

Food Studies Newsletter January 2020: What Can You Do With a Focus in Food Studies?

Welcome from Professor Molly Anderson

Hello and Happy New Year, Food Studies Enthusiasts!

We're focusing on internships in Food Studies in this issue of the newsletter, and we will look at the range of jobs available in Food Studies in the next issue. Internships are often the first step toward a job. At their best, they can teach you more about what you enjoy doing and what you don't want to do professionally. So in choosing an internship, be thinking about future jobs too.

Internships are a great way to "try out" job responsibilities or shadow a person doing the job you think you'd like to do after graduation, in a relatively low-stakes setting. I have encountered Middlebury alumni working in a wide range of food- and agriculture-related jobs. Last summer in Anchorage, Alaska, I met a recent alum running a community garden for refugees. Other alumni are managing restaurants (including Acadia, right here in Middlebury), farming, working for foundations, running start-up companies, writing articles for national distribution, and advising start-up companies and other food businesses. The possibilities are broad!

The Workforce Development Committee of the Vermont Farm to Plate Network created a set of Career Profiles and a guide to Exploring Food System Careers, which explain what each job entails and the expected salary. But even though some Middlebury graduates could well end up in the careers that they highlighted, these reports didn't seem to encompass the full suite of jobs that our alumni might find. The climate crisis and population growth have sharpened global attention on threats to the food supply over the last few years. While this points to a looming problem, it also points to many places where Middlebury graduates might be able to make strong contributions to future food systems. Given Middlebury's strengths in Environmental Studies, International & Global Studies and languages, I anticipate that Middlebury graduates will have a plethora of opportunities. We will explore these more in the next issue.

Read on, and please let me know if this newsletter stimulated new ideas of how we might respond to upcoming opportunities.

Best,
Molly D. Anderson
Academic Director, Food Studies Program

How to Find Food-Related Internships and Job

Students interested in finding internships and part-time and full time jobs in food-related fields should check out the following resources for general postings:

[Vermont Farm to Plate](#), Vermont-specific postings

[ComFoodJobs](#), Tufts University food jobs listserve

[Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group](#), posts jobs and organizations of interest to Food Studies students

[Idealist](#), internship and job search engine for social impact careers

If you want something specific but are unable to find it, try reaching out to Tracy Himmel-Isham in the Center for Careers and Internships. She has even more resources for finding internships and jobs!

Internship Testimonials from Middlebury Students

Below are testimonials from some Middlebury College students who have gotten involved in Food Studies-related internships. Take a look at the amazing work our students have done in the past:

Lucy Kates ('20.5) and Katie Cox ('20.5): FoodWorks Interns at Boundbrook Farm

Middlebury College's FoodWorks program allows students to combine food-related internships in Vermont with cohort living and mentorship. Students accepted into the program are matched with an internship in Vermont and live and learn with other Middlebury students in Weybridge House. FoodWorks interns are provided with free housing and a stipend for the summer. More information and the application can be found on the [FoodWorks website](#).

This summer, as participants in the Middlebury FoodWorks program, **Lucy Kates ('20.5)** and **Katie Cox ('20.5)** worked as interns at Boundbrook Farm in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. Along with being one of very few rice farms in the Northeast, Boundbrook is unique in its use of traditional Japanese rice-growing methods. Erik Andrus, the farm's founder, uses the Japanese aigamo method, which essentially means integrated duck-and-rice-farming. It's been practiced in Japan for thousands of years; and here in Vermont, Erik follows its ideology by rotating groups of a few hundred ducklings across his 6 acres of rice paddies. The ducks, aside from fully enjoying their time roaming around the flooded swaths with their friends, help enormously with pest and weed control (their small feet stir up mud and uproot weeds), and they help fertilize the soil. It is an ecologically-sound model that takes advantage of terrain that is less than ideal for traditional North American grains and vegetables: wet and muddy soil in a valley that often floods.

Working at Boundbrook this summer was an incredible learning experience. Each day, we worked alongside Erik on a variety of tasks: transplanting seedlings using small, drivable Japanese transplanting machines, building wooden houses for ducklings, weeding barefoot in the paddies, driving around in the tractor, etc. Erik explained his reasoning behind all of his practices and decisions on the farm, and he taught us with patience how to use almost all of the farm machinery and essentially how to run the farm—which we did, for a week and a half in late July while Erik traveled to Japan to present at a duck-rice conference. Overseeing farm operations while Erik was away was very exciting and affirmed everything we had learned throughout the summer. Working at Boundbrook allowed us to see many of the principles of sustainability we'd learned about in classes at Middlebury put into practice, and it gave us a full and realistic picture of what farming in the Champlain Valley is really like. In that sense, our connection to Addison County grew much deeper; it was fulfilling to feel as though we were making a real contribution to the region's agricultural community.



