WINNING REAL FOOD ON CAMPUS: THE ROLE OF OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, STRATEGIC CAPACITY, AND IDENTITY IN THE OUTCOMES OF STUDENT CAMPAIGNS

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WINNING REAL FOOD ON CAMPUS: THE ROLE OF OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, STRATEGIC CAPACITY, AND IDENTITY IN THE OUTCOMES OF STUDENT CAMPAIGNS

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This dissertation is dedicated to student activists
everywhere who are seeking to build a just and sustainable world.

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SUMMARY

U.S. college campuses have been important sites of protest and social movement activity since the Civil Rights and New Left movements of the 1960s. Despite the significance of college campuses as sites of mobilization and social protest, student activism has received relatively little attention from social movement scholars. Further, very few studies of campus activism examine their *outcomes* or why some groups "win" while others "lose." This dissertation addresses these gaps by investigating the impact of Real Food Challenge (RFC), a U.S. social movement organization (SMO) supporting student campaigns to shift campus dining toward sources that meet its multifaceted criteria for sustainability, while also building a youth movement to transform the global food system.

RFC campaign outcomes vary widely; some have won institutional commitments to reach 20 percent "real food" by 2020, while others have made little progress toward that objective. This study uses quantitative analysis to identify contextual factors that support the ability of student local and sustainable food activists to win their objectives. An in-depth, qualitative case comparison of four RFC campaigns identifies contextual, organizational, and strategic variables shaping progress and outcomes in this emerging field of student activism.

The study's findings are relevant to social movement scholarship and the work of federated SMOs. The national quantitative analysis reveals a modest regional advantage for schools in Pacific Coast and Northeastern states. Related data from the qualitative study suggest a complex relationship between political context, university orientation toward conventional agribusiness, and administrative response to RFC campaigns. In

addition to geo-political context, the qualitative study suggests that openness to student petitions and campus culture also influence administrative response to RFC activism. Collective identity, campaign movement priorities, and strategic choices of activists, in relation to contextual variables, also significantly influence student progress toward winning "real food." The results suggest the significance of tactical and frame alignment, supported by flexibility and strategic capacity, for effective student activism. The study also identifies ways that federated, campus-based SMOs can facilitate greater strategic capacity within campaigns to enhance effectiveness.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Come to the table, President Morehead!" On September 16, 2016, student activists and allies repeated this cry on social media and in the streets of Athens, Georgia. More than 200 people had gathered at the University of Georgia (UGA) to learn, share, and engage in strategic planning to advance "Real Food" on dozens of college campuses throughout the U.S. (RFC 2016). The march to President Morehead's office was strategically timed to coincide with the national Real Food Challenge (RFC) Summit, providing Real Food UGA with greater numbers for their demonstration. Between the first Real Food Challenge Summit held in 2007 at Yale University and the 2016 Summit at UGA, a small group of young, highly dedicated food system activists created the national RFC nonprofit program that supports a network of college students "to redefine real food and build a food system that benefits everyone" (RFC N.d.a). To date, 43 U.S. colleges and universities and the entire University of California, California State, University of Maine, and Colorado Mountain College systems have become RFC signatories, pledging to increase their procurement of Real Food[1] to at least 20 percent by the year 2020 (RFC N.d.b). On dozens of other campuses, students are working to secure the same commitment, with varying degrees of success.[2] What is Real Food and why are students (and others) demanding it? What explains where and how they are winning—and where they are not? More broadly, what explains which colleges and universities are embracing

[1] Throughout the dissertation I will use the phrase Real Food to refer to food that meets the criteria described in Real Food Challenge standards. Those standards are described in detail on the RFC Calculator web site. Retrieved August 7, 2018 (http://calculator.realfoodchallenge.org/help/resources).
[2] Hannah Weinronk, RFC Program Manager, personal communication, October 9, 2016.

Real Food in dining services, and where it receives little emphasis? This dissertation helps explain where and how this campus trend has taken off, the role of RFC activism, and how and why RFC campaigns produce widely differing outcomes on college campuses. The results of the study reveal key aspects of university context and student mobilization that have influenced progress and setbacks in the Real Food movement.

1.1 Rationale

A growing number of small agricultural producers, scientists, consumers, and a diverse range of social movement organizations (SMOs) are challenging the industrial food system and seeking to advance "sustainable agriculture," citing concerns including environmental quality, animal rights, food safety, and social justice (Parr et al. 2007; Carlisle and Miles 2013; Velten et al. 2015). Colleges and universities are an important concern for the contemporary sustainable food system (SFS) movement, for several reasons. First, the size and reach of these institutions as an aggregate represents a significant portion of the food consumer market in the U.S. Second, the growing campus sustainability movement provides a supportive mobilizing context for sustainable food activism. And third, colleges and universities are not just sites for food consumption—they also are leading sites for research and teaching in agriculture and food systems. College courses and related campus engagement that raises consciousness about social and environmental problems associated with food production are an important part of the global agrifood movement (Meek et al. 2017). Land grant universities, which host the largest academic programs in agricultural sciences in the U.S., are key sites for both advances in and opposition to the agrifood movement (Beus and Dunlap 1992; Ostrom

and Jackson-Smith 2005; Carlisle and Miles 2013). Thus, college campuses are uniquely positioned to provide agrifood reform organizations with opportunities to engage students, faculty, and community members in education, research, and consumer-based change relating to food systems.

Campus sustainability initiatives, including attention to sustainability goals in food and beverage purchasing, have grown rapidly in the past two decades. More than 600 four-year U.S. colleges and universities have become members of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and more than 250 have used a tool called the "Real Food Calculator" to identify ways to increase the use of sustainable food and beverage products in dining halls (AASHE 2018a; RFC N.d.c). While some campuses have made local and sustainable food procurement an important component of their sustainability work on campus, national reporting reveals significant variation, from no attention to food purchasing on some campuses to several campuses that far exceed the Real Food Challenge target of 20 percent Real Food.[3] More than 40 RFC campaigns already have succeeded in securing a commitment to reach that target by 2020, while close to one hundred continue working to achieve that goal, while increasing transparency about the origins of food and beverages provided on campus.[4]

Student activism associated with campus sustainability generally and food and beverage procurement specifically has expanded rapidly in the past decade, with great variability among colleges and universities. A better understanding of where and why these initiatives are taking hold and making progress can add to scholars' understanding

[3] Chapter three provides a detailed analysis of Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage (LSFB) purchasing scores reported through AASHE's reporting tool "STARS;" 2017 scores varied from "0" to the maximum attainable value "4."
[4] Hannah Weinronk, RFC Program Manager, personal communication, October 9, 2016.

of student activism and its outcomes, which has received very little attention in social movement literature. In addition, RFC is structured and has a strategic approach similar to that of a growing number of SMOs that support networks of campus campaigns; a better understand of how why student campaigns succeed and fail is relevant to all of these organizations and their supporters.[5]

1.2 Environmental Activism on U.S. College Campuses: A Brief History

U.S. college campuses have been important sites of protest and social movement activity since the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and the New Left movements of the 1960s (McAdam 1986; Van Dyke 1998). Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and emerging feminist groups drew upon organizing skills and campus networks developed through participation in the CRM (Evans 2010). These networks and further tactical innovations, including the "teach-in," helped mobilize millions for the nation's first Earth Day (Rome 2013). While this day was marked in some way in an estimated 2000 local communities (CBS News 1970), college campuses and their student organizers were the main focus of the "national teach-in on the crisis of the Environment" whose idea was originally conceived by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson (Earth Day Network 2018). In 1969, Senator Nelson, frustrated by his inability to communicate the urgency of environmental problems to his colleagues on Capitol Hill, decided to leverage the skills and power of college student activism. He recruited a group of recent college graduates with campus organizing experience to plan a nationwide events for April 1970 to include teach-ins, demonstrations, environmental cleanup activities, and other forms of advocacy

[5] The relevance to other campus-based SMOs is elaborated in chapters two, five, and six. Similarly structured organizations include United Students Against Sweatshops, Fossil Free USA, and Ban the Bottle.

designed to build momentum and force Congress to act (Earth Day Network 2018). The nation's first Earth Day—in many places, a whole week or even month—was the result, the largest mass demonstration in U.S. history, including more than fifteen hundred campuses, hundreds of local community groups, and an estimated 20 million people. The event and the networks, organizations, and continuing activism it launched helped win landmark environmental legislation that shaped the federal regulatory framework for environmental protection in the U.S. (Rome 2013).

As the modern environmental movement expanded and strengthened in the early 1970s, many universities responded to student and societal concerns by creating new academic programs of study in environmental issues and sciences (Cladwell 1983; Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Orr 1992). In addition, some traditional disciplines expanded to include focused attention on the environment. Laska (1993:4), for example, describes the emergence of environmental sociology as a direct response to the environmental social movement in the early 1970s. Thus, the movement college students helped to launch also re-shaped college curricula, fostering further student involvement in environmental research and civic engagement into the future.

By the late 1970s, the massive expansion of environmental regulation came under fire in the context of serious economic problems and a growing conservative movement (Dryzek 2005; Robertson 2012). The legislative gains and growth in professional environmental SMOs also helped shift environmental discourse from a crisis-based "limits to growth" frame to environmental problem solving. The "big ten" group of environmental organizations, including the Environmental Defense Fund, World Wildlife Fund, and Natural Resources Defense Council, largely shaped the problem solving

discourse which focused, to a great extent, on policy-making and court challenges (Gottlieb 1993). As a result, by the mid- to late-1970s professional environmental SMOs played a much more prominent role in shaping environment advocacy than student protest, although some scholars argue that student activism was transforming, not declining. A new structure of campus organizing supported by professional organizations was emerging, most notably through Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) (Levine and Wilson 1979).

A new discourse in sustainability and sustainable development emerged in the 1980s, alongside environmental problem solving. The 1987 report produced by the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled *Our Common Future* popularized the term "sustainable development," and this term, along with "sustainability," quickly caught on (UNCED 1987; Caradonna 2014). The meaning of *sustainability* sought to bridge the seeming contradiction between "development," often synonymous with "growth," and "sustainable." Some argued that sustainability had been appropriated by so many actors (government, business, universities, individuals), and also used by opponents of environmental regulation, as to be rendered meaningless.[6] Over the past several decades, the myriad meanings of *sustainability* have evolved to include a strong focus on interdependent social and ecological systems; the interdependence of social justice, economic development and environmental protection; and a discourse of "progress" and "reassurance"; e.g., humanity can continue to improve standards of living in ways that do not compromise future generations (Dryzek 2005; Caradonna 2014).

[6] See, for example, Bill McKibben's New York Times OpEd "Buzzless Buzzword." Retrieved November 30, 2016 (http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/10/opinion/buzzless-buzzword.html).

Leaders in higher education quickly became engaged in the promotion of sustainability and sustainable development. Less than three years after the publication of *Our Common Future*, an international group of university administrators gathered in France to advance the role of higher education in sustainability leadership. In October 1990, an international group of 20 university administrators developed a statement in Talloires, France that recognized the key role that higher education institutions could play in sustainability leadership. "Participants acknowledged that, as university leaders, they were uniquely positioned to bring together all the academic disciplines and professional schools on large, complex issues" to encourage societal movement toward environmentally sustainable development (ULSF 2015a:para. 4). The "Talloires Declaration" that resulted from this meeting, since signed by more than 450 university leaders in over 50 countries, set out a 10-point action plan for universities to foster and support environmental literacy, environmentally responsible citizenship, sustainability of operations on campus, interdisciplinary collaboration and leadership, and collaboration with organizations outside higher education to advance the goals of sustainable development (ULSF 2015b).

University sustainability, like sustainability discourse generally, encompasses a wide range of meanings and initiatives. However, most scholars and practitioners share the following broad understanding of *sustainability*: "[meeting] human needs and aspirations, now and in the future, in an equitable way while protecting our environment" (Waas et al. 2011:1645). Over time, businesses and universities developed a shorthand way of categorizing different aspects of sustainability: the "three pillars" of social,

economic, and environmental wellbeing.[7] In the 1990s and into the following decade, a growing number of campus sustainability advocates began suggesting high-level changes in university policies relating to capital planning, operations, student life and curriculum. They described sustainability as a "design principal" that should be present in every aspect of campus decision-making (Barlett and Chase 2004).

As a result of growing interest in the role of colleges and universities in advancing sustainability goals, in 2005 the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) was created to "help coordinate and strengthen campus sustainability efforts at regional and national levels, and to serve as the first North American professional association for those interested in advancing campus sustainability" (AASHE 2018b). AASHE began providing a wide range of resources, training opportunities, and tools to member institutions. In addition, it facilitates networking among members and manages the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), "a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance" (AASHE 2018c). AASHE launched the first version, STARS 1.0, in 2010 and has since released four updated versions, following ongoing feedback and input from member institutions (AASHE 2018d). STARS and other national rating systems including Sierra Club's "Cool Schools"[8] and The Princeton Review's "Green Colleges"[9] list provided student, staff, faculty, and administrator sustainability advocates with standardized metrics for charting

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[7] See, for example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Sustainability Primer." Retrieved August 7, 2018 (https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/sustainability_primer_v9.pdf).
[8] Sierra Club's "Cool Schools" ranking is published annually. Retrieved August 7, 2018 (https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/cool-schools-2017/cool-schools-2017-full-ranking).
[9] The Princeton Review publishes a top 50 list of "green colleges" annually. Retrieved August 7, 2018 (https://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings/green-guide).

progress as well as a public relations argument for prioritizing sustainability investment. For some colleges and universities, being seen as leaders in campus sustainability was viewed as a significant opportunity to enhance student and faculty recruitment (Krizek et al. 2012).

1.3 Campus Local & Sustainable Food and Beverage Procurement Initiatives

As colleges and universities in the United States began exploring and making formal commitments to sustainability in operations, research, and teaching, some had changes in campus dining in their sights. At many institutions, sustainability programs began to include goals to expand local and sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) purchasing in campus dining operations; most colleges and universities participating in STARS complete this portion of the detailed sustainability report. Campus advocates have linked efforts to expand local or sustainably produced foods to some or all of the three components of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental. Procuring food locally or regionally can have environmental benefits as a result of reduced fuel use and emissions associated with transportation (Pirog et al. 2001). Local purchasing commitments also may reflect an interest in supporting social systems and economic development in rural communities, including the reconnection of producer and consumer (Mount 2012). Commitments to sustainably produced foods, including foods certified as organic, humanely raised, or harvested using fair labor standards, support environmental, animal rights, social and economic objectives in campus sustainability initiatives (Kremen and Miles 2012; Lubell, Hillis, and Hoffman 2011).

Colleges and universities make commitments to LSFB purchasing for a variety of reasons. Some make changes in response to student demand for certain kinds of food and beverage choices, such as fair trade coffee and humanely produced meat and eggs. National and campus-specific surveys have demonstrated growing student interest in and willingness to pay extra for local and sustainable food options (Feenstra et al. 2011; Porter et al. 2017). Other institutions invest in sustainable campus dining initiatives as part of their broader effort to improve their sustainability reputation, or as a result of specific "campaigns" led by students, staff, and faculty sustainability leaders (Barlett 2011; Krizek et al. 2012; Porter et al. 2017).

Case studies reveal a great deal of variation in the ways that college and university actors promote sustainability goals and initiatives on campus, including LSFB purchasing. Some changes are incremental and quite mundane, while others are highly contentious and include public displays characteristic of social movement activity, such as demonstrations and rallies (Shriberg 2003; Barlett and Chase 2004; Barlett and Chase 2013; Bratman et al. 2016). Campus sustainability food projects also include many diverse approaches, from small gardens and on-site farmer's markets to wholesale examination of all campus food and beverage procurement (Barlett 2011). On a "macro" level this dissertation examines progress by AASHE member institutions in the area of LSFB procurement and contextual characteristics that help explain variations in progress. On a campus level, it examines the role of student-led, nationally supported, *Real Food Challenge* campaigns in advancing Real Food procurement, and the influence of macro and micro-level variables on campaign progress and outcomes.

1.4 The U.S. Agrifood Movement: Origins

Like environmentalism and sustainability on college campuses, movements associated with food system reform also pre-date contemporary LSFB initiatives by several decades. Concerns about input intensive industrialized agriculture emerged in the U.S. following World War II and were popularized by J. I. Rodale and the Rodale Press (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014). Proponents of alternative or organic agriculture in the 1960s included stakeholders with a variety of concerns about industrial agriculture, from "back-to-the-land" counter-culturists to agronomists concerned with soil health (Goodman et al. 2014; Obach 2015). Public awareness about environmental and human health effects of pesticides and herbicides became more widespread following publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, and the farmworker movement directed attention to the conditions and wages of migrant workers. Other groups focused on the impacts of large-scale irrigated agriculture on water resources, particularly in the West (Allen 2004). This 1960s activism served as a "catalyst" for a growing alternative agrifood movement[10] in the 1970s and 1980s that increased attention to the "social and environmental externalities" associated with industrial-scale agriculture (Kloppenburg, Jr., et al. 2000:178; Obach 2015).

Alongside growing health, labor, and environmental concerns, the failure of many family farms provided another point of engagement in the agrifood movement. Following the widespread crises in farm income in the 1980s, Wendell Berry's *Unsettling America* (1988) helped rally public support for the small family farm, and for the first time a

[10] As elaborated later in this chapter, the field of alternative agrifood movements is diverse and often not well integrated. For simplicity, throughout the rest of the dissertation I will use the term "agrifood movement" to refer to the entire social movement field that encompasses social, economic, and environmental aspects of agrifood systems.

government report discussed "sustainable agriculture" as the way of the future (Allen 2004). As with "sustainability" and "sustainable development" more generally, the term "sustainable agriculture" has been used in variety of ways by farmers, activists, scientists, and corporate actors, among others. Within the context of food system reform, the term "sustainable agriculture" often refers to modes of production that sustain the land as well as the people supported by the goods produced, but what kinds of production and distribution systems *best* sustain social and ecological health in the long-term is contested, even within the movement (see, for example, Goodman et al. 2014).

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a number of bestselling books on food systems and consumer food choices further advanced growing public concern about the way food is produced in the United States and its implications for health and the environment. In 2002 Frances Moore Lappé updated her 1971 book *Diet for a Small Planet* with *Hope's Edge*, co-authored with her daughter. Michael Pollan's 2006 bestseller *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, a journalist's investigation of the negative consequences of the industrial food system in the U.S. and its alternatives, earned him a spot on Time Magazine's "Top 100" list of "best and most influential" nonfiction books since 1923 (Pickert 2011). With growing public interest in food supply chains and their impacts, consumer support for smaller-scale farming through direct-to-consumer sales has grown rapidly. For example, between 2006 and 2014 the number of U.S. farmers markets grew by 180 percent, offering more and more consumers a place to purchase fresh food directly from farmers (Low et al. 2015). In addition, *intermediated* marketing channels—farmers selling directly to restaurants, local retail outlets, and regional distribution centers—came to comprise a large portion of

"local food" sales, and schools and universities are an important part of that market (Vogt and Kaiser 2008; Low and Vogel 2011).

Recent estimates that the global food system contributes about one-third of total human-caused greenhouse gases provided additional urgency to arguments for food system reform (Gilbert 2012). As segments of the movement to combat climate change have shifted their framing toward social justice (della Porta and Parks 2014), social and cultural aspects of sustainability also have become more prominent within the agrifood movement. For example, social justice concerns related to food production and distribution have expanded to include macro-level impacts of corporate consolidation, in addition to continuing calls for improvements in worker protections and fair compensation (Howard 2009; LeBlanc 2017). However, media frames have often simplified these complex factors into binary discussions of "organic" versus "conventional" foods, leaving many people with limited understanding of the full range of food system critiques (Lockie 2006).

