



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

CAMPUS DINING

January 6, 2016

Mike Kensler,  
Director Office of Sustainability  
200 Langdon Annex  
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear Mr. Kensler,

Thank you for your leadership, encouragement and commitment to helping Auburn University become more sustainable. You and your team are helping change the culture here on campus to one that is more mindful of the wider world and the effect we have on it.

Campus Dining is committed to sourcing fresh, responsibly-raised food locally as much as possible. To that end, we are working with multiple components of the College of Agriculture to find ways to grow and source food on campus. The centerpiece of this effort is the on-demand aquaculture system operated cooperatively between Campus Dining, Horticulture, and Fisheries. The system produces both tilapia and cucumbers to help meet demand from campus dining.

While these types of aquaponics systems have existed in a variety of scales for some time, the system currently designed and operated at Auburn innovates upon on this foundational work to allow for on-demand harvesting of fish and vegetables. By switching from the full-harvest model to this new on-demand model, energy and carbon emissions are reduced and the consumer gets a higher quality product because the fish and produce are never frozen. This innovative system is also providing an opportunity for Auburn researchers to explore both design options and efficiencies of this type of aquaponics system, as well as the possibilities of alternative fuel production via algae grown in water from the system. As we continue to expand and enhance this system, we expect to add variety to the vegetable production, meet all campus demand for tilapia, expand research to include nutrition studies, and to work with Extension to utilize this system as a model for the promotion of a new type of aquaculture within Alabama and beyond.

We are also partnering with local farms to provide access to their products as well. Here are a few examples: Locally grown vegetables and preserves from AU grad Josh Hornsby's farm are available at Terrell Market along with Jesse's Girls Honey provided by Jesse Chappell, an AU Employee. Finally, Ralf Du Toit lives in town, and along with his daughter, a current Auburn student, hydroponically grows cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce that are served by Tiger Catering, in Plains to Plate, our sustainably-based restaurant, and as salad ingredients throughout campus.

In the future, we are already budgeting to increase our ability to grow our own food by building greenhouses over the summer. We are excited for what the future holds and plan to continue to find more sources for local products every year.

Sincerely,

Glenn Loughridge '94  
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