Hayley Jones ('18.5): Former Crew Leader at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Food and Farm Program

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), believe young people change the world. VYCC Crew Members (15-26 year olds) and Crew Leaders (19+ year olds) join VYCC for a challenging experience, practical and hands-on work, personal growth, and deep connection to the natural world by working on farm and conservation crews across the state. The VYCC's mission is to teach young

people personal responsibility through meaningful work that connects us to the land, community, and one another. The Food and Farm Program offers numerous crew leader opportunities for folks interested in farming, cooking, and working with youth. These AmeriCorps positions cram a lot of experience into a short time, expecting members to work long hours for little pay. If you are a student who loves physical and intellectual challenges, hopes to make connections with conservation-focused organizations in Vermont, and wants to spend most of your summer working, then the VYCC might be the place for you. Please inquire on their website: vycc.org or contact Kyle Weatherhogg at kyle.weatherhogg@vycc.org for more information as they accept applications on a rolling basis.

After studying food and environmental systems at Middlebury, **Hayley Jones ('18.5)** was excited to accept a position as a crew leader at the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Food and Farm Program. Given her background in nutrition, she split her time between the fields and the farmhouse. She learned the basics of diversified vegetable farming, led crews in preparing meals straight from the field, and developed workshops celebrating nourishment and experimentation in the kitchen. Most of her days included lesson planning, intense physical labor, and working with groups of six to eight crew members.

During her time at the Food and Farm Program, Hayley learned how to accept constructive criticism, speak up in uncomfortable situations, and mediate conflict amongst folks on her team. She also realized that her interests lie in grassroots advocacy work, where she can focus on building movements to radically transform our food and immigration systems. Although she wouldn't search for further employment at VYCC, she would recommend summer AmeriCorps positions to recent graduates who are excited about being outside, hanging out with younger folks, and learning about food as medicine.

As of Autumn 2019, Hayley is pursuing her dreams of community organizing with Toxics Action Center, a non-profit focused on environmental justice issues across New England. During her free time, she interprets at Migrant Justice, takes dance classes at the YMCA, and cares for her family of succulents. Buoyed by her recent backpacking trip in Chile, Hayley hopes the next year will find her cooking in Oaxaca de Juarez and swimming around Bariloche.



Liz Srulevich ('21.5): FoodWorks Intern at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFM)
Liz's internship with VAAFM was also run through the FoodWorks program.

When I applied to be a FoodWorks intern, I knew I wanted to work for a summer in an administrative position within an organization that dealt with food economy and food systems. It was just my luck, then, that I was able to secure an internship with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) as an Agricultural Business Development Intern at the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI), working under the

guidance of Lynn Ellen Schimoler. The experience was, as a whole, absolutely invaluable to me. I learned many things about Vermont's food economy during my internship, but I also realized crucial things about myself; after all, driving one-and-a-half hours to Montpelier (and later, just an hour to the Williston office) from campus every day gave me a significant amount of time to reflect on myself and my work. I learned that, while the work I was doing was meaningful, I'm not cut out for governmental or bureaucratic work in the future. I love the hands-on aspect of my position, which would sometimes lead me to staffing events and ceremonies, visiting farms that had received funding from the WLEI in the past, and creating pamphlets and articles for the organization's website. That said, working in an agency with so many levels of bureaucracy, where nearly every small decision would have to go through several rungs of approval before being executed, was difficult for me. It helped me realize that I needed more free reign in my future career.

All in all, however, I would recommend this internship to anyone who is thinking about applying. Lynn Ellen was an amazing mentor, and the staff at the agency were extremely knowledgeable and supportive. If you're interested in learning more about Vermont's food economy and playing a part in an organization that helps small agriculture and forestry businesses stay afloat through grants, this internship is for you.



Upcoming Events

January 17- May 15: [2020 UVM Extension Master Gardener Course](#) (learn more and register at the [EMG's website](#))

February 15-17: [Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont Winter Conference](#) (University of Vermont, register at [NOFA's website](#))

March 7th: [Toxics Action Center Local Environmental Action Conference](#) (Boston, MA, learn more and register at the [conference's website](#))

March 19-22: [National Slow Fish 2020 and Slow Food Southeast Summit](#) (Charleston, SC, learn more about the conference and register at [Slow Food USA's website](#))

April 3-4: ["Earth in Human Hands" Real Organic Project Symposium](#) (Dartmouth College, register at the symposium's [Eventbrite posting](#))