1.5 Land Grant Universities and the U.S. Agrifood Movement

Public colleges of agriculture in the United States are key sites for the agrifood movement--and for resistance to it--because of their central role in shaping agricultural production in the U.S. The Land Grant University Colleges of Agriculture and Extension System (LGCA system), initiated through the *Morrill Act of 1862*, has supported the development of the U.S. system of food production for more than one hundred and fifty years through education, research, and extension services to farmers (U.S. Congress). This system has been credited with "enormous contributions to agricultural research and technological developments that are accepted as indicators of successful agricultural

research advancements" (Wilkins et al. 2001:170). However, beginning in the late 1960s and concurrent with the agrifood movement described above, the LGCA system also has been criticized for its failure to address concerns about social and environmental consequences of industrial agriculture and for its close alliance with conventional agribusiness (Middendorf and Busch 1997).

Proponents of sustainable agriculture have formed one of the loudest contemporary voices challenging LGCAs, arguing that these publicly funded institutions perpetuate the industrial agricultural production system that the agrifood movement seeks to transform. Critics claimed Land Grant Universities "have promoted and contributed to the development of an agricultural industry that inordinately benefits large agribusiness interests, gives large farmers unfair advantages over smaller farmers, contributes to the decline of rural communities, damages soil and water resources, and exposes human and other species to unsafe levels of dangerous chemical agents" (Beus and Dunlap 1992:364). The highly critical and widely publicized report *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times* focused criticisms of industrial agriculture on the LGCA system and related public institutions (Hightower 1973). Criticisms of a purported bias toward high tech and large-scale industrialized agriculture in the LGCA system remained the focus of many groups in the agrifood movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Buttel 2005). Attempts to secure reform included court challenges, such as a 1979 suit filed by the California Agrarian Action Project against the University of California "for using taxpayer dollars in

the creation of technologies that benefit large farms, and hurt small farms and farmworkers" (Wilkins et al. 2001:171).[11]

By the 1990s, critiques of conventional agricultural science and education within rural sociology and feminist scholarship, along with agrarian activism, had introduced some aspects of agrifood movement perspectives and claims into scientific institutions, including the National Research Council's (NRC) Board on Agriculture (NRC 1996). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began responding to growing consumer interest in and demand for locally and sustainably produced foods by creating new programs to support smaller farming operations and the infrastructure connecting them to consumers, such as food hubs. In addition, federal support for research in sustainable agriculture began in 1988 when Congress appropriated $3.9 million for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. In its first twenty years of operations SARE created a national outreach office and regional centers at land grant universities; provided resources, professional development in sustainable and organic practices, agroforestry, marketing, and business development; and funded 3,700 sustainable agriculture research projects (SARE 2008). More recently, USDA and many state agriculture programs have invested in training and marketing programs that support local and regional food markets, such as the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" program (USDA 2015).

The LGCA system also has responded to growing interest in sustainable agriculture in a variety of ways. In November 2000 close to thirty representatives of

[11] The final decision on CALIFORNIA AGRARIAN ACTION PROJECT, INC., et al., Plaintiffs and Respondents, v. REGENTS OF the UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, et al. was made May 25, 1989 in favor of the defendant.

university sustainable agriculture programs came together to identify ways to collaborate moving forward (Allen 2004). A number of LGCAs changed their mission statements in response to scholarly and public pressure to respond to calls for agrifood system reform (Zimdahl 2003). By 2011 there were 11 LGUs with formal degree programs in sustainable agriculture, and a group of faculty, staff, and students convened again to discuss opportunities for expanding the reach of sustainable agriculture within the LGCA system (Jacobsen et al. 2012). However, the task of building an agenda for an alternative agrifood system and reshaping agricultural science and education in support of it remains a great challenge for LGCAs, especially in light of ongoing "counterattack" and "regulatory occupation" from agribusiness interests (Kloppenberg 1991; Boström and Klintman 2006). In addition, the perspectives of faculty, extension agents and farmers within the LGCA system are diverse; some support more holistic scientific approaches and a sustainable agriculture emphasis, while others believe only conventional production methods, enhanced by biotechnology, will meet future global food production needs (Beus and Dunlap 1992; Lyson 1998; Wilkins et al. 2001).

1.6 The Contemporary U.S. Agrifood Movement

Stakeholders within the agrifood movement understand the term "sustainable agriculture" in a variety of ways. A 1998 conference convened by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in Wisconsin engaged consumers, farmers, activists and other stakeholders in identifying the attributes of a sustainable food system. Participants characterized a sustainable food system as one with fourteen attributes including the following: strong communities with relationships of trust; equitable benefits and safe working conditions for all; farming methods that support crop and biological diversity

and ecological sustainability; and place-based connections among participants and between people, land, and seasons (Kloppenburg, Jr. et al. 2000). The agrifood movement "field" in the U.S. today contains all of the elements described by those conference participants: rural economy, labor rights, health, environment, and animal rights—but often with little coordination between them (Velten et al. 2015).

Like any social movement, the agrifood movement includes a variety of actors and strategic approaches that are, at times, at odds with each other. Contemporary agrifood movements in the U.S. generally focus on one of two broad strategic approaches: 1) developing alternative food systems, offering a consumer-based way to "opt out" of industrialized agriculture; or 2) advocacy aimed at transforming the conventional agribusiness system, usually through policy change (Allen 2004; Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014). Beginning in the 1990s, the "system transformation" approach shifted its focus from USDA and the LGCA system toward agribusiness, agritechnologies, and globalization (Buttel 2005). At the heart of the gap between these two strategic approaches to agrifood reform lies this fundamental question: can market-based strategies transform industrial agriculture? Can consumer choice and grassroots alternative production eventually displace "big ag," given its power and reach (Obach 2015)? Collaboration has proven difficult between advocates that favor one of these strategic approaches with groups or scholars favoring the other, even if they have similar goals (Kleiman 2009). For example, coordinators for a network of alternative food initiatives in Canada reported that the wide range of strategic approaches and goals and objectives among participants had impeded their ability to construct a common "voice" for the regional movement (Levkoe 2015).

The “opt out” approach within the agrifood movement often focuses attention on the importance of supporting farmers within or close to one’s own community using sustainable production methods. Sometimes referred to as “localism,” a number of reasons have been advanced for the powerful appeal of this approach within the sustainable food movement. One contributing factor relates to the growing power of corporations and the retreat of federal regulatory activity in agriculture, which “creates a vacuum of effective political remedies” and has led frustrated advocates to seek alternatives, rather than political action (Allen 2004:169). In other words, consumer-based activism holds particularly strong appeal when opportunities for political reform seem remote. A related explanation is that the “corporate cooptation” of organic standards and distrust of federal authorities fueled the growing emphasis on regional farms for the greater transparency they offer, compared to organic brands at the supermarket (Boström and Klintman 2006). Rather than emphasizing certification as a way to enhance transparency, consumers would rely on “interpersonal trust and farm visits” to ensure their food dollars were supporting sustainable practices (Starr 2010:482).

Communities engaging in alternative, sustainable food projects also value a number of social benefits associated with this approach, including strengthening rural economies, building relationships of trust and respect, and growing a shared commitment to social, economic, and environmental justice (Feenstra 2002). From the standpoint of small farmers, direct marketing and regional farmer networks provide many benefits including networking that enables them to share resources, strategies, and risk, and a support system that may even help farmers adapt to new challenges such as climate change (Furman et al. 2014).

A more pragmatic argument for transforming food systems "from the bottom up" has been advanced by some scholars and advocates who argue that "localism" offers the best route to engage a very large constituency in the movement. What is the most effective way to engage citizens in tackling a global challenge as large as reforming industrial agriculture? Referring to Aldo Leopold's call to "think like a mountain," or engage with complex ecological systems in their entirety, Kloppenburg, Henrickson, and Stevenson have argued "though we may be able to think like mountains, we must act as human beings. To begin the global task to which we are called, we need some particular place to begin, some particular place to stand, some particular place in which to initiate the small, reformist changes that we can only hope may some day become radically transformative" (1996:41). While a minority may be willing to engage politically, a larger portion of concerned citizens, they have argued, can be energized through place-based initiatives that offer opportunities to actually see and experience sustainable farming in action. In addition, the direct connections made through "farming with a face" can serve the movement by demonstrating to participants that alternatives are possible (Starr 2010).

Other scholars and advocates have argued strenuously that building sustainable local farm networks will not, in of itself, transform the U.S. food system, and that an overemphasis on "localism" may actually distract from critically important political reforms. The U.S. federal government has played a significant role in shaping agricultural production since the first the very first "farm bill," the *Agricultural Adjustment Act*, was passed in 1933. Many sustainable agriculture advocates argue that these federal policies must be changed in order to truly reform our food systems. In addition, some stakeholders in the alternative food movement also "realize that they need to engage with

the agrifood *institutions*, such as the USDA and the land-grant agricultural research system, that have largely configured the current agrifood system" (Allen 2004:16; emphasis added). In addition to broad-ranging policies such as the farm bill, a variety of more modest federal, state, and local food policies and the ways in which they are implemented may affect the viability of alternative approaches, from farm-to-school programs (Wilkins 2004) to sustainable meat production by small producers (Pollan 2006). In the U.S. and in Canada, farmers who see themselves as part of a sustainable agrifood system have reported that inadequate and inappropriate government programs often impede their progress (Laforge, Anderson, and McLachlan 2017). Thus, critics of consumer-based approaches to agrifood reform have argued that neglecting the policy and regulatory context may ultimately undermine the alternative systems they seek to advance, because of the negative effects of those policies on alternative producers.

The question of corporate cooptation of organic standards has been the source of some of the tension between competing strategic approaches within the agrifood movement. Between 1997 and 2007, fourteen of the largest twenty food processors in North America had either acquired organic foods producers, processors and distributors or created their own organic subsidiaries (Howard 2009). Many scholars engaged in alternative agrifood system research have expressed concern that this consolidation of organic ownership undermines the viability of strategic approaches directed at strengthening regulatory oversight and changing federal farm policy (Jaffee and Howard 2010). For example, Guthman (2004:312) argues that many corporate organic producers in California meet federal guidelines but fall short of sustainable farming practices. Because these large-scale, corporate-owned monoculture operations are able to sell their

products at a lower price, they undermine independent, integrated operation that are "more committed" to sustainable practices.

Agrifood reform stakeholders do not all agree on the best response to the perceived threat of growing corporate power in organics. Some scholars argue that corporate control over much of the organic food market has reached a point where "regaining social movement influence over the industry appears unlikely" (Howard 2009:27). As a result, some proponents for the "opt out" approach within the agrifood movement believe that their energy is better spent building an alternative sustainable food system "from the farm up," educating consumers about the superiority of local or regional food systems to 'big organic" in the process. Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006) emphasized this solution, calling on consumers to grow the alternative food system through the power of their food shopping choices. Others "worry that if localism is taken too far, it will play into the hands of free-market ideologues… Federal regulations may be weak and even irrational, they argue, but the solution is to reform the state rather than abandon it" (Kleiman 2009:402).

Kleiman (2009) describes the critique made by a number of sustainable agriculture scholars, including Guthman, Dupuis, and Goodman, of Pollan's call for consumers to focus their attention on supporting local farmers committed to sustainable production, saying it neglects the critical need to reform the political and economic structures guiding the dominant food system. Kleiman largely agrees with their critique, noting that Pollan himself, in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, points to a number of badly needed regulatory reforms that could help small, sustainable producers expand

production.[12] Whether in response to these critiques or not, in the period leading up to the 2008 presidential election Pollan crafted an open letter to the presidential candidates "laying out a detailed set of policy recommendations for the next 'Farmer in Chief'" and has since regularly advocated federal support for strengthening local and regional food economies (Kleiman 2009:412).

While some scholars and advocates in the agrifood movement have invested considerable energy contesting one approach to food system reform over another, others have examined the complementary roles different strategic approaches can play within sustainable agriculture. As Wilkins has pointed out, "the promise of a new food system rests as much on reforming the existing system as on becoming food citizens" (2004:272). Kloppenburg, a long-time scholar-activist in food systems, has been a great proponent of citizen participation in his or her regional "foodshed" in direct relationships with farmers (Kloppenburg, Henrickson, and Stevenson 1996), while also engaging in political battles for control of seed technologies and other agricultural commodities, advocating "a conjoining of activists and scientists" to reclaim control over plant science from agribusiness (Kloppenberg 2004:352). In his book on fair trade coffee *Brewing Justice: Fair trade coffee, sustainability, and survival* (2007), Jaffee similarly called for both citizen participation in policy reform and consumer participation through the exercise of purchasing power. Activists, as well as scholars, have made efforts to better integrate consumer-based and policy-based advocacy within the agrifood movement. As a result, at least for some, consumption and political consciousness "are no longer in

[12] Kleiman is referring to the problem cited in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* that if a small-scale slaughterhouse processes meat below a certain threshold, the USDA may simply refuse to assign it an inspector and it will have to shut down.

opposing spheres and instead [are] being recognized as overlapping domains" (Rebughini 2014:72).

1.7 Real Food Challenge

Within the context of a growing presence on U.S. college campuses of sustainability initiatives, and an expanding, if contested, agrifood movement, in 2008 a new initiative called Real Food Challenge emerged. Its mission, principles, and strategic approach reflected a conscious effort to integrate the various historic strands in sustainable agriculture movements—social, economic, and environmental. RFC's mission and principles also reflected *both* strategic priorities of the agrifood movement: using consumer power to support alternative producers, while building a movement to transform conventional agribusiness using a variety of strategies, including policy advocacy. Recognizing the diversity and confusion prevalent in efforts to promote "local" and "sustainable" purchasing (see, for example, Cleveland, Carruth, and Mazaroli 2015) RFC set out to coalesce a variety of food reform perspectives—environmental, social justice, animal welfare, public health—under a single umbrella, and operationalize this broader understanding as Real Food.

Real Food Challenge was first envisioned at a 2005 Kellogg Foundation Food and Society conference in a discussion session titled "Local Food, Fair Trade, and the Power of Procurement." The discussion was hosted by the director of a Boston nonprofit organization called The Food Project and author and food activist Anna Lappé. Follow-up from that initial discussion led to the creation of a formal network for organizing students to use the power of campus procurement to influence food production. In 2008 Real Food Challenge (RFC) was formally launched as a self-funded project of The Food

Project (Real Food Challenge N.d.a). Led by a small full-time staff (comprised of four young professionals while this dissertation was in process), several regional food organizers, and an advisory board, the organization began working with student leaders on college campuses to pilot test the first version of RFC's "Real Food Calculator."

The stated mission of Real Food Challenge is to use the power of college students to "shift $1 billion of existing university food budgets away from industrial farms and junk food and towards local/community-based, fair, ecologically sound and humane food sources… 'real food' – by 2020" (Real Food Challenge N.d.b). The program's Real Food Calculator operationalizes this broad definition of Real Food by specifying detailed criteria in four categories: local and community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane. To date, more than 250 colleges and universities have signed up to use the calculator to evaluate the food and beverages served on campus (Real Food Challenge N.d.c.). In addition, RFC's calculator has been incorporated into the dining score criteria in the most recent version of the STARS rating system, resulting in more stringent criteria for local and sustainable food procurement for the many colleges and universities using that system.[13]

RFC's primary strategy for shifting food purchasing toward Real Food is mobilizing and supporting student-led campaigns on college and university campuses throughout the U.S. RFC staff members provide ongoing strategic advice, educational materials, and national summits that provide training in grassroots organizing and build solidarity (Real Food Challenge N.d.d.). Campus RFC campaigns seek to implement use of the Real Food Calculator to audit current practices in food procurement and persuade

[13] AASHE STARS and RFC calculator alignment are explained here: http://calculator.realfoodchallenge.org/help/getting_started

the college or university president (or chancellor) to sign the Real Food Challenge pledging to reach a level of 20 percent by 2020. The Commitment also sets out parameters for implementation, including creation of a Food Systems Working Group (FSWG) on campus.

While RFC's primary campaign adopts a consumer-based approach to creating change, the organization also supports campus activism targeting farm and trade policy—for example, protests against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (RFC 2015). Six Real Food "principles" outlined on its web site demonstrate broader goals related to, but extending beyond, campus LSFB purchasing. The "Real Food Principle" refers to the way in which RFC defines Real Food. The "Movement Principle" and the "Youth Principle" identify RFC's place in the larger agrifood movement, and how/why they see youth as its leaders. The "Partnership Principle" and "Multicultural Principle" describe key partners and why they feel they should work together, and the "Participatory Principle" describes commitment to a democratic process for advancing RFC objectives (RFC N.d.a). Thus, while RFC's mission and resources have largely been directed toward helping students implement use of the Calculator and persuade top administrators to sign the Commitment, staff members also have been very intentional about articulating and building commitment to the movement context of these campaigns.

A survey of the RFC blog provides a snapshot of the organization's efforts to advance campaigns and also articulate movement goals and values. In 2017 and 2018, posts included many detailed updates on campus campaigns and past successes, including the California State University Food Systems Working Group call for applications to help craft its "Multi Year Action Plan" (Tsang 2018). Blog posts also included an article about

a coordinated action at seven universities where Real Food students dropped banners reading "Our Food System is Built on Racism" (Jacir 2017) and another by one of RFC's staff organizers about the social and environmental impacts of corporate consolidation in Kentucky and Ohio (LeBlanc 2017).

This challenging RFC agenda--articulating and mobilizing around a broad and ambitious vision for food justice while supporting instrumental changes in LSFB purchasing--has produced different outcomes on different campuses. This dissertation uses a national, quantitative investigation to identify contextual factors shaping LSFB purchasing. It then presents a qualitative case comparison of four Real Food Challenge campaigns to reveal the most significant variables shaping progress and outcomes in this new field of student activism.

1.8 Overview of Dissertation

The chapters that follow present the theoretical grounding, methods, results, and analysis of a quantitative study of national variation in LSFB purchasing and a qualitative investigation of variation in the outcomes of Real Food activism on U.S. college campuses. Chapter two provides a synthesis of relevant social movement and organizational theory that informed hypotheses about what variables most likely explain progress and setbacks in campus LSFB initiatives and Real Food campaigns. The chapter also outlines the research questions and theoretical framework guiding the quantitative and qualitative investigations. Chapter three presents the results of a quantitative analysis of national variation in LSFB purchasing among U.S. colleges and universities as measured by self-reported STARS data. The purpose of the quantitative section was to uncover variables that might make a campaign to increase LSFB purchasing easier or

more difficult to advance. Chapter four describes how Real Food campaigns unfolded at four large, public universities—two of which won agreement to the RFC Commitment, and two of which did not. In chapter five I compare contextual, organizational, and strategic factors across campaigns and analyze which variables had the most significant influence on campaign outcomes. Chapter six, the conclusion, extends that analysis by highlighting its relevance to social movement theory and to stakeholders with interests in student activism on college campuses.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, AND METHODS

Why do some colleges and universities commit to and invest in locally and sustainably produced foods and beverages as part of their campus sustainability initiatives, while others do not? While sustainable food initiatives, like sustainability more broadly, have diffused rapidly on U.S. college campuses in recent years, isomorphic pressure alone cannot explain the great variation in evidence. Food production in the United States varies significantly by region. Do regional advantages explain some of the difference in food procurement initiatives? Colleges and universities also vary with respect to dining services management, administrative structures, campus culture, and leadership styles and preferences. To what extent do these variables influence organizational change? And what is the role of student activism in campus commitments to just and sustainable food and beverage procurement? Why do the outcomes associated with those campaigns differ widely from campus to campus? This chapter examines theory and empirical studies in social movement and organizational change literature that suggest a variety of factors that may influence change processes on university campuses.

