



# Coalition-Building Guide

*Involving groups through coalitions is a key strategy for getting university administrators and corporations on board with your campaign. It is also essential for building the world as we want to see it, building power together and collaborating across campus and throughout the food system.*

## TACTICS FOR ENGAGING COALITION PARTNERS

### Petitions & Endorsements

Gather petition signatures and/or letters of campaign endorsement. This tactic can often be a first step in relationship-building towards further partnership and coalition-building.

### Event Co-sponsorship

Partnering to co-plan events and turn people out for them provides a lot of opportunity to work together on the various aspects of event-planning, publicly represent your partnership through the event, and have the opportunity for a lot of relationship-building amongst group members at the event

### Strategic Partnership

There might be many campaigns for justice, sustainability, and student power happening on a campus at a given time. Through doing campaign planning trainings & sessions together, groups can share research, powermaps, & opportunities for collaboration and support towards each others' strategies & tactics.

**Food System Working Groups** are inherently coalitional, drawing together stakeholders from throughout the campus and community food system. The process of bringing together your Food System Working Group can include many creative coalition-building tactics, and the established Working Group can support the efforts of all stakeholders, supporting and strengthening the coalition.

**Why should the group care?** Our broken food system is caused by myriad issues, and the real food system we want to build interweaves many different struggles for justice, sustainability, and health. Reflect on the Real Food Wheel and approach the issue from a perspective that most resonates with the group.

**What can you do for the group?** There is never a bad time to start building solidarity with other groups. Begin promoting and turning people out for each others' events, share powermaps, media contacts, ally and supporter contacts. Check-in about events so they don't overlap, and strategize about how to cross-promote each others' work.

**What can the group do?** Depending on the model of your coalition, folks can write & sign petitions or endorsement letters, participate in planning and co-sponsoring events, promote events to their group, and do turn-out to events and meetings.

*Think about what works best for your campus --remember that the earlier that more people are involved and power is shared, the more invested people feel in the campaign's success.*



## Building power together! Organizations to build a coalition with:

**Cultural and Ethnic Student Organizations** -- Too often, food movement campaigns focus too closely on local and sustainable production without addressing the racial injustices of the food system. Many of the problems we're working to solve -- food deserts, unfair trade policy, mistreatment of farm workers, ownership of farmland -- stem from systemic racism. There may be groups on your campus interested in opening a dialogue on these issues and how they relate to campus food politics and your campaign.

**Gardening and Nutrition clubs:** Perhaps the most obvious allies in the quest for more real food on campus, these folks already have an interest in food systems, food production, and health. These may be independent or attached to academic departments.

**Food access and waste recovery groups:** These groups also have a demonstrated interest in the wastefulness and inequality of the food system, and better yet, they are doing something about it. They are important people to talk to when figuring out how to make your Dining Halls more sustainable and ethical.

**Environmental clubs:** These students already have an interest in sustainability and there's a good chance they're interested in food issues as well. Depending on the character of the group and what projects and campaigns they're already committed to, these clubs could be major allies in your campaign.

**Labor solidarity groups:** From the field to factory to kitchen, food chain workers are some of the worst-treated and lowest-paid people in the country. Groups working to improve working conditions on campus or elsewhere should definitely be interested in helping build a more fair food system.

**Cafeteria workers:** The folks who cook and serve the food in your dining halls know best what is happening in the kitchen and dining hall, and likely have their own vision for how food could be best purchased, prepared, served, and disposed of on your campus. Building relationships with them is important, to make sure that your efforts towards a real food system on-campus include their visions.

**Sustainability Offices:** Many campuses have an established Sustainability Office that oversees and connects a wide variety of programs. They could help get students credit for the Calculator, find resources for events, or help you identify other good people to talk to.

**Faculty:** Faculty supporters can give you an opportunity to speak at a class, allow you to do campaign research for credit, co-sponsor speakers or screenings, require or promote attendance at events, make public statements of support and add legitimacy to your arguments, give you tips

on who to talk to in the administration, sponsor a support resolution in Faculty Council (or equivalent faculty organization), and help your strategize on how to achieve your campaign goals -- for those who have organizing experience. Look for campaign allies first among faculty that teach classes on food, sustainability, social movements, but don't stop there -- you might just as easily find a champion among the engineering professors.

**Student government:** Student government officers often have direct access to important administrators and funding for events and projects. They also have a duty to represent the needs of students, so if you can rally significant student support behind your cause, the student government can be a great platform to push your campaign to the next level.

**Community service groups:** Many organizations can offer volunteer support for events and actions, key links to other community related groups, and ideas on recruitment and volunteer retention.

**Alumni:** Alumni often have more power than the current students because of the money they can give. Try drawing on alumni of progressive student groups on campus. Look through old yearbooks and alumni directories. Famous or powerful alumni supporters are especially valuable.

**Fraternity/Sorority groups:** The Greeks, in their community service efforts, can be helpful allies with plenty of resources, including philanthropy departments. They can help turn people out to events and actions.

**RAs and Resident Hall Associations:** Resident Assistants can provide slots to speak to groups of new students, and access to post flyers in dorms. An endorsement from the Resident Hall Association can be a powerful boost to campaigns at some schools.

**Chaplains and campus ministries:** These folks can be very helpful by providing the moral high ground, connections to administration, and are particularly powerful at Catholic or other religiously-affiliated schools.

**Food Policy Councils:** Some cities have Food Policy Councils, which are multi-stakeholder bodies that seek to improve food-related policy towards building a better local food system. If your city has one, they could be very persuasive allies when dealing with the administration, and might be able to connect you to producers in the area who'd want to sell food to your school.

**Off-campus food movement groups:** Find out what other people in your area are doing for food justice! It's good to get away from the campus bubble every so often, and meet people coming at the problems of the food system from a different perspective.