



April 28, 2014

To whom it may concern:

This letter provides some background on the Bronco Urban Gardens (BUG) program at Santa Clara University. Launched in 2009, the BUG Program offers experiential learning opportunities around food justice and promotes community food security, health, and environmental literacy. The BUG program emerged out of our half-acre student garden, The Forge. BUG works with urban schools and after-school programs primarily in San Jose's underserved Alma, Gardner, and Washington neighborhoods and at Homesafe Women's Shelter near our university campus to undertake garden-based education. By involving undergraduate students in its environmental justice programming, the BUG program seeks to transform both the communities in which we work and the campus from which we draw support.

BUG works closely with the Arrupe Partnership for Community-based Learning to provide placements for Santa Clara University students. Our students serve as important mentors to community youth, demonstrating leadership, providing training, and building positive relationships with elementary and middle school students. A phrase one often hears on a Jesuit campus is that students must let the "gritty reality" of the world into their lives in order to think critically about constructive engagement. By engaging in food justice with low-income communities of color through innovative campus programs such as BUG, our students are likely to see the food system from a very different vantage point than if they had stayed on campus, resulting in deep learning experiences and also benefits for communities.

Having established programs in these neighborhoods, we have developed strong relationships with local residents. With guidance and support from SCU faculty, our student volunteers and AmeriCorps members have earned BUG a reputation as a responsive and trusted community partner. These young adults serve as mentors to community youth, demonstrating leadership, providing training, and building positive relationships with the elementary and middle school students served. One mother recently told an AmeriCorps member at Gardner:

"You've really started something here. Every day when I pick up my kids at school they walk by the garden and stop to check on their tomato plants...They tell me about the worms and ask if we can start a garden at home. This [pointing to the transformed lot] was a mess, where people have thrown their trash; now look at the pride the kids have in what they have grown."



At a time when schools have refocused curricula on basic skills and local governments have cut after-school initiatives, there are few stimulating enrichment programs available to these children. Through BUG, SCU works with community stakeholders to provide science-based environmental and gardening programs that get kids excited about learning and model healthy lifestyles. We know that many sociological factors play a part in educational success, so BUG works as closely with neighborhoods and families as it does with schools. This includes building partnerships with parent-teacher associations, hosting community events, distributing healthy fruits and vegetables, and developing beautiful garden spaces that fill communities with pride. It also makes neighbors much nicer.

Sincerely yours,

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