Organization theory helps explain change within organizations, and social movement theory provides a framework for analyzing the influence of advocacy on those changes. Within organizations, bureaucratic structure, campus culture, past practices, resources and power dynamics, and the timing of proposals all influence organizational decision-making (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972; Tierney 1988; Pfeffer 1992; Scott 1995; Simon 1997). Decisions by colleges and universities to invest in new initiatives,

such as campus sustainability, also may be influenced by trends among similar institutions—colleges and universities they consider to be their peers--through "mimetic isomorphic pressure" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) and "institutional logics" (Lounsbury 2001), or through a combination of mimetic processes and the influence of campus activism (Rojas 2006). On campuses with active sustainable food campaigns or where actors have promoted Real Food by other means, social movement theory can help predict factors explaining different rates of progress and different outcomes across campuses.

While research that investigates movements within universities and other organizations lags behind that of societal level movements (e.g., Civil Rights, Feminism, Gay Rights, Environmentalism, Anti-Globalization), a growing body of studies uses social movement theory as a framework for investigating contentious change processes within organizations as well as campaigns that target organizations (see, for example, Rao, Morrill, and Zald 2000; Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Davis et al. 2005; Arthur 2008). The ability of activists to create change inside organizations, including universities, is influenced by the same kinds of environmental, relational, and cognitive mechanisms that influence change more broadly (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Campbell 2005).

A social movement organization (SMO) may be defined as "a complex, or formal, organization [that] identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1218). The Real Food Challenge (RFC) considers itself to be a youth-oriented SMO operating within the broader social movement for food system reform (Real Food

Challenge N.d.a). RFC has a loosely federated structure typical of many national SMOs, in which the organization provides a variety of resources but local "chapters," in this case informal, maintain a great deal of autonomy (Weed 1991; McCarthy 2005). If the national RFC group is an SMO, how do we characterize campus-based efforts, led by students and supported by the national group? Their status as "movement" or as "campaign" is an important question, as the relevance of some variables may be different for these two activism contexts. For example, stable mobilizing structures and access to financial resources are more important for long-term *movements* focused on broad social change than for *campaigns* targeting a narrow issue or objective (Flacks 2004). Based upon the characteristics of the RFC program and RFC campus groups, I considered the former to be a federated SMO, embedded in the U.S. movement for food system reform, and the latter to be informal chapters leading campaigns.

In the first two sections below, I describe literature on social movement outcomes and organizational change that are most relevant to this study investigating variation in campus response to pressures to expand Real Food procurement. Then, I present a theoretical model based on this literature and the research questions and hypotheses that frame my study. Finally, the last section of the chapter describes the methods I used to investigate those questions and test my hypotheses.

2.1 Explaining Social Movement Outcomes

What kinds of outcomes do social movements and campaigns produce? When and why do they fall short of attaining their goals and objectives? Systematic research on the *outcomes* and *consequences* of social movements lags in comparison to research on movement emergence and mobilization (Giugni 1998, 1999). This weakness may result,

in part, from the difficulties of demonstrating causal relationships between movement activities and outcomes, even when an effect seems relatively clear (Giugni 1998; Tilly 1999). A further challenge in studying movement outcomes is selecting what outcomes to study. Scholars define movement success in a variety of ways, from direct results such as legitimacy and "new advantages" (Gamson 1975) to indirect and unintended outcomes, such as developing "ideal citizens" who remain engaged in civic issues throughout their lives (Fendrich and Lovoy 1988:784). Actors and organizations within movements may hold different--even competing--goals, and these goals may be considerably more modest than the broader societal change ("collective goods" such as reduced inequality or poverty, or improved public health) that observers identify as a movement's ultimate goal (Amenta and Young 1999).

While somewhat limited, the body of literature on social movement outcomes does provide evidence for several kinds of factors, internal and external, that seem to influence movement "success" (Giugni 1998, 1999). These variables are often grouped within three broad categories emphasized in the "dominant paradigm" in social movement theory: the context of *opportunities and constraints* confronting the movement; the forms of social movement organization or *mobilizing structures* that are available or are developed and sustained; and the collective processes of issue construction, or *cultural framing,* used to communicate a perceived problem and proposed solutions (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). A movement or campaign's "repertoire," or set of displays, petitions, and other actions, forms a fourth category that intersects with contextual opportunity and framing (McAdam et al. 2001; Taylor and VanDyke 2004; Tilly and Wood 2009). While many scholars focus on the influence of

just one aspect of the dominant paradigm on outcomes (e.g., political opportunity, organization, cultural framing, or tactics), studies investigating more than one tend to find that multiple kinds of variables--and interactions between them--influence outcomes, highlighting the importance of a more integrated theoretical approach (Cress and Snow 1996, 2000; Soule and Olzak 2004; Giugni 2007).

Many scholars have criticized the structural bias of the "dominant paradigm" and have encouraged greater focus on interactions between variables and dynamic aspects of movements, including strategic framing, adaptive response to countermovement or opponent tactics, and day-to-day tactical decisions that contribute to advances and setbacks (McAdam et al. 2001; McAdam 2003; Jasper 2004; Meyer 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2014). In addition, a number of scholars have sought to expand the dominant paradigm to more fully incorporate the role of cultural factors in these dynamic processes, adding aspects of collective identity and emotion to the closely studied area of cultural framing (see, for example, Polletta 2004; Jasper 2011). More recently, scholars have expanded theory and research examining the influence of strategic framing and tactical choices on outcomes to consider, more broadly, movement strategy, strategic innovation and adaptation, and strategic capacity, or variables associated with the ability of activists to develop effective strategy (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Jasper 2004, 2010; McAdam 2004; Williams 2016).

As described above, most social movement scholarship focuses on collective action targeting the state or related institutions. Zald and Berger (1978) were among the earliest scholars to argue that collective efforts to create change *within organizations* may be usefully viewed as social movement phenomena. Like social movement activity,

change *within* organizations can be quite contentious and involve sustained "campaigns" on the part of reformers over extended periods of time. In 2005, sociologists in the subfields of organizations and social movements collaborated on an edited volume of papers that highlighted ways in which decision-making and change processes within organizations have a great deal in common with contentious collective action, or social movement activity (Davis et al. 2005). Like social movements, recent literature on the outcomes of movement activity within organizations provides evidence for the influence of contextual opportunities and constraints (Lounsbury 2001), organizational structures (Smith 2005; Strang and Jung 2005), framing (Arthur 2011, Rojas 2006) and tactics (Arthur 2008) in shaping mobilization and outcomes.

One of the most significant differences to consider between social movements outside and inside organizations is the nature of the contextual factors. For example, the "political context" relevant to campus activism is likely to include the openness, responsiveness, and views of the administration, as well as external factors that shape the administration's priorities. Depending upon those external relationships, political opportunity influencing campus campaigns also may include state actors and institutions. In other words, contextual variables important to campus campaigns are likely to include some that are external to the campus, such as relationships between decision makers and major donors and trustees, as well as characteristics internal to the college or university. In addition, with respect to the campus campaigns, the regular turnover of students and their ambiguous status in relation to the college or university they seek to change (not fully "insider" or "outsider") also are likely to influence the ways in which mobilizing structures and resources function within campaigns in a university setting. In this

dissertation I adapted the dominant categories within social movement theory to reflect the types of factors relevant to campus-based campaigns: contextual factors (both external and internal to the college or university), organizational factors (university structures and resources), and strategic factors, which include framing, tactics, decision-making processes, and other aspects of campaign implementation. In the sections that follow, I provide a more complete discussion of the areas of social movement literature on outcomes relevant to this study and discuss their relevance to college and university organizational change and advocacy relating to local and sustainable food systems.

2.1.1. Contextual factors

Many contextual factors influence the progress and outcomes of social movements. The contextual factor most commonly discussed in social movement literature is "political opportunity," which includes stable *structural elements*, like the strength or weakness of the state, as well as *shifting opportunities*, such as dissent among opponents, party control, electoral instability, or the availability of allies (Piven and Cloward 1977; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996; Meyer 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Many aspects of political context may affect the response of the state to movement demands. The influence of contextual variables on a target's openness to petition suggests that movement campaigns with very similar strategic approaches would experience different outcomes in different contexts (Amenta and Young 1999; Cress and Snow 1996; Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005).

In addition to political context, a number of scholars have explored the impact of *economic opportunities* on mobilization and outcomes. Economic opportunity structure matters in cases where businesses are secondary targets, able to sway elected officials, as

in small business targeted by Civil Rights movement boycotts (Luders 2006). In addition, for many social movements, including environmental and food reform campaigns, corporations, rather than political institutions, are the primary targets. For these cases, opportunities and constraints relating to corporate structures and vulnerability to negative media coverage are more important than political context (Pellow 2001; King 2008; Vasi and King 2012). For movements and campaigns that target markets through consumer purchasing power, characteristics and relationships within commodity supply chains create opportunities as well as challenges (Schurman and Munro 2009).

Culture and ideology may interact with and shape opportunities and constraints that influence movement mobilization, progress, and outcomes (Snow and Benford 1988; Polletta 2004). Campus culture, along with opportunities and constraints associated with the administrative leadership structure and priorities, is likely to influence the ability of RFC campaign leaders to mobilize students, recruit allies, and persuade decision-makers that their goals align with university priorities. For campaigns and organizational change relating to campus food procurement, below I describe four kinds of contextual factors most likely to influence campus initiatives and campaigns to expand Real Food procurement.

2.1.1.1 The campus' external political opportunity structure

What aspects of a college or university's external environment should be considered as potential elements of its external *political opportunity structure,* in relation to student activism? Like movements targeting political institutions, multiple "layers" of contextual factors are likely to influence the outcomes of campus campaigns, some

outside the campus and some within. In this section I examine political factors outside the college or university that may shape outcomes of local and sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) advocacy.

Social movement studies that investigate demands of the state often examine the influence of the political make-up of governing bodies, as well as the state's general openness to petition, on movement objectives. Meyer and Minkoff (2004) found that a Democratic president and Democratic control of Congress were associated with a "signaling" function for the Civil Rights Movement. Signaling refers to a political change (in this case, an increase in perceived allies) that leads activists to increase mobilization and protest activity. In addition to increased mobilization, Democratic presidential administrations also were associated with positive outcomes—winning policy gains. With respect to universities, McLendon, Hearn, and Mokher (2009) found that Republican legislative strength and Republican gubernatorial control was associated with a decline in state appropriations for higher education. While it is difficult to predict a relationship between a context of general fiscal constraint and a specific campus initiative, it seems reasonable to expect that administrations may be less open to considering petitions perceived to involve some cost when state revenues are in decline (see discussion of resources, below).

Of course, the nature of the movement or campaign makes a great deal of difference with respect to the impact of party control on movement outcomes, as political opportunities often are issue-specific (Meyer 1993). The political affiliations and sympathies of a particular governing body may be considered "opportunity" in relation to some campaigns while "constraints" in relation to others. As discussed in chapter one,

campus sustainability may be framed in a variety of ways. When framed as an environmental initiative or as a social justice imperative, a liberal political environment is likely to be a more positive political opportunity structure than a more conservation environment. Further, sensitivity to political context is expected to be more significant for public institutions than independent ones, as public institutions rely on state appropriations for a portion of their revenue. Another way in which state political leadership has a direct influence on public institutions is through the selection of trustees; at public, four-year institutions, typically almost half are appointed by the governor (Madsen 1997, cited in Pusser, Slaughter, and Thomas 2006).

Land Grant Universities (LGUs) form a subset of public universities that may be more sensitive to political context than their public peer institutions. As described in chapter one, LGUs have a mandate to serve their respective state's interests and public needs with respect to agriculture and industry (NRC 1997; APLU 2012). In addition to greater sensitivity to state interests in general, the external political environment may be particularly significant for LSFB initiatives at LGUs, specifically, because of their close ties to the states' agricultural stakeholders. As noted in chapter one, LGUs are important sites for both advances in and opposition to the sustainable agriculture movement (Beus and Dunlap 1992; Ostrom and Jackson-Smith 2005; Carlisle and Miles 2013).

Finally, the potential influence of a college or university's board of trustees is an aspect of political opportunity structure for campus campaigns that falls at the intersection of external and internal. Trustees are formally associated with the institution and hold significant power but often serve relatively short terms and generally hold employment elsewhere. While size, composition and some aspects of roles vary among

institutions, most boards in higher education are entrusted with managing the institution in the public interest; effectively managing the endowment and the financial interests of the institution; defining and upholding its educational mission; and appointing and overseeing the president or chancellor (Henderson 1971). Thus, the presence of allies and the perspectives of trustees regarding LSFB initiatives, particularly ones that require approval at the level of the president, are important elements of the POS for some campus campaigns. Specifically, trustees may have interests aligned with or opposed to sustainable or conventional agriculture that would be expected to influence their views on LSFB initiatives.

Higher education scholarship reveals surprisingly little attention to the influence of trustee interests and relationships in university policies and decisions (Kezar 2006). However, studies of university and corporate "interlocks"[14] have identified some of the university and corporate networks of college and university trustees. In general, networks of interlocking trustees (both with other schools and with corporations) are much more common at independent institutions than at public institutions, but little is known about the implications of these relationships for decision-making (Pusser, Slaughter, and Thomas 2006). Within public institutions, corporate interlocks are much more common than connections to other university boards, and more than half of trustees are men with corporate roles, but the prevalence of specific industries represented (including agribusiness connections) has not been studied (Woodward 2009).

[14] Interlocks refer to situations in which trustees or directors serve on multiple boards, be they corporate, higher education, or nonprofit boards of trustees.

2.1.1.2 The campus' internal political opportunity structure

For campus campaigns, the political opportunities and constraints influencing outcomes are likely to include external institutions and actors with power, as discussed in the previous section, as well as characteristics of the college or university governance structures and individuals *within* the college or university. The discussion below examines variables within the university that should be considered with respect to political opportunity and constraint.

The "openness" of governance structures, on the level of nation-states, influences the strategic approaches adopted and outcomes achieved by social movements (Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996). Where government openness is high, movement targets are more likely to respond to campaigns by searching for solutions (Kitchelt 1986). However, as a number of scholars note, access does not guarantee results for activists; access may fragment, defuse, or coopt movement goals (Piven and Cloward 1977; Jaffee and Howard 2010). Widespread student protests in the mid-1960s resulted in greater student participation in university governance (Trent 1971). However, the ways in which student participation in governance is implemented and its effectiveness in advancing student interests varies widely among colleges and universities (Lizzio and Wilson 2009). RFC campaigns on campuses with structured access to decision-making may adopt different tactics and frames and experience different kinds of target responses, compared to those on campuses where student representation is limited to student government associations.

The ultimate "target" of RFC groups on campus is the president or chancellor,

who signs the RFC commitment.[15] This individual's support will be influenced by many factors specific to that individual and to the particular institution. The president's support also may be influenced by relationships with actors, organizations, and institutions outside the campus. The positions of major donors and other influential entities and the behavior of competitor colleges and universities both are likely influences on the president's position regarding RFC goals. An RFC blogger described with concern the presence of large corporations, including petrochemical giant Dupont, on the board of trustees of the University System of Georgia, implying that these powerful actors may influence the university's stance on agrifood issues (Real Food Challenge 2016). However, as discussed above, little is known about the mechanisms of board influence on university decision-making (Pussey, Slaughter, and Thomas 2006).

A president or chancellor's response to specific petitions also may be influenced by highly time-bounded factors such as a high profile "scandal" or a large funding request before the state legislature, in the case of a public university. In general, organizations may be more open to the demands of activists or isomorphic pressure to adopt new practices when in a period of reputational decline (Westphal, Gulati, and Shortell 1997; King 2008). Decision-making processes in "loosely coupled" and fluid organizations such as a college or university may be significantly influenced by the set of other demands and issues in process at a particular moment (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972; Weick 1976). As a result, for campus campaigns, shifting contextual factors, compared to stable ones, may be particularly important in shaping the opportunity structure.

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[15] A second signatory also is required—someone who "will directly oversee and participate in the implementation process…" *Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment,* p.2. Retrieved June 28, 2018 (file:///Users/rebecca/Downloads/RealFood_CampusCommitment%20(8).pdf).

Movements that seek to "displace" their targets, as compared to those seeking a less-threatening change in policy or stance, are significantly less likely to win acceptance or concessions (Gamson 1975; Mirowski and Ross 1981). RFC campaigns do not seek the removal of university presidents, but they may be viewed as threatening conventional agribusiness—indeed, RFC clearly states it seeks to shift $1 billion in consumer spending away from that industry toward alternative producers. In addition, as discussed in chapter one, RFC also supports food policy activism, such as rallies protesting proposed trade agreements—agreements that agribusiness interests tend to favor. Thus, university ties to agribusiness interests and RFC campaigns perceived to threaten that industry are expected to negatively influence RFC campaigns progress.

The presence of allies also is an important aspect of the political opportunity structure influencing campaigns and movements (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Schools that have academic and research units on campus that align with RFC goals may be more likely to have faculty and staff allies who are able to provide support to the campaign. These allies may influence campaign outcomes by offering advantages associated with their "insider" location. Scholars distinguish between "insider" and "outsider" roles and associated tactics within social movements (see, for example, Gamson 1975; Werum and Winders 2001). Institutional location influences the power and tactics of activists and their allies (Piven and Cloward 1977). RFC campaigns are *student* campaigns; the SMO supporting them, RFC, seeks to "leverage the power of youth" and maintain a national network of "student food activists."[16] Students occupy a more peripheral location—more "outsider"-- in relation to the university's governing structure than staff or faculty. Faculty and staff

[16] Real Food Challenge: Our Vision (http://realfoodchallenge.org/about-real-food-challenge).

tend to have more "insider" positions, depending upon their positions, and they are likely to be more knowledge about campus structures and decision-making processes than students. They also are more likely to choose collaborative rather than confrontational approaches, avoiding actions that could jeopardize their position or professional relationships (Meyerson and Scully 1995; Scully and Segal 2002; Meyerson 2003), although some tenured faculty feel free to "rock the institutional boat" (Hart 2008:204). Having both "insider" and "outsider" allies can increase the pool of relevant knowledge and skills and the problem-solving capacity of a campaign, making success more likely (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Franceschet 2004).

The importance of allies and their insider or outsider status to the campaign may be influenced by other variables, including political and legal context, countermovement response, and issue complexity (Cress and Snow 1996; Santoro and McGuire 1997; Werum and Winders 2001). The effect of insider allies also depends upon tactical choices and level of opposition (Cress and Snow 2000). As a result, as with other aspects of political opportunity structure, it is important to examine the availability of insider allies in relation to other variables, including other aspects of the movement's context and the ways in which activists do—or do not—develop strategic alliances with potential allies (Jasper 2004).

2.1.1.3 The economic opportunity structure

Food system reform movements often seek to use market forces to achieve desired changes in food production. For example, the fair trade, organic, and anti-genetically engineered food campaigns all have sought to shift consumer buying behavior in order to influence food production, processing and trade practices (Schurman and

Munro 2009; Jaffee and Howard 2010). RFC's vision, to "leverage the power of youth and universities to create a healthy, fair, and green food system" (RFC N.d.a), relies on the third-party certification standards influenced by these broader movements. The RFC goal of 20 percent Real Food also relies on regional food infrastructure that makes it feasible for colleges and universities to purchase "community-based" food products.

