Thomas A. Lyson Center 2019 Thanksgiving Report

Our Vision

The Lyson Center envisions a growing number/network of communities throughout North America committed to improving the health and well-being of their residents, the diverse participation in equitable food systems, the long-term stewardship of local natural resources, and the viability of local and regionally oriented food and farm businesses.

Our Mission

To that end, the Lyson Center’s mission is to provide practical research-based information, tools, programs, and services that lead to productive collaboration between food systems scholars, professionals, and active residents engaged in food systems development work at the community level.

Our Team

Advisory Council
Kareem Usher (Chair) ..................... Ohio State University, City and Regional Planning
Loretta Carrillo ............................. Cornell University, retired
Ardyth Harris Gillespie .................. Cornell University, retired; Harrisdale Center, Iowa
Gilbert W. Gillespie, Jr. ................. Cornell University, retired; Harrisdale Center, Iowa
Amy Guptill ................................. SUNY Brockport, Department of Sociology
Gail Meyers (NAFSN Chair) ............. Farms to Grow, Inc.
Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman ....... Cornell University, Comm. & Regional Develop. Institute
Christine M. Porter ....................... University of Wyoming, Community & Public Health
Debra Tropp ................................. USDA, retired; Debra Tropp Consulting

Staff
Amy Christian, Project Co-Director and Managing Editor of JAFSCD
Duncan Hilchey, Project Co-Director and Editor in Chief and Publisher of JAFSCD
Ushbah Asim, Cornell University sophomore, editorial assistant
Javier Ramirez, Cornell University sophomore, program assistant
Andrés Sanchez, Cornell University junior, editorial assistant
Ryan Stasolla, Cornell University junior, program assistant
Our Work

Our work comes under two key programs:

- The *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development (JAFSCD)* publishes peer-reviewed research on programs, trends, case studies for use by both researchers and those working in communities.

- The *North American Food Systems Network (NAFSN)* is a volunteer-run organization sponsored by the Lyson Center to build the capacity of professionals and activists in food systems to be more successful, both for themselves and for the communities they work in.

JAFSCD Highlights

- We completed JAFSCD’s transition to the world’s first open access, community-supported journal. The growth of our social media metrics (see graphic below) demonstrates how the transformation has resulted in greater access to JAFSCD content.

As shown in this sample paper, attention and activity at the JAFSCD website skyrocketed when we became open access on 1/1/18.
• Members of the JAFSCD Shareholder Consortium, representing 54 academic programs and nonprofits, provide annual contributions and guidance to JAFSCD.

• Over 100 libraries support JAFSCD through shares in lieu of subscriptions.

• JAFSCD is now in the Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), a listing of reputable OA journals.

• We completed our second Impact and Equity Evaluation (discussed below).

• We launched Voices from the Grassroots, short essays by community activists working on local food and farming issues.

• We published 3 special issues of JAFSCD—on the Economics of Local Food Systems, with proceedings of the Place-Based Food Systems Conference (at Kwantlen Polytechnic University), and on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (sponsored by Arizona State University).

2018 JAFSCD Impact and Inclusion Evaluation

We conducted a survey regarding our impact and inclusion in early 2019, asking respondents to reflect back on 2018. This was a slightly modified version of a survey done in 2017. We have moved the needle in a positive direction since becoming open access. There is room for improvement, however. For example, stakeholders reporting affiliation with institutions of color remain low (26%) despite our outreach effort (visits to institutions serving people of color, phone interviews, and active recruitment of authors and reviewers of color).

Building on our impact and inclusion evaluation, Lyson Center advisor Christine Porter (University of Wyoming) and Lindsey Lunsford (Tuskegee University) helped to form the JAFSCD Shareholder Consortium’s “Not-Just-Another-Equity-Statement Committee.” The committee drafted an equity action agenda that includes many strategies JAFSCD can undertake in the coming months—and years—to increase equity and inclusion. Shareholder Consortium chairs Keith Williams (First Nations Technical Institute) and James Farmer (Indiana University) are finalizing the draft for review by the full consortium later this fall.

North American Food Systems Network Highlights

• Dr. Gail Myers became chair of the NAFSN Leadership Circle. With leadership of Bakari McClendon of Florida A&M and Kai Thomas of Agnes Scott College, NAFSN rebooted its popular NAFSN Good Food Talk webinars.

• NAFSN conducted its second survey of food system development practitioners (over 680 respondents across North America) focused on their challenges and training needs. Results show a growing interest in equity and inclusion.

• NAFSN began collaborating with Iowa State University and other national partners on a project funded by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service to identify best practices–based core competencies for food system development professionals.
NAFSN has begun to explore a “Certified Good Food Community” program in collaboration with its national partner organizations, in which counties and municipalities complete a good food scorecard and are ranked by the level of good food activities they engage in.

Other Lyson Center Highlights

- Our work-study students completed interviews with 29 limited-resource organizations and organizations of color around the U.S. regarding their challenges and information needs.
- Duncan completed a Fulbright Specialist project with VetAgro Sup university in Lempdes, France, and established relationships with French colleagues regarding agricultural entrepreneurship.
- Our survey of food system development practitioners showed keen interest in an online searchable database of OA food systems literature.

Goals for 2019, 2020, and Beyond

- During the fall of 2019, we will complete a special issue of JAFSCD on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (cover at right).
- NAFSN will convene partners and experts to conduct prefeasibility of the Certified Good Food Communities project.
- NAFSN will continue to collaborate with national partners in developing a national training curriculum for food system development professionals.
- We are exploring collaboration with the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development in hosting the 2020 Vision: Northeastern Regional Agriculture Development Summit, which will bring together agricultural, planning, and economic development professionals, government representatives, and representatives of nonprofits and farm organizations to investigate new intraregional food system initiatives.
- JAFSCD will publish a set of articles on values chains from Food Systems at the University of Vermont.
- We will implement the equity policies and strategies developed by the Shareholder Consortium and increase the number of authors of color and authors from isolated rural communities publishing in JAFSCD.

We appreciate your enthusiasm and support for this work. THANK YOU!

Contact Amy Christian (amy@lysoncenter.org) or Duncan Hilchey (duncan@lysoncenter.org) if you have any questions or feedback.