceptions of the kinds of food that is available to them.

I hope that this short explanation has enriched your understanding of our Produce Rescue Initiative. We have found it to be a universally beneficial partnership as it serves to decrease waste, provide healthy, fresh food to low income communities, deepen our community partnerships, and help students to understand the dynamics of waste in their community.

Sincerely,

Shelley Graves Sizemore
Campus Kitchen Coordinator
Wake Forest University