Colleges and universities vary considerably in their access to regional infrastructure supporting direct farm-to-institution linkages, which may affect the feasibility of the RFC 20 percent target. Administrators often hesitate to agree to campus sustainability targets that appear very difficult to meet (Barlett 2011). Gaps in infrastructure, particularly "food hub" facilities that can aggregate, store, process, and distribute food from small producers, can be a significant barrier to expanding local sourcing and sourcing from certified-sustainable producers (Vogt and Kaiser 2008; Bloom and Hinrichs 2010; Gaskin et al. 2013). Limited storage infrastructure is a particularly significant issue for farm-to-campus initiatives because most food purchasing at colleges and universities occurs September through May, while the most productive growing season in many regions is in the summer months. Farm supply chains that do not have the capacity to flash freeze and store produce will be able to provide institutions with local produce for only a limited portion of fall and spring semesters. As a result, RFC groups in regions with less developed food hub systems may encounter greater opposition from decision-makers out of concern that expanding local and sustainable procurement is not feasible.

A second aspect of the food infrastructure that may influence RFC campaigns is internal to the college or university--the form and leadership of dining services on

campus. While the college or university president is the person charged with signing the RFC commitment, day-to-day management of dining services is the responsibility of that department within the university or a vendor under contract with the university to provide those services. The existing supply chain relationships and experience of this department or vendor will influence the difficulty, for dining services, of expanding community-based and sustainable, humane, and fairly produced products.

Organizational routines may be resistant to change, and "structural inertia" can impede adoption of innovations (Hannan and Freeman 1984; Nelson and Winter 2002). Knowledge is embedded within organizational structures and technologies, and this knowledge varies for different corporate food service owners (Argote and Darr 2001). Dining services managers associated with different service contractors (or who are managed directly by the college or university) are likely to respond differently to inquiries based differences in their experience and knowledge base. Existing structures, technologies, and knowledge will influence how they perceive the challenge of implementing new tracking and purchasing approaches and its compatibility with existing dining services processes.

2.1.1.4 Campus culture: mission and political orientation

Just as political and economic contextual factors often influence a movement or campaign's trajectory, the *cultural* environment in which it operates also may influence the ability of actors to mobilize support and achieve their goals (Polletta 2004; Williams 2007). This contextual variable can have a significant influence on movement impacts depending on alignment with a movement's "frames" (see discussion of framing, below). For example, mobilizing sympathetic farmers harmed by agribusiness policies and

practices to collective action calling for regulatory reform has proven very difficult in communities where ideological opposition to regulation is prevalent, even though farmers generally agreed with organizers about the source of the problem (Pechlaner 2012). Colleges and universities with institutional missions or with academic units that have missions that align with the RFC vision and goals have a more favorable cultural context for RFC campaigns than those that do not.

RFC values and principles are more closely aligned with politically liberal ideology than with conservative perspectives, which may facilitate frame resonance on more politically liberal campuses. However, studies examining the influence of political orientation on campuses with progressive activism are inconclusive. For example, Dixon, Tope, and Van Dyke (2008) found that more liberal-leaning campuses were associated with greater labor activism, but a national survey of early leaders in campus sustainability did not find that political culture predicted commitment levels (Shriberg 2002). In addition, measures of political orientation may apply to the student body, and may therefore influence mobilization, but may not apply to activist targets. Thus, the significance of campus political orientation to LSFB initiative outcomes is likely to be moderated significantly by other factors, including other elements of the opportunity structure and strategic variables.

2.1.2 Organizational Factors

In addition to variation in context, described above, social movements and campaigns also differ in the kinds of resources available to them and existing *mobilizing structures* (or, opportunities to create them on campus). These variables influence the choices available to activists and the outcomes of their campaigns.

2.1.2.1 Resources

Movements with access to greater resources are more likely to sustain their activities over time, and this sustained support can be critical to winning concessions for movements that target the state (Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Similarly, Dixon, Tope, and Van Dyke (2008) found that elite universities were more likely to experience graduate student labor organizing campaigns, which they argued was likely linked to the greater resources available to students at these institutions. In the case of a federated SMO supporting multiple campus campaigns, such as RFC, SMO support may be more significant in shaping outcomes than campus resources, assuming the campus provides all student organizations with modest resources. Real Food Challenge provides many strategic planning resources as well as Real Food calculator support through its web site (Real Food Challenge N.d.c). Other significant forms of support may vary from campus to campus, such as funding to attend retreats and summits, visits from field organizers, and other forms of ongoing strategic planning support (such as calls and email communication). Human and financial support from RFC, along with enough campus resources to allow student leaders to meet and mobilize, may enhance or constrain the ability of campus campaigns to sustain themselves over time, engage in regular strategic planning, and respond effectively to setbacks as they occur (see discussion of *strategic capacity*, below).

2.1.2.2 Mobilizing structures

"The magnitude and duration of collective actions depend on mobilizing people through social networks and around identifiable symbols that are drawn from cultural frames of meaning" (Tarrow 1994:6). Social movements must create or appropriate

coordination structures in order to function effectively (McAdam et al. 2001). *Mobilizing structures*—informal or formal vehicles used to mobilize people for collective action—may take a variety of forms on college campuses, including issue-focused living spaces, degree programs, and formal student organizations. Students activists associated with RFC generally create formal campus organizations to mobilize others and advance their campaigns. The presence of other networking opportunities, such as a related academic initiative, can support mobilization and the identification and recruitment of allies.

Case studies of successful campus student sustainability campaigns suggest that when single-issue student environmental groups collaborate effectively through an umbrella organization, they increase their ability to win change on campus (Shriberg et al. 2013; Dostal 2015). This variable is both organizational and tactical, as movement actors can make tactical decisions to enhance the potential efficacy of the organizational structures supporting mobilization, but their ability to do so may be mediated by the structures in place prior to mobilization.

Mobilizing structures are important for sustaining campus activism because they can provide stability for campaigns to extend beyond the tenure of a single cohort of students (Chang 2004). They also may help student activists garner resources. At the University of Michigan, the structure of academic units aligned with sustainability goals, such as the School of Natural Resources & Environment, supported student recruitment and provided resources for student environmental groups and student environmental leadership training (Shriberg et al. 2013). However, as discussed in chapter one, RFC campaigns have discrete, short-term goals and do not necessarily need to be sustained for more than a few years. As a result, mobilizing structures and university resources are not

expected to be highly significant to RFC campaign success, in comparison to contextual and strategic variables.

2.1.3 Strategic factors

As discussed above, many social movement studies provide evidence that the context in which social movements operate has a significant influence on outcomes. But opportunities only matter if actors recognize and capitalize upon them (or create them), and some movements and campaigns do this more effectively than others. Focusing on structural variables alone ignores movement culture, misses the dynamic nature of social movement activity, and denies agency in social movement actors (Morris 1999; McAdam et al. 2001; McAdam 2003; Jasper 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2014). Movement leaders make decisions about tactics and framing, assess progress, interpret opponent responses, and readjust their approach on a regular basis. A movement's strategic approach often evolves over time; for example, disruptive tactics tend to be more common in the emergent phase of movements, and less likely once formal organizations are established (McAdam 1983; McAdam et al. 1996). How effectively movement actors align and adjust tactical decisions with the context in which they operate influences their success in attaining movement goals (Cress and Snow 1996, 2000; McCammon et al. 2008; Arthur 2011). Strategic capacity and strategic innovation within movements help explain how and why movement actors make (or do not make) adaptive, strategic decisions that enhance the likelihood of successful outcomes (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Williams 2016).

2.1.3.1 Tactics

Social movement actors engage in a variety of dramaturgical displays to demonstrate power (Benford and Hunt 1992). Activists normally make tactical choices

from an established "repertoire of contention" that includes a range of displays of solidarity and power as well as actions designed to make inaction costly (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1994; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Disruption of normal institutional processes helps campaigns win earned media (Amenta et al. 2009) and increases the costs, for opponents, of ignoring the demands of challengers (Piven and Cloward 1977). Movements that can gather the resources to sustain regular disruptive displays often use the threat of continuing disruption to win concessions (Tarrow 1994).

Scholars disagree about the efficacy of disruptive versus non-disruptive tactics in movement outcomes. Some studies have found that direct confrontation is associated with greater likelihood of concessions (Gamson 1975; Mirowsky and Ross 1981; McAdam 1983) while other have found a great deal of variation in the effectiveness of contentious tactics (Giugni 1998). This variation lends support to arguments that the costs and benefits of disruptive tactics vary depending upon contextual variables, including the presence of allies and level of opposition (Cress and Snow 1996). Disruptive tactics may not be effective in a more challenging environment; for example, Biggs and Andrews (2015) found that favorable political and economic opportunity structures and relatively weak opposition increased the likelihood that sit-in protests would win concessions in the Civil Rights Movement.

The kinds of tactics selected and the extent to which they are collaborative versus confrontational and disruptive are related to a movement's general orientation toward an "insider" or "outsider" position (Gamson and Meyer 1996). A number of scholars have argued that "insider" and "outsider" collaboration within movements enhances movement effectiveness, such as when movement leaders organize people both inside and outside of

political institutions (Beckwith 2000; Franceschet 2004; Friedman 2000; Ganz 2009). Movements may include both political insiders and outsiders and some are characterized by members who see themselves as simultaneously participating in both insider institutions and aligned with outsider, challenging groups. Meyerson and Scully (1995) refer to activists with this kind of dual location and association as "tempered radicals;" Beckwith (2000) refers to this dual strategy as "double militancy."

Among organizations, including colleges and universities, evidence seems to support greater efficacy for non-disruptive, and more collaborative, tactics (Arthur 2008). Rojas (2006) found non-disruptive protest encouraged the creation of African-American Studies programs, and was enhanced by mimetic isomorphism as program creation spread. Disruptive forms of protest did not have an effect on program adoption. Several reasons may explain a preference, and greater effectiveness, of non-disruptive tactics within organizations. Bureaucratic insiders may be essential to implementing movement demands, and they may find it harder to advocate on behalf of activists when they use disruptive tactics on campus.

Like movements and campaigns more broadly, the kinds of tactics that are most effective within organizations are likely to vary in relation to contextual factors. For example, the same tactics used by challengers to promote an afro-centric curriculum had different outcomes in three different major cities; activists were more successful where the tactics "resonated culturally and organizationally with the school district's administrators" (Binder 2000:87). Because particular tactics may prove effective in some situations but not in others, the ability of movement actors to identify tactics likely to support their objectives and to make adjustments as needed deserve greater attention in

social movement research. As Jasper has noted, "participants in social movements make many choices, but you would never know this from the scholarly literature" (2004:2). Tactical choices that face movement actors include the scope of the campaign (with tradeoffs for broader versus more narrow goals and objectives) and whether to adopt a more versus less contentious position in messaging and actions (Jasper 2004; Taylor and VanDyke 2004). More and more scholars are calling for research that examines the interaction of these kinds of dynamic variables in combination with structural factors.

2.1.3.2 Framing and "discursive opportunity structures"

Framing has been identified as a particularly significant strategic variable in social movements. Collective action frames are "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organization (SMO)" (Benford and Snow 2000:614). The process of constructing meaning within a social movement is ongoing and dynamic, influenced not only by the movement participants but also by external environments and actors, including opponents and the media (McCright and Dunlap 2003). Discursive opportunities can be stable, persisting over time, or volatile, in association with short-term contexts such as a war in progress (Gamson and Meyer 1996; McCammon et al. 2007). Movement actors need to recognize and make strategic decisions about how to respond to opportunities in the discursive environment, just as they do with respect to the political opportunity structure (Gamson and Meyer 1996; McAdam et al. 2001).

The *salience* and *credibility* of collective action frames influences their effectiveness in supporting movement success (Benford and Snow 2000). Frame alignment with the cultural/ideational context also influences salience, or *resonance*, with

movement actors and targets (Snow et al. 1986). Many scholars have focused on the importance of framing and frame alignment for participant mobilization, and mobilizing large numbers of participants and key allies can support positive movement outcomes (Guigni 1998). Frames that are highly resonant with discursive elements in the cultural context also may support movement efficacy by legitimizing movement demands in the eyes of the broader public and with persons who may be influential with movement targets (Koopmans and Statham 1999). When movement goals and the way they are framed "fit" more readily with cultural ideology (Schurman and Munro 2009) and the evidence and experience of community members (Babb 1996), movements are more likely to make progress toward their goals. Conversely, discrepancies between beliefs, experience, or evidence and collective action frames can make them less persuasive (Snow et al. 1986; Babb 1996; Pechlaner 2012).

While framing dynamics *within organizations*, including colleges and universities, and their influence on outcomes, have received much less attention from scholars, they also are likely to be influenced by how well activists adjust tactics to align with the organizational context (Arthur 2008, 2011). Real Food Challenge campaigns are supported by a national organization that provides training and communications and outreach materials. If RFC campus leaders all frame their campaigns in the same way, using RFC principles and vision, we can expect the frames to align more readily on some campuses than others. The extent to which Real Food frames align and resonate with their cultural context is likely to affect the ability of campaign leaders to mobilize sympathetic students, recruit the support of allies, build legitimacy, and win influence with their target—the university president or chancellor. On campuses where Real Food

frames do not readily align with the beliefs and values of different groups on campus, RFC campaign leaders who adjust or extend framing to better align may be just as successful as those whose campus culture more readily aligns with RFC's national frames.

Frame alignment processes imply that choices about movement frames are strategic, or intended to enhance a movement's ability to achieve concrete objectives including student mobilization, ally recruitment, and target persuasion. At the same time, movements often have multiple objectives and framing serves a variety of purposes, including building collective identity, demonstrating solidarity with partners, and recruitment (Friedman and McAdam 1999). These movement objectives, as well as emotion and values, sometimes shape framing decisions as much as strategic considerations (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Jasper 2011). Attention to the strategic function of framing, as compared with identity and mobilization, may enhance strategic adaptation, discussed below.

2.1.3.3 Strategic adaptation and capacity

As discussed above, while contextual variables often significantly enhance or constrain movement progress and outcomes, the strategic choices that activists make on a regular basis also matter. These decisions include a movement or campaign's collective action frames and tactics, described above, and how and when to adjust them in response to changes in the political opportunity structure and target responses (see, for example, Franceschet 2004; McCammon et al. 2008). As McCammon et al. concluded regarding the women's jury movement in the U.S., "…when social movement actors tailor their

actions to respond to exigencies in the environment they are more likely to expedite political success" (2008:1104).

Effective movement leaders are *resourceful*--able to adjust in response to changing circumstances, and *innovative*, developing new tactics when old ones are not producing results (McAdam 1983; Ganz 2000; McAdam et al. 2001; Goodwin and Jasper 2014). Activists can increase their chances of success when they find ways to make the most of their own, limited resources and exploit the vulnerabilities and missteps of their opponents (Ganz 2009; Guthman and Brown 2016). Evaluating the effect of collective action frames through structured learning processes and changing course when they are not having the desired effects on mobilization, media, or targets influences the movement's progress and efficacy (Friedman 2000; Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Franceschet 2004).

In the context of the RFC network, flexibility and innovation might mean rethinking a strategic approach that was successful on another campus but has failed to win advances in a different campaign. Campaigns with leaders and allies prepared to adjust their tactics and try new approaches, when needed, are likely to be more successful at winning desired outcomes. Further, strategic factors are likely to be more important for campaigns with less supportive contextual and organizing features. In other words, activists on some campuses will have a harder job than those in more supportive environments, and their ability to adjust and innovate will be more important for winning campaigns.

What factors influence the extent to which activists are resourceful and innovative, responding to opponents, targets, and changing circumstances in ways that

enhance the likelihood of success? Within organizations, understanding power dynamics and their sources in a particular context, including relationships and influence held by potential allies and opponents, is critical to the ability of actors to develop and effectively wield power (Pfeffer 1992). For social movements more broadly, Ganz (2000, 2004, 2009) argues that *salient knowledge* is one of three elements that characterize the *strategic capacity* of social movement groups. "The better one's information about a domain within which one is working, the better the 'local' knowledge, the more likely one is to know how to deal effectively with problems that arise within that domain" (Ganz 2000:1012). In addition to power dynamics, salient knowledge includes other relevant information and skills (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009). In a college or university context, salient information and skills for groups interested in influencing food and beverage purchasing would include organizational structure and reporting relationships; pre-existing commitments (or decisions to decline commitment opportunities) related to food and to sustainability; preferences and past decisions of key administrators regarding student-initiated programs; key external stakeholders with an interest in dining and/or food procurement; and the school's culture and history generally with respect to different forms of activism and organizational change. Greater salient knowledge should support the development of resonant frames, as SM actors must understand the values, beliefs, and norms of potential allies, movement participants, and targets in order to engage in frame bridging, amplification, or extension that enhances alignment (Snow et al. 1986).

In addition to salient knowledge, Ganz (2000, 2004, 2009) has identified *motivation* and *learning practices* as key to strategic capacity. Strong commitment of groups to their cause can enhance resourcefulness and creativity, which facilitates

problem solving. Organizational forms and practices that support regular and open deliberation also facilitate the kinds of creative problem solving often demanded by social movements, particularly those operating in challenging environments. In the anti-sweatshop movement on college campuses, the network of activists responded to challenges by engaging in "egalitarian, consensus-building" processes that resulted in strategic innovation (Williams 2016:287). Thus, the processes and practices by which movement actors learn and innovate can influence outcomes.

Few scholars have examined the influence and implications of a federated structure—a national organization with local or state chapters—on movement strategy or outcomes (McCarthy 2005; but see Weed 1991 and Williams 2016). This organizational element is highly relevant to research examining Real Food Challenge campaign outcomes. RFC has a loose, federated structure that connects campus campaigns to each other and to its small groups of national staff and regional organizers. Most federated SMOs provide templates that create uniformity in goals and tactics among their chapters, with varying degrees of adaptation to local conditions (McCarthy 2005). Through its web site, RFC provides organizing resources for campus campaigns, including guides for coalition-building, campaign strategy, power mapping, media and messaging, and running meetings (RFC N.d.e). In addition, it provides regular retreats and summits that include training exercises as well as opportunities for individualized strategic support from field organizers (Real Food Challenge N.d.d). Diversity within organizational leadership can support greater strategic capacity (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Olzak and Ryo 2004). As a result, the nature of federated support and its influence on diversity in

leadership, framing processes, and tactics are important to consider in an investigation of social movement outcomes.

2.2 Organizational Change

Literature in the subfield of organization theory includes analysis of the sources and uses of resources and power in organizations, the development and influence of institutional logics, and diffusion of ideas and practices that may be relevant to understanding change within colleges and universities regarding local and sustainable food and beverage purchasing. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, while most scholars interested in organizational change draw primarily on *either* social movement *or* organization theory, a growing number have integrated concepts and terms across the subfields, in recognition of their overlap and mutual relevance (Campbell 2005; Lounsbury 2005; Vasi 2006). Below I provide a brief discussion of several areas of organization theory that may be relevant to this study.

2.2.1 Organizational resources and power

While resource mobilization theory in social movement literature emphasizes the importance of ongoing resources for sustaining movement activity, in the case of advocacy for university sustainability initiatives, the target's resources may be influential, as well. Chapter one briefly discussed some of the challenges that face to farm-to-institution initiatives, including a perception, and sometimes a reality, of higher costs for products that qualify as "sustainable." In cases where proponents do not adequately address this concern, usually through research demonstrating affordability, an institution's resource constraints in dining services may influence the efficacy of LSFB

campaigns. Many different external variables influence funding for colleges and universities, and they differ for independent and state institutions.

