Growing a student garden: An integrated approach to teaching, service learning and student recruitment

David Berle, Associate Professor
Coordinator Local Food Systems Certificate
Horticulture Department
University of Georgia
Athens-Clarke County (Sad) Demographics

- 38% Non-White
- Unemployment rate 8.0%
- Poverty rate 36.7%
- Children affected by poverty 40.9%
- > 21% food insecure
- 61% residents eligible for SNAP
- 70% children eligible for free school lunch
USDA/NIFA HED Grant

Short Term Goal: To create an interdisciplinary certificate in local food systems
- 3 Tracks
  - Policy
  - Food and Nutrition
  - Production
- Internship/production course requirement
- Student garden as centerpiece

Higher Goal: Graduate more well-rounded students prepared to work to help make healthy food available to everyone
History of Garden

- Coalition of student orgs with eco focus
- Wrote a manifesto
- Requested garden space
- Nobody said yes, nobody said no!
- Incorporated garden into USDA grant
- Horticulture Department offered space
Where does service learning fit in?

- Formal courses
  - Community food production
  - Freshman seminar
  - Introduction to horticulture
  - After school garden nutrition course
  - Aux. course requirement
Student Organizations

- Campus Kitchen
  - Weekly meals to families
- UGArden
  - Harvest for Food Bank
  - CSA for low-income families
- The ONE Campaign
  - Incubator farm with Burmese refugees
Campus Partners

- Office of Service-Learning
- Office of Sustainability
- Student Affairs
- Grounds Department
- Colleges and Departments
  - Foods and Nutrition, Family and Consumer Economics
  - Geography, Anthropology, History
  - Environment and Design
  - Horticulture, Pathology, Engineering
Community Partners

- Athens Land Trust
- Council on Aging
- Clarke County Public Schools
- ACC Master Gardeners
- Keep Clarke County Clean and Beautiful
- P.L.A.C.E.
- Hands on NE Georgia
- Athens Latino Center for Educ. and Services
OK, the quick numbers for 2011-12 academic year

- 5,000+ student volunteer hours at garden
- 2,000+ student hours at community gardens
- 100 elementary kids participated
- 60 workdays and/or tours
- 110 instructional contact hours
- 17 students enrolled in LFS Certificate
- 7 undergrad student research projects
- 2 graduate student projects
- 3 student sustainable project grants
- 2 UGArden student fundraising events
- Total direct cost ~ $40,000