Institution Name: Hampshire College

Institution Location: Amherst, MA

Number of Students: 1,400

Percentage of Students living off-campus: 10.7% percent (with occasional exceptions)

Meal Plan requirements: Only students living in dorms have a meal plan requirement

Program Summary: As one of the oldest CSA programs in the country, The Hampshire College CSA offers a vegetable and meat share from its on-campus farm to students, staff and faculty, and provides job opportunities for students.

To learn more about CSAs or Community Supported Agriculture visit: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/community-supported-agriculture

Find this case study and others on our website: www.farmtoinstitution.org/blog-categories/case-studies
THE STORY

Over 20 years ago, Hampshire College students predicted the popularity of fresh farm foods with weekly pickups, long before CSAs were a popular trend. In 1992, as part of a capstone project, students decided to start a program at their school where students could buy weekly shares from the school’s farm, which had been in operation since the early 1970s. At Hampshire College, there are no majors, so the project was the culminating experience or “final” for the students. That year the farm supported 30 shares with student interns and a farm manager running the farm.

By 1999, the CSA grew to 100-120 members and the farm hired a part-time manager with an eight to nine month position to help manage the program.

CSA Profile

Organization: Hampshire College Community Supported Agriculture
Location: Hampshire College
Number of Employees: Five employees, up to 50 student workers and volunteers
Distance to Farm That Supports The CSA Program: On-campus
Name of Farm: Hampshire College Farm
Structure: Campus-run farm offers weekly CSA to campus community tailored around academic year
Cost: Pay in advance
• Vegetable - $360 for weekly pick-ups for three months
• Meat - $330 for three pick-ups once a month

The program now hosts around 200 shares, 75 of which go to dining services at Hampshire College. Of the remaining 125 shares, about half go to students and the remainder go home with staff and faculty. There is now a full-time position which manages the program year-round.

The program hosts 20 acres of vegetable production and 65 acres in pasture and livestock. With a lot of other farms in the area, the CSA program doesn’t extend beyond the campus market and finds no need to. The farm produces approximately 75,000 pounds of vegetables a year.

In addition to shares, the Hampshire College Farm taps over 100 maple trees across campus to produce 220 gallons of sap each spring and cares for a variety of livestock, including chickens, lambs, and heritage breed cows and pigs.
STRUCTURE

Seasons are geared toward the academic year. This past season, Hampshire hosted 210 shares with once-a-week pick ups from late August through late November. Starting in late July, shareholders who sign up early have unlimited access to pick-your-own heirloom tomatoes (another student project), herbs, and flowers.

The farm offers limited sales throughout the winter and early spring at pop-up farmers markets across campus featuring winter salad greens, root vegetables, honey, eggs, maple syrup, and popcorn – all produced on campus.

STAFF

The CSA is run by a full-time Hampshire College employee and the help of work-study students, student interns, and volunteers. The program has a staff assistant vegetable grower, livestock and pasture manager, director, and director of programs. Student positions include four full-time interns from May to September, and two full-time livestock interns. In the fall, the program has 40 to 50 students on payroll (many who are work-study) who work a few hours each week. By November, there are around 15 to 20 student workers, and 10 to 15 in the winter. Hampshire College also requires students to meet a community engagement requirement on campus, so the farm garners volunteers through that program as well. The CSA program has had little trouble finding students, as they get a lot of interest from first-year students. Student interest has increased since the program’s start.

“The Hampshire College Farm provides educational opportunities for the community and welcomes student and faculty projects, research, and coursework. The farm is also a place to enjoy the landscape, visit with animals, study, and host events.” -Hampshire Farm website
MEAT SHARES

In addition to the vegetable CSA which runs late August through late November, Hampshire also has a meat CSA. In 2015 the meat program had 30 shares in the fall and 30 in the spring. Hampshire College hopes to increase that number to 60 shares this fall. The spring and fall meat CSAs consist of three monthly pickups of frozen meat. Shareholders receive 12 to 15 pounds of frozen meat at each of the three pickups including a variety of cuts of grass-fed beef, heritage breed pigs, and lamb. All the meat is grown on campus by the livestock manager and interns.

FUNDING

Hampshire College covers half of the CSA’s budget and the other half comes from sales. Half the total budget is dedicated to full-time staff, 25 percent to student labor and 25 percent to operating expenses. The CSA program searches for grants to do additional projects such as greenhouses. The educational programmatic side of the CSA is funded by grants and gift funding.
LESSONS LEARNED

The number one lesson that the CSA Manager, Nancy Hanson, learned is: “Don’t expect a campus farm to operate like a regular farm.” She notes that the labor, funding, and timing are all different than that of a regular farm — they are more malleable and change more quickly.

“It’s not like you can take a commercial farm and plop it down on a college campus,” she said.

Hanson also warns, funding is never guaranteed and it is important to build a sustainable financial model as well as a supportive student body.

LEARN MORE

FINE’s Farm & Sea to Campus Project aims to increase the amount of local food served on campus and elevate awareness about the regional food system through connecting and communicating with campus food system stakeholders, developing and sharing resources, collecting data, and identifying collaborative opportunities for action. Get connected with the New England Farm & Sea to Campus Network by visiting: www.farmtoinstitution.org/new-england-farm-sea-campus-network.

To learn more about farm to institution efforts across New England, visit www.farmtoinstitution.org.

- Hampshire College: www.hampshire.edu/
- Hampshire College Farm: www.hampshire.edu/farm/hampshire-college-farm

QUESTIONS?

Contact FINE’s Farm & Sea to Campus Coordinator Riley Neugebauer: riley@farmtoinstitution.org

Acknowledgements

Author & Designer: Danielle Walczak, Farm & Sea to Campus Intern
Photographers: Jess Marsh Wissemann and Amanda Schwengel
Case Study Contact: Nancy Hanson, CSA Program Manager, Hampshire College, nhanson@hampshire.edu