Universities depend upon resources from governmental sources, foundations, corporations, individual donors, and student tuition and fees. These resource flows reflect—and influence—power within universities, and the power of external stakeholders (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Power dynamics are central to the study of social movements, in which actors construct and demonstrate power in order to persuade targets to make the changes they seek (Benford and Hunt 1992; Tarrow 1994). While often not discussed explicitly by social movement scholars, power dynamics are implicit in analyses of mobilization, organization, and outcomes. However, most social movement research considers power dynamics between movement actors and targets, whereas organizational research examines the sources and uses of power within organizations and organizational fields. To what extent can this literature contribute to an analysis of decision-making and campaigns within universities?

Organizational structures and subunit functions influence power dynamics within organizations, including colleges and universities, and social movement actors need to understand power relationships in order to develop effective strategy (Hickson et al. 1971; Pfeffer 1992). Within large research universities, academic departments that attract resources important to the university, such as grants and contracts, prestige, and large graduate programs, tend to have greater power than peer departments, which affords them greater access to scarce resources including graduate student fellowships and posts on influential university committees (Pfeffer and Slancick 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer 1974). The extent to which a department is considered to be central to the university's core

mission and resource negotiation skills also are associated with greater power and higher allocation of resources among both academic and non-academic units (Hackman 1985).

The relevance of power differences between academic units may influence the ability of faculty members advocating local and sustainable purchasing initiatives to win support from top administrators. Further, this research suggests that differences in departmental power and demonstrated effectiveness in resource negotiations may be important considerations for ally recruitment by student campaigns. However, national data on relative power of academic departments at particular institutions, and on the presence of faculty "champions" and their departmental affiliations, is not readily available. As a result, the influence of departmental power may be helpful to consider in case studies, but very difficult to examine in a national analysis.

2.2.2 Isomorphic pressure

Institutional theory suggests that organizations within the same organizational fields become more and more similar over time as a result of coercive, mimetic and normative "mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). At the same time, scholars understand that organizations do not always respond to institutional pressures in the same way or at the same rate. Empirical studies suggest that differences in the relationship between organizations and field-level institutions, as well as internal organizational characteristics and current performance, influence the differential effects of institutional pressures on organizational change (Edelman 1992; Uzzi 1997; Westphal, Gulati, and Shortell 1997).

While there is clear evidence that isomorphic pressure has exerted a general influence on sustainability initiatives within higher education (for example, the growing

numbers of colleges and universities with sustainability offices and/or staff persons), colleges and universities have many options for demonstrating commitment. For example, institutions reporting on their sustainability progress through STARS include data on 11 areas of academics, 15 different aspects of campus engagement, 23 discrete measures in operations, and 14 different indicators within planning and administration (AASHE 2018e). Thus, institutions have many opportunities to demonstrate sustainability commitment and progress without engaging in local and sustainable food and beverage purchasing at all. As a result, isomorphic pressure is unlikely to explain variation in this specific aspect of campus sustainability initiative.

2.2.3 Organizational logics

As discussed above, social movement research suggests that when movement frames align with the cultural context in which the movement is embedded, messages are more likely to resonate and support positive outcomes. Similarly, organization scholars discuss how "logics" at the level of organizations, industries, and society shape the attention and decisions of organizational leaders (Scott 1995; Fligstein 1996). These organizational logics "constitute a set of assumptions and values, usually implicit, about how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior, and how to succeed" (Thornton and Ocasio 1999:804).

In addition to their influence on the perceived legitimacy of activists' claims and demands, changing and competing logics can influence the strategies and tactics they employ and the objectives they seek (Lounsbury 2005). In the context of American universities, campus culture, organizational logics, and institutional norms all are likely to influence the ways in which the Office of the President or Chancellor responds to

student initiatives to increase the university's commitment to LSFB purchasing. The concept of organizational logics may also be a useful way to view the influence of the broader food reform movement and the Real Food Challenge organization on the meaning construction and strategic choices of individual Real Food campaigns. In addition, at the institutional level changing "logics" regarding campus sustainability may influence the ways in which administrators view Real Food initiatives. The latter is discussed in greater detail, below.

2.2.4 Innovation diffusion

A number of scholars have investigated the diffusion of social movement tactics and campaigns from the perspective of institutional theories of innovation diffusion or a combination of social movement and diffusion mechanisms. "Cultural categories," or an organization's networks and peer group membership, influence *diffusion of new practices* (Soule 1997; Strang and Soule 1998), as does alignment with the organizational mission and context (Vasi 2006). If we view campus sustainability, and specifically Real Food initiatives, as an organizational innovation spreading within higher education, these findings suggest that colleges and universities will be more sensitive to isomorphic pressure from peer institutions. The extent to which the college or university's mission and culture readily align with the innovation also is likely to influence adoption. A mission oriented toward social change, or a student culture embracing social and environmental justice, may interact with isomorphic pressure from peer institutions to increase the likelihood that colleges and universities invest resources in expanding their Real Food commitment.

A second kind of innovation whose diffusion is relevant to campus activism is innovation in *campaign tactics*. Campaign tactics perceived as effective diffuse rapidly among college campuses with similar characteristics where students are engaged in the same social movement (Soule 1997; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). In the case of RFC campaigns, diffusion should occur easily because of the common "toolkit" and training provided by the national RFC program. However, as discussed above, the tactics themselves may be less important for predicting outcomes than the selection of tactics *that best align* with a campaign's particular context and operational dynamics (Arthur 2011).

2.3 Theoretical Model, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

In section 2.2, above, I reviewed social movement and organization literature relevant to understanding how and why colleges and universities choose to make changes—or not—in their food procurement practices in response to institutional influence or campaigns advocating change. Many social movement studies focus their attention on just one of the major areas of social movement literature described above: political and economic opportunity structures (see, for example, Kitschelt 1986), organization and resources (see, for example, McCarthy and Zald 1977), or one or more strategic factors (see, for example, Snow et al. 1986; Ganz 2000). However, as scholars have come to recognize the complex interactions between context, movement organization, and strategy, a growing number have examined variables in two or more of these areas. For example, Franceschet (2000) found that changing political opportunity structure influenced changes in strategy and the development of new frames that influenced greater efficacy in second- versus first-wave feminism on Chile. Other

scholars have argued that a more integrated and agency-oriented approach to research on outcomes—one that does not pit one particular kind of explanation against others--is likely to be of greater use to movement actors (Flacks 2004; Bevington and Dixon 2005). For both of these reasons—uncovering complexity and enhancing the relevance of my findings--I developed a broad theoretical model with multiple categories of variables to guide my investigation. In the three sections, below, I first describe that theoretical model. I then provide the primary research questions I explored and my hypotheses associated with those questions.

2.3.1 Theoretical model

As discussed above, many social movement studies explore the significance of a single aspect of the dominant paradigm (opportunities, organization, framing, or tactics). While a highly focused approach can facilitate new insights into a particular aspects of movement dynamics, in some cases single focus studies have sought to elevate the importance of a particular facet, such as political opportunity, rather than understand how that feature operates in interaction with others (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). A growing number of studies demonstrate that multiple contextual variables, interactions between them, and strategic adaptation all may influence outcomes attributed to a given movement. Further, because empirical studies of the outcomes of campus activism are so limited, there is little justification for choosing to privilege one kind of factor over others. In other words, little is known about the relative importance of contextual, organizational, and strategic variables influencing the outcomes of student campaigns. As a result, I developed a research design that includes elements of all three kinds of variables.

This study's theoretical model reflects a social movement orientation toward the research questions, but its methodology is flexible in order to capture evidence of factors that were not predicted based on dominant paradigms. Micro-scale, qualitative investigation of campus activism is limited to a modest number of case studies. While my approach is grounded in theories of change within organizations and society more broadly, few studies have specifically investigated outcomes of campus activism using qualitative methods that reveal micro-level variables, such as framing and tactics (but see Arthur 2011). As a result, I designed the qualitative portion of this study to reflect a compromise between grounded theory and hypothesis testing, to provide ample opportunity for uncovering factors not reflected in the model or hypotheses.

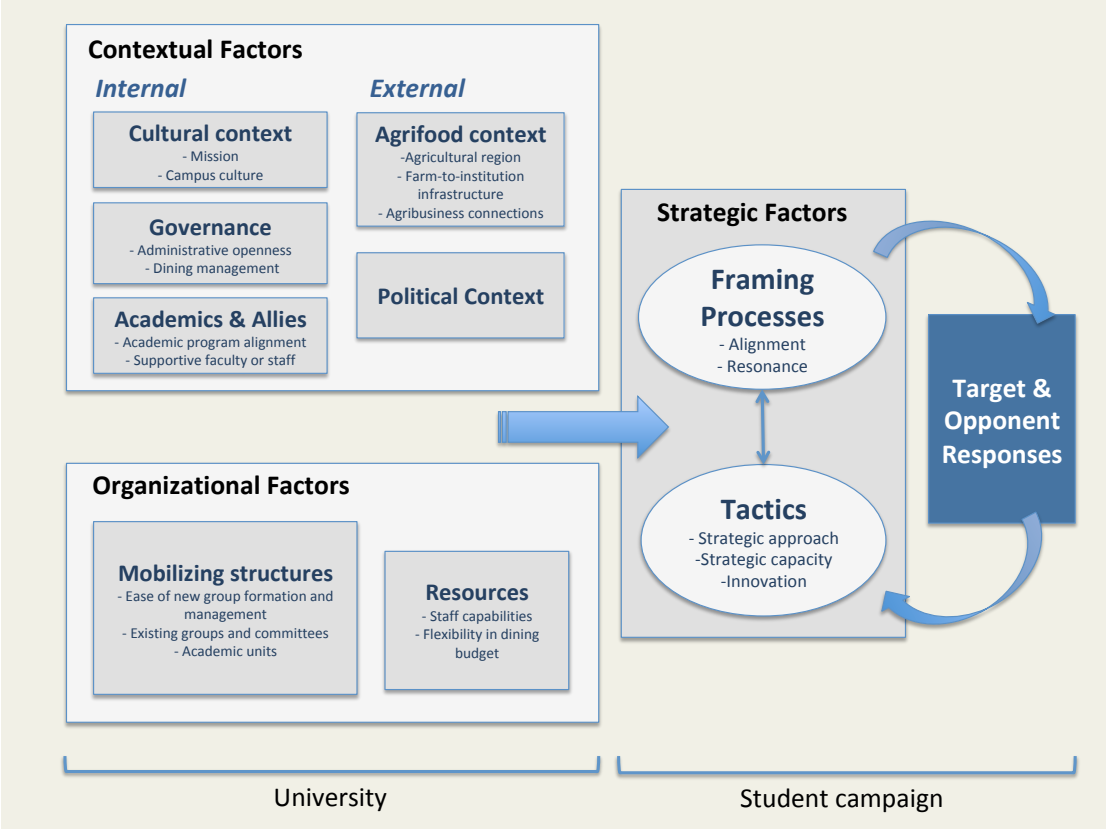

Figure 2.1: Factors predicted to influence college/university decisions and campaign outcomes seeking increases in Real Food procurement

2.3.2 Research questions and hypotheses

I developed three primary research questions and related hypotheses based on the theoretical model described above. The first research question and hypothesis examine several contextual variables expected to influence university dining's likelihood of increasing LSFB purchasing, including its response to student campaigns with that objective. The variables selected for this portion of the study are ones for which a national, quantitative analysis is feasible. This question framed the quantitative portion of the dissertation, whose results are presented and analyzed in chapter three. This investigation sought to uncover contextual variables associated with higher levels of local and sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) purchasing as reported through AASHE's STARS database. Variables associated with higher LSFB scores would be expected to contribute to a supportive context, or *opportunity structure*, for student RFC campaigns.

I developed the second and third questions and hypotheses to examine the influence of contextual, organizational, and strategic variables associated with Real Food Challenge campaign progress and outcomes, including interactions between different kinds of variables. Answering these questions required micro-level data unavailable through databases or through RFC record keeping. As a result, I developed a qualitative, case study approach to answer these questions. In the section that follows I provide the three research questions, the hypotheses associated with each, and a brief summary of the theory and literature that informed them.

Research Question 1: *What contextual and organizational factors help explain the variation in level of commitment to local/sustainable food purchasing at U.S. colleges and universities?*

Political and economic opportunity structures, discussed above, often influence the characteristics and outcomes of social movements. For campaigns on college campuses, internal political dynamics are complex and have not been characterized in a format that allows for quantitative analysis. However, the STARS database includes a measure for participatory governance that may serve as a proxy for internal political openness. Thus, campus openness was examined in the quantitative study using this STARS measure, and also explored in greater depth for four universities, through interview data, in the qualitative portion.

With respect to external contextual variables, political context may be measured by party control and dominance of state executive and legislative party branches. For consumer and product-based initiatives and campus campaigns, the regional economic context may matter at least as much as political factors. Supply chains and aspects of regional context influencing supply may shape the ease with which desired changes may be made and, therefore, the willingness of decision makers to pursue changes in purchasing. Thus, political leadership, geographic location (associated with growing regions), and several farm-to-institution infrastructure measures also were selected as independent, contextual variables.

Land Grant University (LGU) status is another aspect of political context that was included in the national analysis of LSFB scores, as a result of its likely influence on the way in which LSFB frames are interpreted and received (as explained in chapter one and above). LGU status was included in the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study and is explained further under research question three, below.

Many social movement scholars consider human and financial resources to be important to sustaining movements (see, for example, McCarthy and Zald 1977). However, the kinds of resources most important to LSFB initiatives and campaigns on college campaigns are unclear. Certainly some dining services managers have concerns about potential cost increases, but whether those constraints and concerns are linked directly to an institution's financial resources is unclear. In addition, there is a great deal of flexibility in the criteria for Real Food, including locally produced products that do not increase costs. In addition, access to external organizing resources is assumed to be equivalent, as RFC staff support all student campaigns that seek their help. Thus, institutional financial resources and sustainability staffing were included as control variables in the statistical model investigating the relationship between multiple variables and local and sustainable food scores, but they were not considered to be variables of interest.

Resources and opportunities associated with internal dining management also were expected to have an influence on outcomes because they may influence the level of difficulty of the change and level of opposition. I expected experience and openness of the dining services management to expanding Real Food purchasing to influence LSFB purchasing scores. Data regarding dining services management (whether it is self-operated or contracted to a vendor) are available for many institutions on their student dining web sites. However, the experience and orientation of dining services staff toward LSFB initiatives are not readily available and are more difficult to characterize. As a result, the former was included in the quantitative portion of this study, while the latter was evaluated, as possible, through interview data in the qualitative study.

HYPOTHESIS 1: *Geographic region, political and agricultural context, LGU affiliation, openness to participatory governance, and type of dining services management together explain a portion of the variation in LSFB procurement scores among colleges and universities reporting on sustainability.*

Research Question 2: *What contextual, organizational, and strategic factors explain the variation we find among Real Food Challenge campaigns in progress toward movement goals?*

As discussed above, more or less favorable contextual factors matter, but their influence is mediated by the "strategic capacity" of movement actors—their ability to design and implement the most effective approaches given the context (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009). For example, while the presence of insider allies should be helpful in many cases, that effect may be mediated by level of opposition and the activists' tactical choices. Within organizations, the effects of framing and tactical choices also depend upon their alignment with the organizational context (Arthur 2008, 2011). As a result, I predicted that the effects of contextual and organizational variables would be mediated by tactical choices. I expected flexibility in the campaign's responses to changing circumstances to be associated with more rapid and more favorable outcomes.

HYPOTHESIS 2a: *The structure of student participation in campus decision-making and administrative openness to student initiatives influences the success of RFC campaigns. This effect is mediated by strategic choices.*

HYPOTHESIS 2b: *The presence (and participation) of faculty and staff allies positively influences the progress of RFC campaigns. This effect is mediated by the presence of significant opposition and by strategic choices of the campaign.*

HYPOTHESIS 2c: *Alignment between college/university mission and RFC frames, or adjustment of frames to more closely align with institutional mission and culture, positively influences outcomes.*

HYPOTHESIS 2d: *Greater campaign strategic capacity and greater flexibility and innovation in response to the target's responses is associated with greater progress.*

Research Question 3: *How do contextual and organizational factors associated with Land Grant University status influence the trajectory of a campaign that challenges conventional food production?*

Today's land grant colleges of agriculture (LGCAs) face a very diverse constituency with a wide range of conflicting interests (Middendorf and Busch 1997). LGCAs have responded to criticisms and new demands by expanding educational programs and dedicating extension staff to include sustainable production methods; some have gone further and created new institutes or centers wholly dedicated to alternatives to industrial agricultural production (Lyson 1998). However, largely most LGCAs still fall short of fully embracing sustainable agriculture. For example, most LGCA mission statements "do not reflect a genuine concern for opening minds or engaging in the agricultural debates about sustainability, soil erosion, pesticide use and misuse, animal treatment and animal rights" (Zimdahl 2003:114). In addition, while USDA provides some funding to LGCAs for extension and research in sustainable agriculture, public funding for agricultural science is still overwhelmingly biased toward conventional methods and biotechnology (Delonge, Miles, and Carlisle 2015). As a result, RFC goals may conflict or, at the least, not readily align with mission statements and research priorities at LGUs. RFC campaigns perceived as threatening conventional agribusiness may provoke strong opposition at LGUs.

HYPOTHESIS 3: *Land Grant University (LGU) status increases access to sustainable agriculture allies but also increases opposition, because the campaign is perceived as a threat to agribusiness stakeholders.*

2.4 Methods

This research project adopted a mixed methods approach to identify the contextual, organizational, and strategic variables that influence changes in commitment to Real Food on college and university campuses. A mixed methods approach can provide better results than a single approach by drawing on the strengths of both qualitative and qualitative methods (Creswell and Clark 2007). Quantitative studies offer greater opportunities to link specific conditions and outcomes when data are available for a relatively large number of institutions. However, with respect to trends and changes in local and sustainable food procurement on college campuses, the kinds of variables for which data are available are limited to very few contextual and organizational variables of interest. Most significant for the purposes of this study, to the author's knowledge there are no national databases tracking student activism and its outcomes. To understand Real Food Challenge campaigns and their impacts, a qualitative approach is required because there are no datasets available related to campaign activity.[17] Further, many campus-based campaigns generate limited public media or publicly available documents. As a result, interviews and ethnographic approaches are essential to studying strategic aspects of campus campaigns.

The first part of the study examines more than two hundred colleges and universities that self-report sustainability data to investigate contextual and organizational variables that predict higher levels of commitment to LSFB procurement. The second part of the study is limited to campuses where students are leading campaigns to increase those scores through a framework developed by the Real Food Challenge program. I used

[17] Through personal communication with RFC staff, we determined that their record keeping regarding roughly 100 ongoing Real Food campaigns was not systematic enough to make Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of a larger set of cases feasible.

qualitative methods to explore the effects of contextual, organizational and strategic choices of four campaigns on their outcomes.

2.4.1 Quantitative study

The research question for the quantitative portion of this project was: *What organizational and contextual factors predict level of commitment to local/sustainable food purchasing?* To answer this research question I assembled a dataset and built a statistical model to examine relationships using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. This part of the study tested hypothesis one. Table 2.1 describes the variables examined in this part of the study. Chapter three describes in detail the regression models used to test relationships among variables and the findings of the quantitative analyses.

Table 2.1: Variables and their measurement for the quantitative study.

	Variable Type	Measurement
Local & Sustainable Food and Beverage Commitment	Dependent Variable	STARS 0-4 score
Geographic Region	Independent - contextual	U.S. Census Bureau Regions and Divisions
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Food Hubs	Independent - contextual	Number of food hubs within 200 miles of campus
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Farmers Markets	Independent - contextual	Number of farmers markets within 50 miles of campus
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Farms Marketing Directly	Independent - contextual	Numbers of farms marketing directly to consumers and institutions (by region)
Land Grant University?	Independent – contextual/organizational	Dummy variable (LGU = 1; non LGU = 0)
Political Leadership - Governor	Independent - contextual	Dummy variable (Republican = 1; Democrat = 0)
Political Leadership - Legislature	Independent - contextual	Percent Republican
Participatory governance	Independent – contextual	Type of student representation on highest decision-making body
Dining Services Management	Independent - organizational	Self-operated or type of contractor
Financial resources	Independent - Control	Endowment size
Staffing Resources	Independent - control	STARS response (sustainability office and employees)
Type of Institution	Independent - Control	Dummy variables (Public =1; Private = 0)

2.4.2 Qualitative study

2.4.2.1 Research design

The second and third research questions, described above, guided the qualitative portion of this study: *What contextual, organizational and strategic factors explain the variation we find among Real Food Challenge campaigns in progress toward movement goals? How does Land Grant University status matter?* This portion of the study tested hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, and 3.

The design of this qualitative portion is a comparative multiple-case approach. A multiple-case design is appropriate for testing the effects of different kinds of conditions on the phenomenon of interest, in this case progress toward advancing RFC goals (Yin 2009). I used this approach to explore differences in contextual variables, including the university's culture and governance, key external commitments, and allies; organizational factors including mobilizing structures and dining services; and strategic factors including framing, strategic approach, and tactical flexibility and innovation. As discussed above, social movement scholars recognize that the interactions between contextual, organizational, and strategic variables are complex, and difficult to evaluate when limited by available datasets. A case study approach allows in-depth exploration of complex interactions between variables (Yin 2009). As Woodward (2009) concluded regarding the very limited understanding of the politics of trustee decision-making—just one of many variables that may matter for advancing LSFB purchasing at LGUs:

> [The] lack of understanding of the processes by which board policy decisions are arrived at points to a need for case studies, in-depth interviews at universities, and other forms of qualitative research that track information flows across interlocks or corporate and political affiliations in the decision-making process. (P. 129)

In other words, if scholars are to better understand decision-making among university presidents and boards of trustees, or the dynamics and outcomes of campus campaigns, we need more in-depth case studies. The qualitative portion of this dissertation was designed to contribute to fulfilling that need.

In a comparative, multi-case study it is important to limit, to the extent possible, the number of variables examined to facilitate comparison and reveal key

causal relationships. The focus of the comparative study was the relative importance of and interactions among several aspects of university context and organization, and campaign activity (see Table 2.2). As a result, I selected cases from regions similar with respect to regional food infrastructure and limited them to a single type of university (public, "R1," "flagship") to reduce the amount of variation between cases with respect to other contextual and organizational factors. I worked with RFC national and regional field staff to select four public university cases in the Southeast and Midwest (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: RFC Cases Selected for Qualitative Study

	Slow progress	Significant progress
Southeast	The University of Georgia	University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
Midwest	The Ohio State University	University of Pittsburgh

The theoretical model described in Figure 2.1 informed the overall design of the dissertation, including the comparative case study of Real Food Challenge campaigns. However, I used an open-ended, grounded approach to data collection and analysis to reflect the complexity of social movement micro-dynamics and allow for the emergence of unanticipated variables of interest. While tighter designs often make sense for areas of research with a large body of well-developed theory, which is the case for social movement theory, looser designs are helpful for areas of inquiry that are understudied, and campus campaigns supported by federated SMOs fall into that category (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 1994).

I collected several forms of qualitative data to develop a comprehensive history of Real Food campaigns at each of the four universities selected. The largest source of data was semi-structured interviews with student organizers, their allies, university administrators, and RFC support staff working with them. I also reviewed earned media, social media posts, and web sites associated with the campaigns for relevant data. Building a description of social movement activity empirically, from the micro-level up, with interviews and ethnographic techniques, can help overcome the structural bias of social movement theory's dominant paradigm and capture elements such as emotion, commitment, and interactions among movement actors that may be as important as more visible contextual and organizational elements (Jasper 2004, 2010; Bevington and Dixon 2005).

Table 2.3: Variables and their measurement for the qualitative study.

	Variable Type	**Measurement**
Geographic Region	Control variable	Cases were limited to two agricultural regions, each with one LGU and one non-LGU
University Type	Control variable	Public (versus private/independent) Research 1 institution "Flagship" university
Political environment	Independent - contextual	Party control of state executive and legislative branches Political influence on university decision-making
LGU Status	Independent - contextual	Self-explanatory
Academic Programs & Allies	Independent – contextual	Academic programs and research relating to food systems Faculty & staff willing to support campaign
Campus culture	Independent - contextual	University mission Political leaning of student body Prevalence of student activism
Mobilizing Structures	Independent - Organizational	Student groups and networks Academic networks

Table 2.3 (continued)

	Variable Type	Measurement
Openness to student initiatives	Independent – contextual	Student representation on decision-making bodies Administrative response to student communications Formal university statements
Frame alignment	Independent - strategic	Alignment between campaign frames and university mission and culture
Tactical Flexibility	Independent - strategic	Campaign responses to target actions; diversity of tactical repertoire
Strategic Capacity	Independent - strategic	Adaptation in response to contextual opportunities and constraints and target response
RFC Campaign Progress	Dependent Variable	Significant progress = signatory achieved (within 3 yrs) Slow progress = 3+ years effort with no clear commitment to progress by administration

2.4.2.2 Data collection and analysis

I completed 55 interviews across the four universities in the study. Through the Institutional Review Board process, I developed an informed consent document, shared with all potential interviewees that detailed the steps I would take to protect anonymity. All audio files, transcripts, interview notes, and field notes were identified by code name only. A single spreadsheet links interviewee names and code names and that file, along with all interview data, was stored on a password-protected computer. Table 2.3 presents the numbers of different types of interviewees at the four universities.

Table 2.4: Record of Qualitative Study Interviewees.

Affiliation	Administrators and non-academic staff *	Faculty and academic administration**	Students	Community members***
Pitt	3	1	6	0
OSU	1	6	5	1
UNC	1	2	4	1
UGA	2	7	8	3
Real Food Challenge	4****			

*Includes Office of the President/Chancellor, Office of the Provost, Office of Student Life, Campus Operations, Student Services, and Dining Services (including contractors)
**Includes faculty members, Department Chairpersons, and Academic Deans
***Includes staff persons and board members with non profit organizations working on in food system reform initiatives within the state or region where the university is located
****Includes national staff members and regional/field organizers

The unevenness in the distribution of interviewee by type reflects a number of logistical challenges. At the University of Pittsburgh, I was not able to interview representatives of the farming community because Pitt dining services representatives were not willing to share information about specific farms with whom they contract. At Ohio State and UGA, none of the administrative leadership team familiar with the Real Food campaign agreed to participate in an interview.[18] At UGA, following a great deal of persistence, I was referred to someone in student affairs but this individual had had no direct contact with Real Food students.

The difference in the total number of interviewees across campuses reflects the availability of interviewees, the availability of alternative sources of information about the RFC campaigns, and an iterative process in which some interviewees made claims I

[18] My efforts to reach administrative staff at OSU and UGA who had held meetings with RFC students included emails with multiple follow up reminders, phone calls to their assistants, and finding them and/or their assistants in person and introducing myself, following up with further calls and emails.

felt I needed to compare by talking with others. Because the student campaigns at Pitt and UNC had already won the Real Food Commitment before I began this study, some of the students who had been directly involved had graduated and were therefore more difficult to track down. In addition, because Pitt and UNC did sign the Commitment, for these cases I was able to find articles and press materials stating the university's (public) views regarding the campaign. I interviewed more individuals at OSU and UGA, where the campaigns did not win the RFC Commitment, both because it was more difficult to find individuals with direct knowledge of the administration's position, and because there was greater disagreement among interviewees about important aspects of the campaigns. The greatest number of interviewees at UGA reflects both a convenience bias, as I was able to complete several field visits to UGA, and the challenges of uncovering key variables in this case. Both OSU and UGA student groups faced a great deal of hurdles in their RF campaigns, but there is a great deal more written documentation available for the OSU case, due to earned media by the student group and formal, written responses by the administration. At UGA, students were less successful earning media coverage and never received a formal response from the president's office regarding their petition. As a result, I interviewed significantly more faculty members and students at UGA in order to build as complete a picture as possible of the campaign's experience.

Most of the interviews were digitally recorded, with the interviewees' permission. I personally transcribed the interviews to ensure anonymity. For several interviews I chose not to record either for logistical reasons (locations of the interview—ambient noise) or out of concern than recording would limit the openness of an interviewee who had expressed concerns about anonymity. For these interviews I took detailed notes by

hand that I later transcribed. One digital recording was unintelligible due to ambient noise but I had anticipated that possibility and recorded highly detailed notes.

I used the software program Quirkos to code and analyze interview data. As in the structure of the interviews I conducted, the codes or themes I created to organize the data reflect a synthesis of my hypotheses, theme frequency, and the relative emphasis that interviewees gave to factors that influenced the campaigns. The results are discussed in chapters four and five. Appendix A provides tables detailing the codes used to sort interview data and their frequency by university and by social location (administrator/staff, faculty, student, community member, RFC staff).

CHAPTER 3:

WHO'S LEADING? EXPLAINING VARIATION IN LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND BEVERAGE PROCUREMENT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES IN THE U.S.

Statements about local foods and sustainability have become a new norm on campus dining web sites and even on dining hall signage, where some provide colorful maps showing the farm origins of some of the produce and animal products prepared by college chefs for student diners. College and university attention to sustainability goals in food and beverage purchasing have grown rapidly in the past decade. As described in chapter one, more than 600 four-year U.S. colleges and universities are members of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE),[19] and more than 250 use the Real Food Calculator to identify ways to increase the use of local and sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) products in their dining halls.[20] But while some campuses have made local and sustainable food procurement an important component of their sustainability work, national reporting reveals significant variation, from no attention at all at some schools to some commitments that exceed the Real Food Challenge target of 20 percent.[21] What factors explain the differences we see in local and sustainable food and beverage sourcing on college campuses? This chapter presents the

[19] As of May 1, 2018, 601 institutions of higher education were members of AASHE. An up-to-date list may be found here: https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/participants-and-reports/.
[20] As of May 1, 2018, 257 institutions of higher education were using the Real Food Calculator to evaluate sourcing for more than 388 million dollars of food and beverage purchasing. A current tally may be accessed here: http://calculator.realfoodchallenge.org/.
[21] As indicated in Table 3.2, below, Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage scores in the database of institutions with current STARS reports vary from the lowest possible score (0) to the highest possible (4).

results of a quantitative analysis of variation in LSFB scores as reported through AASHE's STARS tool.

As discussed in chapters one and two, understanding patterns of variation in LSFB scores nationally may reveal contextual or organizational factors that either support or impede efforts to advance Real Food on college campuses. The primary focus of this quantitative analysis was the influence of college and university *geographic context* on commitment to local and sustainable food procurement. This chapter addresses the dissertation's first research question: *What contextual factors help explain variation in level of commitment to local/sustainable food purchasing among colleges and universities in the U.S.?* The results reveal that geographic region plays a modest role, and that the reasons for the advantage shared by two geographic regions—the Northeast and the Pacific Coast--are likely multi-faceted and complex.

The quantitative analysis reported in this chapter tests three hypotheses: one, LSFB purchasing will vary by geographic region; two, variation in LSFB scores is explained, in part, by farm-to-institution infrastructure making LSFB purchasing easier; and three, that political context also helps explain geographic variation in LSFB scores. I used data available through the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) created by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)[22] and other sources to explore the effects of geographic region, farm-to-institution infrastructure, and political context on local/sustainable food and beverage procurement scores (see Table 3.1). The chapter concludes with a discussion of

[22] For more information about STARS: https://stars.aashe.org/pages/about/stars-overview.html. Data used in the analysis presented here were downloaded from current STARS reports only (expired reports were excluded), submitted between January 2014 and September 2016.

the results of the statistical models, limitations of the study, and ways in which this quantitative analysis relates to the design of the qualitative portion of the dissertation.

3.1 Factors Likely to Influence LSFB Scores on U.S. College Campuses

Chapter one traces the origins of the recent growth in direct-to-consumer and sustainably sourced food and beverage purchasing in the U.S. Chapter two provided the rationale for choosing geographic location, farm-to-institution infrastructure, and political context as key independent variables for this quantitative, national analysis, with university type (public or independent) as a control variable. Chapter two also included discussion of four additional variables that are not included in the model presented here as a result of limitations in the database and the results of a pilot study. I originally included Land Grant University (LGU) status as a second variable measuring university type. The pilot study revealed no association between LGU status and LSFB score. Only 22 of the 207 institutions in the database are LGUs and those institutions have LSFB scores ranging widely, from 0 to 1.28. The second variable dropped from the model was shared governance, which STARS reports on a 0-3 scale. More than half of the 207 institutions gave themselves 3.0 points out of the possible 3.0, calling into question the validity of the measure, as reported, as a proxy for shared governance.[23] The third variable eliminated from the final statistical model was dining operations management—whether dining services were self-operated or, if not, which corporation had been contracted to manage dining services. While support from dining services staff certainly

[23] This measure is PA-3 (Planning & Administration): Governance, in STARS version 2.0. The score is intended to be a measure of shared governance, or participation of students, faculty, and staff in governance decisions at the institution (See AASHE 2018e for access to the STARS technical manual).

matters for LSFB scores, the pilot study as well as anecdotal evidence and preliminary data from the qualitative portion of this dissertation showed that the specific *contractor* selected did not predict orientation toward LSFB initiatives. Rather, dining services staff seem to vary in their experience and orientation toward LSFB purchasing within each of the major contracting firms, as well as within schools with self-operated facilities.[24] Finally, chapter two discussed the importance of *resources* to social movements and to some campus sustainability initiatives. Endowment size and sustainability staffing were included as control variables in the pilot study's statistical models and they did not have any relationship to LSFB scores. As a result, these measurements for campus resources were not included in the final statistical models presented in this chapter.

Table 3.1 describes the remaining variables of interest that were examined in the investigation of variation in Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage (LSFB) presented in this chapter.

[24] The pilot study statistical model did not find statistically significant associations between dining services management and LSFB scores. Qualitative evidence of variation within different types of dining services management included the significant changes at University of Pittsburgh, which contracts with Sodexo, and University of Georgia, which is self-operating, between two consecutive dining services directors (people unreceptive to LSFB initiatives succeeded by individuals who were much more responsive). Further, at UNC dining services staff members throughout two waves of LSFB student activism were highly supportive despite their employment with ARAMARK, a major vendor typically considered by Real Food activists to be less responsive to LSFB initiatives than Sodexo.

Table 3.1: Variables, Measurement, and Data Sources for Quantitative Study.

	Variable Type	**Measurement**	**Data source**
Local & Sustainable Food and Beverage Commitment	Dependent Variable	STARS 0-4 score	STARS database
Geographic Region	Independent - contextual	Dummy variables by region and by division	U.S. Census Bureau Regions and Divisions
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Food Hubs	Independent - contextual	Number of food hubs within 200 miles of campus	USDA Food Hub Directory
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Farmers Markets	Independent - contextual	Number of farmers markets within 50 miles of campus	USDA Local Food Directory
Farm-to-Institution Infrastructure: Farms Marketing Directly	Independent - contextual	Numbers of farms marketing directly to consumers and institutions (by region)	USDA Local Food Marketing Practices Survey (2015)
Political Leadership - Governor	Independent - contextual	Dummy variables (Republican = 1; Democrat = 0)*	Council of State Governments (2015)
Political Leadership - Legislature	Independent - contextual	Percent Republican	Council of State Governments (2015)
Type of Institution	Independent - Control	Dummy variables (Public =1; Private = 0)	STARS database

*Alaska's governor in 2015 was an independent but there were no Alaska schools in the database so this anomaly did not affect coding.

I adjusted the original hypothesis about factors associated with national variation in LSFB scores described in chapter two to reflect the findings in the dataset regarding shared governance, LGU status, and dining operations described above. The resulting hypothesis was as follows: *LSFB scores will vary by geographic region. Political context and regional food infrastructure together explain a portion of the geographic variation in LSFB procurement scores among colleges and universities reporting on sustainability.*

To summarize that rationale for this hypothesis (see chapter two for additional discussion), colleges and universities vary considerably in their access to regional infrastructure supporting direct farm-to-institution linkages. This infrastructure, which includes farms producing for direct sale to institutions as well as "food hub" facilities that can aggregate, store, process, and distribute food from small producers, has been identified as a significant barrier to expanding local sourcing and sourcing from certified-sustainable producers (Vogt and Kaiser 2008; Bloom and Hinrichs 2010; Gaskin et al. 2013). As a result, colleges and universities in regions with less developed infrastructure for direct farm-to-institution sales may encounter greater opposition from decision-makers or from dining services management, out of concern that expanding local and sustainable procurement is not feasible. In addition, dining services directors who embrace advancing LSFB procurement but are in areas with more limited alternative infrastructure may find they are not able to increase their institution's LSFB score at the same rate as institutions in regions with a more favorable agricultural context.

Because farm-to-institution infrastructure varies regionally,[25] I expected to find regional variation in LSFB purchasing scores. However, anecdotal evidence from colleges and universities, collected at AASHE conferences and through the STARS database, has suggested that some institutions are able to increase LSFB scores using conventional suppliers. In addition, the USDA databases for food hubs and farmers markets rely on self-reporting and may miss elements of the agricultural context that support community-based institutional procurement. Thus, I examined the influence of geographic region alone, as well as its interactions with farm-to-institution measures, in

[25] See, for example, this national food hub map created by the National Good Food Network: http://ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs/food-hubs/

case available measures of direct marketing infrastructure do not fully capture this variable. In addition to standard forms of geographic region per the U.S. Census, I also examined regions in which USDA analyses have revealed the highest levels (by value) of direct-to-consumer sales, as a proxy for favorable farm-to-university context (Low and Vogel 2011).

In addition to agricultural factors that vary by region, I also examined the influence of political context. As discussed in chapter two, sustainability initiatives generally and sustainable agriculture specifically are politicized topics in many states. Political context and a college or university's relationships with political leaders and with donors may influence an institution's willingness to openly pursue higher LSFB scores. A full investigation of the influences of donor relationships is beyond the scope of this study, but evidence from the qualitative portion of this dissertation suggests that donor as well as political preferences have influenced some forms of local and sustainable food commitments at public universities (see chapter five).

3.2 Analysis of Factors Predicting Variation in LSFB Procurement on U.S. College Campuses

3.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 3.2 provides descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables.

Table 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Selected Variables for 207 Colleges and Universities That Participate in STARS[1]

Variable	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Local/sustainable food score (0-4 scale)[1]	0.79	0.64	0.00	4.00
Region - South	0.28	0.45	0.00	1.00
Region - Northeast	0.31	0.46	0.00	1.00
Region - Midwest	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00
Region - Pacific	0.12	0.32	0.00	1.00
Food Hubs[2]	14.09	9.22	0.00	33.00
Farmers Markets[3]	89.82	82.81	5	368
Farms That Market Directly[4]	27325.17	5042.85	14563	32516
Republican Governor?	0.63	0.48	0	1
Legislature (percent R)	0.51	0.15	0.14	0.81
Public Institution?	0.59	0.49	0	1

[1] Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Reporting System (STARS) managed by AASHE. STARS data downloaded on July 1, 2017. For institutions that had more than one active report available using STARS 2.0, I use the more recent LSFB score. For schools with an active 2.0 report and an active 2.1 report I use the score in the 2.0 report, as most institutions had not yet reported using the 2.1 version. For a small number of institutions with active 2.1 reports but without an active 2.0 report, I adjust the 2.1 LSFB score to align with 2.0 reporting. With version 2.1 of STARS, the LSFB score changes from a 0-4 scale to a 0-6 scale. For these cases, I use the reported percentage of total dining services food and beverage expenditures on products that meet the criteria (0-100) and adjust it using the STARS 2.0 calculation tool (multiple by 0.053) to create a score comparable to the 2.0 0-4 scales.

[2] USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Directories: Food Hub Directory, calculated at distance of 200 miles from institution zip code on August 8, 2017 (https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs).

[3] USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Local Food Directories: National Farmers Market Directory, calculated at distance of 50 miles from institution zip code on August 22, 2017 (https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets).

[4] USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey. Retrieved on April 17, 2018 (https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/results/66D052A2-D49D-3311-ADBB-92F405AAF0AC#B4BE2397-AAE1-34FD-8748-C33448A84A09).

Variation in the dependent variable, local and sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) score, was great, ranging from the lowest (0) to the highest possible (4). The mean score of .79 out of a possible 4 points means that the average institution participating in STARS reported that about 15 percent of the foods and beverages

purchased by its dining services qualified as either local and community-based or sustainable, following the criteria set out in the STARS technical guide.[26]

The mean for the regional variable shows the percentage of institutions located in that region. For the four regions listed, the largest percent of institutions were located in the Northeast, followed by the South, the Midwest, and the Pacific.

The means and standard deviation for food hubs and farmers markets revealed a high degree of variability in these indicators of farm-to-institution infrastructure. The third variable associated with farm-to-institution infrastructure, number of farms that engaged in direct to consumer or direct to institution marketing, showed less variability. I used regional values for the number of farms marketing directly, which likely accounts for the more limited degree of variability in this measure.

With respect to political variables the mean for legislatures indicated that if all the state legislatures were pooled, the numbers of democratic and republican legislators would be almost evenly split. However, the range and standard deviation show that some colleges and universities were located in states with strongly republican-dominated legislatures (81percent); some were located in strongly democratic-dominated legislatures (85 percent); and most were in states that were more moderately democratic or republican-controlled. Sixty-three percent of reporting schools were located in states with republican governors (with the remaining 37 percent in states with democratic governors).

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[26] A detailed description of STARS 2.0 criteria for local, sustainable food and beverage procurement may be downloaded here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzY7o-k46NLgclZoX0F2ajZ1YWs/view. STARS 2.1 criteria for food and beverage procurement added an additional component—"part 2." For colleges and universities that did not have a valid STARS 2.0 report, I modified their 2.1 LSFB scores to be consistent with 2.0 scores. I multiplied their part 1 number (percentage local/community or third-party certified) by .053 to get their calculated score (consistent with 2.0 scores).

3.2.2 Statistical models

I used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to analyze four models. The first model evaluates the effects of state political leadership; the second includes three variables that measure different aspects of farm-to-institution infrastructure; the third examines all independent variables; and the fourth includes only those variables with statistically significant effects.

The first model tested the relationship between local & sustainable food and beverage (LSFB) scores and political environments. I used OLS regression to examine the effects of one dichotomous variable, political affiliation of the governor, and one continuous variable, the proportion of republicans in the state legislature, on the LSFB score. The second model tested the relationship between agricultural infrastructure and LSFB score using three measures: the number of food hubs within 200 miles of campus, the number of farmers markets within 50 miles, and a regional measure of the number of farms marketing directly to consumers and institutions. The third model tested the main effects of all independent variables as well as the control variable.

The fourth model includes the key independent variable predicting LSFB scores: location in the Northeast or Pacific coast, with the control variable included. This model represented the best prediction of LSFB score for all independent variables, and interactions between them, that were examined in this study.

3.2.3 Results

The results of this study supported the hypothesis that LSFB scores would vary by geographic region. While one of the three farm-to-institution infrastructure measures, numbers of farmers markets within 50 miles, yielded a positive, statistically significant

result, it was very, very small. Statistical analysis also revealed a weak association with political context. The model that best explains variation included geographic region alone, suggesting that this regional variation is not explained fully by political context and farm-to-institution infrastructure.

Table 3.3 OLS Models Predicting Local & Sustainable Food & Beverage Procurement Scores for U.S. Colleges and Universities (N=207)

	Model 1 Agricultural Context	**Model 2 Political Context** (with control)	**Model 3 Main effects** (all variables + control)	**Model 4 Significant effects** (with control)
Intercept	.912 (.278)	1.158 (.153)	.298 (.457)	.694 (.087)
Region – South			.035 (.239)	
Region – Northeast			.624* (.265)	.366**** (.101)
Region – Midwest			.029 (.237)	
Region – Pacific			.463 (.256)	.408*** (.137)
Food Hubs	.001		-.013 (.008)	
Farmers markets	.001**		.001 (.001)	
Farms Directly Marketing	.000 (000)		.000 (.000)	
Governor (R)		-.184* (.098)	-.089 (.110)	
Legislature (percent R)		-.267 (.318)	.856 (.443)	
Public Institution?		-.199** (.092)	-.134 (.096)	-.114 (.093)
R-Square	.032	.056	.134	.106
Adjusted *R-square*	.017	.042	.070	.093

Significance: *<.10, **<.05, ***<.01, ****<.001)
Unstandardized beta coefficients (standard errors)

Hypothesis #1: LSFB scores will vary by geographic region.

A regression model that includes all regions (South, Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific) yielded just one statistically significant result when allowing a confidence interval of 90 percent: presence in the Northeast was associated with an increase in LSFB score of .366 ($p<.10$) (model not shown). However, running regressions by regions individually uncovered two regions, Pacific and Northeast, with higher LSFB scores at much higher confidence intervals (Model 4). Colleges and universities located in the Pacific region (California, Oregon, Washington) on average scored .408 higher on the 0-4 LSFB scale ($p<.01$), a 10% advantage. Schools located in the Northeast region (Mid-Atlantic and New England) on average scored .366 higher ($p<.001$), a 9% advantage. This result was consistent with regional differences in the total sales of directly marketed products, which are highest in Pacific Coast states and in the Northeast (Low and Vogel 2011).

Hypothesis #2: Presence of a more robust farm-to-institution infrastructure will be associated with higher LSFB scores.

The third model presented in Table 3.3 tests the effects of three measures associated with farm-to-infrastructure supply chains: the number of farms engaged regionally in direct to consumer sales; the number of food hubs within 200 miles of the campus; and the number of farmers markets within 50 miles of campus. The measures were selected to represent farm-to-infrastructure context at three different scales of analysis. The model revealed a very, very weak, positive association between farmers markets and LSFB scores—too weak to be meaningful. I also tested interaction effects between pairs of the three variables, which did not produce any meaningful results.

Hypothesis #3: Political context explains part of the geographic variation in LSFB scores.

I tested the effects of political context using governor political party, percent republican (or democrat) representation in the state legislation, and an interaction variable including both variables. The interaction variable produced a statistically significant result in the opposite direction than expected (higher LSFB scores were associated with a more conservative context). However, a test for collinearity produced a mean VIF of 10.47, invalidating the interaction result. Model 1 included both political variables and the control variable and found a weak association between the governor's political party and LSFB score. Having a Republican governor was associated with a drop of .184 in LSFB score or 4.6 percent ($p<.10$). Percent republican or democratic representation in the state legislature was not associated with a statistically significant difference in score.

3.2.4 Discussion of statistical results

The results of this statistical investigation of LSFB scores suggests that colleges and universities on the Pacific coast and in the Northeast are more likely to devote a higher proportion of their food and beverage purchasing to local, community-based products and/or products that are third-party certified as sustainable, as compared to schools in other regions. However, the best-fit model only explains about nine percent of the variation, which indicates that variables associated with geographic region are just one of many factors that influence these scores.

While the two regions associated with higher scores have tended to lean strongly democratic in state politics, the two political variables tested had much less explanatory power than region on its own. This suggests that political context is only a small part of the reason why those regions tend to have higher scores. Further, while I expected the

farm-to-institution infrastructure to explain part of the regional variation, with the exception of a slight benefit associated with the number of farmers markets, the three measures used in the model did not help explain why the Pacific or the Northeast tended to have higher scores. Why might that be the case?

Several factors may explain why this quantitative investigation was only able to identify one variable with meaningful statistical significance (geographic region). First, the flexibility in the LSFB score metric and the relatively low proportion of purchasing that meets the criteria at most institutions (the mean for schools in this study was a score of .79 out of 4) means that agricultural context may not serve as a significant constraint—at least, not yet. In other words, because most institutions are still in an early phase of exploring LSFB purchasing and pursuing the "low hanging fruit," they may not have yet butted up against regional limitations in food and beverage production that would constrain modest increases in their scores. In response to significant demand for locally grown and certified sustainable food at institutions, many conventional distributors have begun offering local and organic options. Thus, while some schools certainly have begun exploring relationships with food hubs or even directly with farms, many others are able to increase their LSFB score, at least to a point, through conventional supply chains alone. For example, FreshPoint, one of the largest distributors of produce to institutions in the U.S., now offers clients the opportunity to customize sourcing based upon their own definition of "local" as well as a growing range of organic products (FreshPoint 2018).

Another factor that may help explain the difficulty of identifying sources of geographical variability is the way in which available data are aggregated by region. The

USDA data available by region for number of farms that market directly categorizes regions differently than the Pacific Coast and Northeast groupings associated with higher scores. A 2011 USDA study reporting the value of direct and intermediated marketing of local foods in the U.S. had results consistent with this study: the West Coast and Northeast had the highest sales by value (Low and Vogel 2011). However, USDA raw data provides a different regional categorization.[27] Thus, there may be a direct marketing benefit supporting higher scores in those two regions that are simply difficult to demonstrate using available datasets.

Second, with respect to political context, while sustainability in general often carries "progressive" connotations, locally based purchasing can be framed in terms of economic development, distancing this objective from initiatives perceived to be associated with environment and sustainability goals (see, for example, Gaskin 2011). In recent years, all state departments of agriculture have developed marketing programs promoting "local" products that seek to support economic development in their rural farming communities (Onken and Bernard 2010). While the STARS criteria have become more restrictive in their definition of "local and community-based" in version 2.1, version 2.0, the point or reference for the dataset used for this study, still defined that category broadly as products originating within 250 miles of campus, excluding those originating from Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Thus, while certification programs qualifying foods and beverages as "sustainable," such as organic or produced with fair

[27] USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service uses the following designations for regions: Region 1 (AZ CA CO HI NV NM UT); Region 2 (CT DE ME MD MA NH NJ NY PA RI VY); Region 3 (AK ID MT OR WA WY); Region 4 (IA KS MN MO NE ND SD); Region 5 (AL AR LA MS OK TX); Region 6 (FL GA KY NC SC TN VA WV); and Region 7 (IL IN MI OH WI). Retrieved on April 17, 2018 (https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/results/66D052A2-D49D-3311-ADBB-92F405AAF0AC#B4BE2397-AAE1-34FD-8748-C33448A84A09).

labor standards tend to be viewed as "progressive," colleges and universities may also frame purchasing that qualifies as locally produced in alignment with state-sponsored "buy local" programs, which have been established in every state, regardless of political context.

Third, the complexity of factors that influence progress toward advancing campus sustainability suggests that many contextual and organizational factors play a significant role in institutional change, and many of these variables are not well suited to quantitative comparison. The ways in which administrators, staff, faculty, and students advance changes in food and beverage purchasing, the kinds of roadblocks they encounter, and the pace and degree of progress they achieve vary significantly from campus to campus (Barlett and Chase 2004, 2013; Barlett 2011; Brinkhurst et al. 2011). STARS or other reporting systems mostly detail "what" has been accomplished, not "how." Problems with STARS self-reported data of 'shared governance,' described above, provide one case in point of the limitations of decision-making measures in STARS. Further, STARS reports do not capture other factors that may be important for understanding organizational change, including: the experience and openness of the dining services director to considering product shifts; relationships between staff in sustainability and staff in dining services; and presence and persuasiveness of faculty and student advocates--all of which may significantly influence the LSFB score. Because these variables are not tracked systematically, they cannot be considered in a national, quantitative analysis of LSFB purchasing trends.

Finally, problems with the STARS dataset also may limit the strength of the statistical models. While STARS Technical Manuals provide clear and detailed guidance

on the determination of LSFB scores, colleges and universities complete all the data collection and analysis and self-report the results in STARS reports. All reports are publicly available on the AASHE web site and other schools may challenge a score if they find something that appears suspect. However, there has not been, as yet, any independent auditing process for checking the validity of self-reported scoring in the STARS database.

As described in chapter two, Real Food Challenge staff have been closely involved in the process of refining the LSFB purchasing credit in STARS, and the STARS 2.1 Technical Manual specifically refers to the RFC Calculator tool for analyzing food and beverage purchasing and generating a valid LSFB score. Most of the LSFB scores used in this analysis were based on STARS 2.0, as most schools had not yet submitted 2.1 reports when the dataset was compiled. Tables 3.4 and 3.5, below, provide a basis for comparing top performing schools based on these two related but separately administered measures of LSFB purchasing levels: STARS and the Real Food Calculator. As measured by STARS scores, 15 of the top 20 institutions are in the two regions with a statistically significant advantage: the Northeast and the Pacific Coast. Using schools reporting through the Real Food Calculator tool, a list of all schools reaching 20 percent or higher also reveals an advantage, albeit a weaker one, for those two regions, which together comprise half of the 24 schools meeting that benchmark.

Table 3.4 Top Twenty Scoring Institutions with Respect to Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage Purchasing

Name of Institution	**Region**	**State**	**LSFB Score***	**STARS level****
Sterling College	Northeast	Vermont	4.00	Gold
Columbia University	Northeast	New York	3.19	Gold
University of North Texas	South	Texas	3.00	Silver
University of Washington, Seattle	Pacific	Washington	2.79	Gold
Central Carolina Community College	South	North Carolina	2.53	Silver
Carnegie Mellon University	Northeast	Pennsylvania	2.51	Silver
California State University, Fullerton	Pacific	California	2.20	Silver
Villanova University	Northeast	Pennsylvania	2.09	Silver
Saint Mary's College of California	Pacific	California	2.08	Silver
University of Buffalo	Northeast	New York	1.97	Gold
Wartburg College	Midwest	Iowa	1.96	Gold
Denison University	Midwest	Ohio	1.91	Gold
St. Joseph's College	Northeast	Maine	1.89	Silver
University of California, Santa Cruz	Pacific	California	1.88	Gold
St. John's University	Northeast	New York	1.87	Gold
Chatham University	Northeast	Pennsylvania	1.86	Gold
Western Michigan University	Midwest	Michigan	1.80	Gold
University of Massachusetts, Lowell	Northeast	Massachusetts	1.76	Gold
Guilford College	South	North Carolina	1.68	Silver
University at Albany	Northeast	New York	1.62	Gold

*Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Reporting System (STARS) managed by AASHE. STARS data downloaded on July 1, 2017.
**STARS ranks reporting institutions with the following designations: reporter (lowest), bronze, silver, gold, platinum (highest).

Table 3.5 Institutions Using the Real Food Challenge Calculator Tool with Scores of 20 Percent or Higher

Name of Institution	**Region**	**State**	**Calculator Score***	**RFC Signatory?**
Sterling College	Northeast	Vermont	65	yes
Antioch College	Midwest	Ohio	60	yes
The New School	Northeast	New York	33	no
Evergreen College	Pacific	Washington	31	yes
University of Utah	West	Utah	31	yes
St. Olaf College	Midwest	Minnesota	30	no
Warren Wilson	South	North Carolina	30	yes
College of the Atlantic	Northeast	Maine	29	yes
University of California - Davis	Pacific	California	29	yes (system)
University of California - Berkeley	Pacific	California	27	yes (system)
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill	South	North Carolina	27	yes
Carlton College	Midwest	Minnesota	27	no
Wesleyan University	Northeast	Connecticut	26	yes
Northland College	Midwest	Wisconsin	26	no
Johns Hopkins University	Northeast	Maryland	24	yes
Occidental	Pacific	California	24	yes
Oberlin College	Midwest	Ohio	23	yes
Berea College	South	Kentucky	23	no
Brown University	Northeast	Rhode Island	23	no
University of Vermont	Northeast	Vermont	22	yes
University of Montana - Missoula	West	Montana	22	yes
Bard College	Northeast	New York	22	yes
Hamilton College	Northeast	New York	20	no
Cabrillo College	Pacific	California	20	no

*Most recent score, reported as percentage of total food and beverage purchasing meeting RFC Calculator standards for either Real Food A or B. from list of 124 institutions for which data were available. Current as of June 2, 2017. Data provided by Real Food Challenge.

The RFC dataset is smaller (N=125) than the STARS dataset (N=207), and schools may drop out of or take a year off from reporting through either system for a variety of reasons, making comparison difficult. As more colleges and universities report through the RFC Calculator and/or through STARS 2.1, whose LSFB score is based upon

the calculator, representation and score validity may improve and provide opportunities to uncover more powerful explanations for variation among institutions.

3.3 Conclusions and Implications for Understanding Changes in Campus Commitment to LSFB Procurement

The results of this national, quantitative survey support the hypothesis that geographic context provides an advantage for colleges and universities in the Pacific Coast and Northeast region. At the same time, it also reveals that this advantage falls short of providing a complete explanation of differences in local and sustainable food and beverage procurement across college campuses in the United States. As described above, this study suggests that attention to this form of campus sustainability is higher in Northeastern and Pacific Coast states but that this regional variable explains only about nine percent of the variation. Analyses of political and agricultural variables that might help explain this regional advantage were suggestive but inconclusive. The weakness of the statistical model is likely in part a function of the reality that institutions have multiple supply chain options available to them that can boost their LSFB scores. Limitations in available datasets meant that I was able to represent only a fraction of the diverse range of variables influencing regional advantage in the model.

Case study research (Barlett and Chase 2004, 2013; Brinkurst et al. 2011) and anecdotal evidence from AASHE conferences reveal a very wide variety of commitments and priorities among schools that choose to participate in the STARS ranking system. A quantitative model can show regional variation but cannot explain why administrators at a school located in a favorable geographic context may choose not to invest in local and sustainable food procurement at all, or why another, in a more challenging agricultural

context, may invest a great deal of resources to increase the LSFB score. Further, the processes by which staff, faculty, administrators, and students advocate and advance LSFB purchasing on college campuses are highly complex and not well suited to quantitative analysis. A quantitative approach to evaluate variation in scores cannot reveal process characteristics that might help institutions interested in taking steps to increase their LSFB scores.

It may be that a more sophisticated proxy for farm-to-institution infrastructure—one that integrates participation within the conventional supply chain as well as a number of growing direct-marketing mechanisms—would reveal a stronger association between this contextual variable and LSFB scores. While technically possible to fashion, such a proxy would be difficult to assemble because it would require an analysis both of desired foods and beverages (meeting STARS criteria) produced within 250 miles of each campus along with the supply chains that influence the ease with which dining services can access them. The latter is mediated by the policies of regional distributors as well as emerging farm-to-institution infrastructure.

The results presented in this chapter support the selection of a mixed methods approach for investigating how and why colleges and universities have been making changes on campus with respect to food and beverage procurement. This quantitative analysis, along with published case studies and those available through AASHE conferences and resources, suggest that the factors influencing greater commitment to LSFB procurement at colleges and universities are highly varied and complex. The qualitative case study comparison and analysis that follows in chapters four and five

helps explain why the contextual variables examined only explain a small portion of the variation we see in LSFB advances.

Chapters four and five introduce and explain the role of an additional variable—student activism—in advancing LSFB initiatives on campus. The micro-scale, qualitative portion of this dissertation identified ways in which the variables explored in this quantitative analysis may be mediated by other factors. For example, the political context (measured by party affiliation in state government) of two of the cases examined in the qualitative study, UNC and UGA, are quite similar, and yet their influence on LSFB initiatives and activism at the two universities was very different. The comparative analysis of campaigns at four universities revealed a number of contextual, organizational, and strategic factors that help explain how and why some student campaigns have been able to advance LSFB purchasing further than others.

CHAPTER 4

REAL FOOD CHALLENGE CAMPAIGNS: FOUR CASES

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative portion of the dissertation: the stories of Real Food Challenge student-led campaigns at University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), the Ohio State University (OSU), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), and the University of Georgia (UGA). These accounts represent the synthesis of interview data from 55 participants, along with supporting information from university documents and media when available. The basis for the selection of these universities is described in chapter two, which also details the process used to select interviewees, the composition of interviewees at each university, and agreed upon conditions of anonymity. In this chapter I use footnotes to identify university and participant number for direct quotes; I do not cite synthesized references or those not directly quoted in order to maintain anonymity to the greatest degree possible. All direct quotes were pre-approved for inclusion by the interviewee.

The chapter that follows provides detailed accounts of each campaign, including a brief summary of reasons participants provided for the degree of progress made by the Real Food campus groups. Chapter five then provides a detailed *analysis* of the findings presented in this chapter. It provides additional detail regarding relevant variables, explores differences between the campaigns in depth, and presents my arguments for the most important variables that explain differences between campaigns and their outcomes.

As discussed in chapter two, the cases were selected to be as similar as possible, given the population of campuses that had hosted RFC campaigns that were sustained over several years. As Land Grant University status was an independent variable of

interest, the selection of two cases with that status and two without also was intentional. All four of the campaigns described here took place at large, public universities that are classified as doctoral universities with "highest research activity;" the undergraduate instructional programs are all described as "arts and sciences plus professions;" and all are considered to be "more selective" universities (United Stated Department of Education 2017).

4.1 The University of Pittsburgh

Of the four cases in this study, University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) was by far the shortest campaign, winning the RF commitment in less than two years. Pitt also was a relatively easy win, with the least amount of delays and opposition expressed by administrators. The description of the campaign at Pitt that follows is based on interviews with seven current or former students (at the time) and three staff members in administration (including dining services). No faculty interviews were pursued because this was the only campaign that had virtually no faculty involvement, outside of signing petitions. Figure 4.1 provides a chronological summary of some campaign milestones.

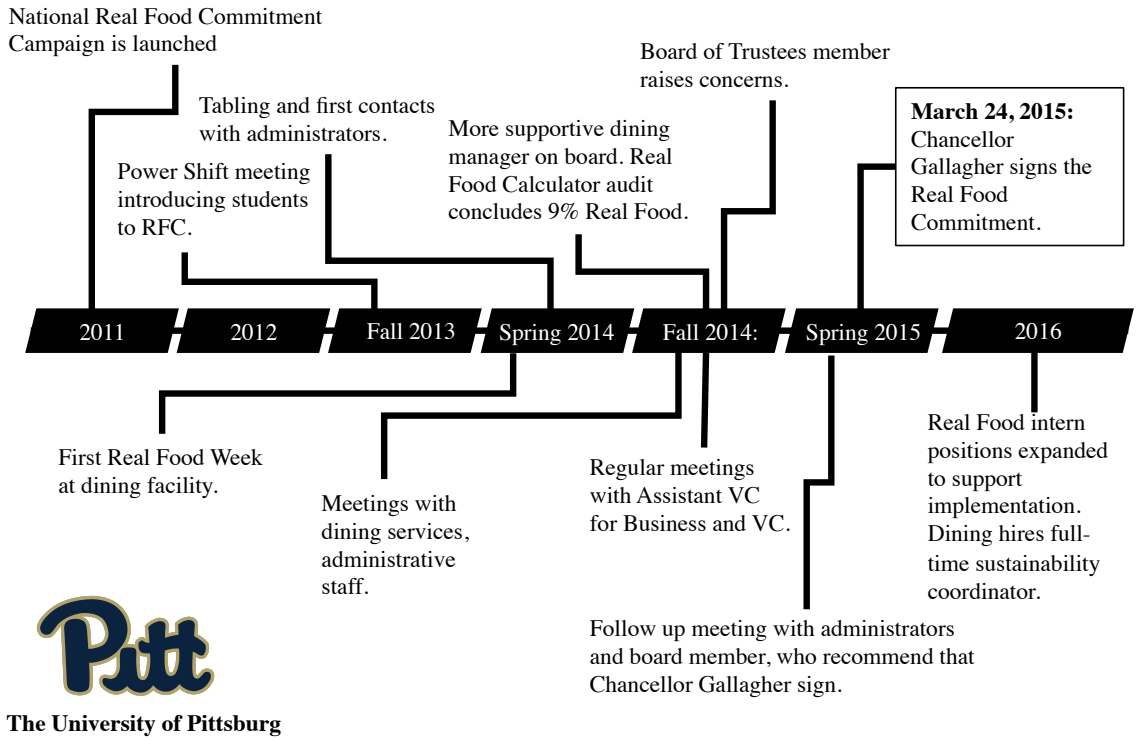

Figure 4.1: Real Food Pitt Timeline

4.1.1 Launch and early campaign

In the fall of 2013, Power Shift, a network that "mobilizes the collective power of young people to mitigate climate change and create a just, clean energy future and resilient, thriving communities for all" gathered in Pittsburgh for education and training, fellowship, and action (Power Shift 2018). A Pitt student who attended learned about the Real Food Challenge and decided to create an associated group at Pitt a few months later, called the Fair Food Cooperative Club. Jess McDonald, a senior majoring in environmental studies, and Steve Nicolet, a senior majoring in urban studies, co-founded the student club (Rosenblatt 2014). A number of students became involved with or, at least, aware of the Real Food group through their association with other environmental and labor rights student groups on campus. Early student leaders also recruited by tabling

at Market Square, Pitt's main dining facility, by circulating statements of support to other environmental groups on campus, and by hosting Real Food week in March, 2014. Real Food week highlighted a different aspect of Real Food on different days at Market Central and hosted RFC regional organizer Jon Berger, who led two student workshops called "Real Food Challenge: Uniting Students for a Healthy, Just, Sustainable Food System" and "Social Justice in the Food System" (Rosenblatt 2014).

Like many student-led campaigns, an important part of the Pitt Real Food group's early work was outreach, education, and recruitment, accomplished by staffing information tables on campus and sending emails to faculty members whose work intersected with food systems. Real Food students collected petition signatures and the endorsement of supportive student groups to help them demonstrate strong student and faculty support in future meetings with administrators. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor demonstrated early on their availability and their openness to student input when a student leader happened to see Chancellor Gallagher and Vice Chancellor (VC) Reynolds (Renny) Clark walking to lunch while the student was tabling. The student reported having "kind of ambushed" them with "Hey! Can I talk to you about Real Food?" This student was immediately provided with the VC's email address for an opportunity to follow up. While Real Food students did not begin meeting with the VC until they had gained the support of administrators working under him, and they never had a direct meeting with the Chancellor, both were consistently friendly and responsive when students approached them informally, walking on campus.

Once the RF Pitt group had collected enough signatures that they felt demonstrated strong student and faculty support, they began working their way up the

hierarchy of relevant administrators. They took this approach because they believed that the chancellor and VC would agree to sign the commitment if relevant staff members who would be involved in implementation thought it was a good idea and something that was feasible for the university. They met with the head of Dining Services, who was a Sodexo employee,[28] and the VC for business, who was responsible for housing and dining. They also met with the dean of students and a staff person working for that dean. They found that their petitions demonstrating student support were important for getting the support of the dean of students, but that once they had her on board and were able to move up to the VC level, demonstrating student support no longer seemed to matter very much.

Pitt is a large, urban university with undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering, nursing, and business, as well as a wide range of graduate and professional schools. The university's heath sciences courses in nutrition are the closest connection any faculty members had to food studies relating to Real Food Challenge standards and principles. When RF Pitt students met with administrators and discussed problems with the conventional food system and ways in which the RF Commitment could help Pitt contribute to reform, they got the impression that these individuals had little familiarity with the agrifood movement or food system critiques. Some staff members were very open to listening to and learning from the students; one even watched the documentary *Food, Inc.* at home at the suggestion of a RF Pitt student. This administrator later expressed appreciation that the Real Food Pitt group's initiative gave

[28] Many colleges and universities contract with private companies to provide dining services on their campuses. Sodexo, Pitt's contractor, and Aramark, UNC-CH's vendor, are two of the larger providers in the U.S.

him the opportunity to learn about important issues surrounding food production in the U.S.

The students at Pitt put in a great deal of time and research to demonstrate to Pitt's Dining Services leadership, and to administrators, that the 20 percent Commitment goal was feasible. For course credit, several students used the RFC calculator tool to evaluate the baseline for Real Food purchasing at Pitt. When the first calculator audit was completed in 2014, Pitt's purchasing was at nine percent Real Food. Demonstrating that the university already had reached nine percent without any assistance from the RF Pitt team helped administrators feel confident that 20 percent by 2020 was an attainable goal.

While the process of gaining staff support was much easier at Pitt than at the other three universities, it was not always smooth sailing. When students first approached the head of dining services, the person in that position at the time was not open to allowing students access to invoices needed to use the calculator tool. This was in 2014, a year before the commitment was signed. With persistence, the students were able to get the invoices because of an agreement negotiated between Real Food Challenge and Sodexo's corporate office that stated campus RF groups would be provided access to invoices, with stipulations about privacy and use of the data (Food Service Director 2013). When that dining services director was replaced through the promotion of a long-time Pitt dining employee, the new director, Abdu Cole, had a very different response to the campaign. Cole was fully behind the Real Food initiative and was willing to support the students' calculator analysis and their efforts to determine how Pitt could increase the proportion of its food purchasing that was Real. This change in staffing likely supported the haste with which RF Pitt was able to make a strong case for feasibility to the VC and get the

Commitment signed. Administrators confirmed that hearing from dining services that meeting the commitment goal would be feasible was a very important consideration for the chancellor in his decision.

During peak activity, in fall 2014 and spring 2015, RF Pitt students met with the Assistant VC for Business, Jim Earle, who directs housing and dining, and VC Renny Clark every couple of weeks about the RF commitment and their plans for implementation. Students spent a great deal of time explaining all the facets of food system reform, the RFC vision and approach, and what the commitment would entail for Pitt. They addressed concerns about potential increases in pricing that product shifts might entail, and explained to administrative staff that the commitment would not require the university to drop long-time, local suppliers if they used ingredients that disqualified a product from being considered Real, such as high fructose corn syrup. As students responded to these concerns, they explained the four areas used in the Real Food Calculator to evaluate products and community-based businesses, helping staff understand the social aspects of food sustainability. Some students suspected that the fact that Pitt administrators and faculty had a limited understanding of food system issues and controversies helped their case. As one student stated, "I don't know if they were coming from an informed enough place, at that point, to really challenge what the [Real Food] criteria said."[29]

The biggest obstacle that RF Pitt faced in its campaign followed a meeting in late fall of 2014 with several administrators. For the first time in the process, these administrators asked a member of the university's Board of Trustees to join their meeting with Real Food student leaders. One of the students present stated that this board member

[29] Interviewee Pitt 1.

"kind of shut the whole thing down." During the meeting, the two administrators and board member repeatedly interrupted the RF students as they tried to present their case. The primary objection they raised was whether the commitment would lead to legal liability for Pitt if the university failed to reach the 20 percent goal by 2020. The students had worked with RFC national staff to draft an addendum that made clear the commitment did not commit the university in a legal sense, but the students felt they were not being heard, perhaps (in their view) because the students were all young women, facing a group of older men across the table. As one student recalled, "that was a really, really frustrating meeting… The meeting that we set up after that, we were thinking about how to sort of get around that gender and age dynamic and actually get our point across, because basically we knew they would say 'yes' if they would just let us actually speak!"[30]

At the following meeting, the students prepared a PowerPoint presentation and used their presentation to maintain control of the discussion. They also recruited a male RFC staff person to attend, in order to have a male on their side of the table. At this follow-up meeting the student RF leaders were, as usual, very well prepared and had copies of the commitment, addendum, and a detailed case for the feasibility of the RF Commitment and how it could benefit Pitt, as it would make the university the largest urban, public university to sign the Commitment (a public relations opportunity). At that meeting, the VC told the students he thought that the chancellor would be willing to sign. Chancellor Gallagher signed the Real Food Challenge campus commitment on March 24, 2015, during a Pitt Student Government Board meeting. At the time of signing, nine percent of food and beverages served in Pitt's primary dining facility, Market Central,

[30] Interviewee 1.

was Real, according to the analysis of student interns using the Real Food Calculator. By the summer of 2017 that number was 13 percent and dining services indicated it was on track to reach the 20 percent by 2020 goal (University of Pittsburgh 2018).

4.1.2 Winning in record time

Pitt enjoyed a favorable context for the Real Food campaign in at least two ways: first, as described above, limited knowledge of food system issues and critiques, and an absence of direct ties to industrial agriculture interests, meant that administrators did not respond negatively to Real Food standards, outside of logistical concerns. As a result, administrators relied upon the judgment of dining services leaders, who (following a change in leadership) affirmed that the commitment was feasible. Second, Pitt's campus culture around student initiatives is highly open and supportive of student initiatives. Real Food leaders did not have difficulty securing meetings with relevant administrative staff, even at the level of Vice Chancellor. Several administrators explained that they feel they have a responsibility to work with students who bring a serious proposal to their attention and are willing to do the work it will take to research and implement their idea. One administrator described his belief that mentoring students in how to negotiate the decision-making processes within the university is part of his responsibility as an administrator and an important part of student education at Pitt. This claim is consistent with the following statement that appears on the "Student Resources" web page of the Provost's Office:

> We are committed to educating the whole student, determined that every graduate, regardless of degree earned, should leave the University with four key attributes: communications skills, a sense of motivation, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of self. Pitt students become perceptive,

> reflective, contributing individuals within our diverse community of faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students.[31]

Another factor that students felt supported the campaign was the strength of the student environmental network on campus at the time the RF campaign was launched, which included many experienced leaders who "knew how to get things done." When RF Pitt was formed, environmental activism and sustainability initiatives on campus were largely student led. The university's Pitt Serves program in the Office of Student Affairs had created a "hub" for student groups with some connection to sustainability called the Student Office of Sustainability.[32] The leadership role previous students had taken on, their experience advancing sustainability initiatives with administrators, and the shared student space facilitated connections among a particularly capable group of student environmental leaders. As one student stated:

> We have very inspirational upper-class students who can teach the under-classmen how to do things. Because reflecting personally on how I've gotten to where I am, you know, I'm considered a student leader in sustainability, and it wasn't a professor—well, maybe Ward—it wasn't an administrator, it wasn't a boss that taught me everything I know. It's upper-classmen who I had as TAs in a class called 'sustainability' where we had to make projects having to do with sustainability. Those TAs and those upper-classmen really guided me.[33]

Another factor that many people reported as important to RF Pitt's success was the group's strategic approach and the ways in which they benefitted by comparison to several other student campaigns going on at the same time. The students themselves and administrators who worked with them described their approach as highly "professional"

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[31] The University of Pittsburgh. Retrieved on February 27, 2018 (http://provost.pitt.edu/student-resources).

[32] The Student Office of Sustainability "fosters environmental awareness throughout the Pitt community. The goal of the office is to infuse sustainability into the culture, values, and decision making process [at Pitt}." University of Pittsburgh Student Affairs. Retrieved on June 7, 2018 (https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pittserves/sustain/studentoffice/).

[33] Interviewee Pitt 6.

and collaborative. As one administrator stated, the students were "willing to collaborate and listen to feedback."[34] The students never engaged in contentious "actions" designed to demonstrate power through disruption; they never actually needed to do so. Students seemed to understand what would work best in Pitt's context and they effectively utilized the decision-making processes at Pitt. As a student involved in RF implementation described:

> They didn't have sit-ins, they didn't have rallies; it was pretty much sitting down with the administration, sitting down with Sodexo employees, saying 'this is something that would be good for our university,' and working incrementally through each department so that by the time that they met with the chancellor, they already had everyone below them saying 'yes.' So, it wasn't pushing the chancellor's hand at all—it was an easy decision for him because he already had the support that he needed to sign off.[35]

While administrators at Pitt were more receptive to Real Food proposals than was the case at the other three universities in this study, Real Food students did experience and had to navigate several setbacks, first with dining staff and late in the process when a board member began participating in meetings, as described above. When delays or setbacks occurred, the students' Real Food Challenge staff liaison interpreted those delays as stalling tactics and urged RF Pitt leaders to engage in "actions." The Pitt students did not do as advised by RF staff and chose instead to continue engaging in a way they thought more likely to win the Commitment. As one student described, "we would hit like a minor setback and Real Food's immediate answer was 'you should just have an action against the administration.' And we were like, 'well, we're not against the administration; we actually have a great working relationship with them, we just hit a

[34] Interviewee Pitt 7.
[35] Interviewee Pitt 6.

minor snag.'"[36] RF Pitt students felt the advice they received from RFC national was not well aligned with their context so they did not follow it; rather, they developed different strategies for responding to setbacks and their approach won them the Commitment.

Pitt students adopted an "insider" strategy, in their telling, largely because they felt it would be most effective. One student recalled VC Renny Clark, described as the group's greatest supporter, specifically referring to the contrast between the "professional" approach of Real Food and the more confrontational tactics of other student groups:

> Whenever we would meet with Renny Clark, and we would just have a casual conversation with him, he brought [Pitt Divestment] up as a bad representative of getting something changed. What they would do is have big parades, and big actions, and he was like "yeah that's never going to happen." So, we saw what they were doing and we were like "yeah we don't want that to happen to us."[37]

Another former student made a similar argument, saying that administrators were eager to say "yes" to a group pursuing a collegial approach because, at the same time, several student groups were engaged on campus in disruptive protest:

> …when you've got, kind of, a more active group and then one that takes a more kind of institution-friendly group, the institution is more likely to kind of listen to them and react positively to them… When you have spray painting on the cathedral, and campaigns, and rallies, and sit-ins, and then these nice Real Food kids come in? You can see how the administration is like, "yes, sure, we'll do that—don't riot."[38]

This student was describing what social movement scholars refer to as positive "radical flank effects" in which the presence of more extreme groups results in greater support for those viewed as more moderate (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996:14).

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[36] Interviewee Pitt 1.
[37] Interviewee Pitt 9.
[38] Interviewee Pitt 2.

4.1.3 Implementing the RFC Campus Commitment

Because students at Pitt won the RF Commitment so quickly, leaders of the original campaign were still on campus to participate in the early stages of RF Commitment implementation. In addition to the 20 percent Real Food goal, when universities sign they also agree to an implementation process that includes the formation of a Food Systems Working Group composed of faculty, staff, students, and community members. On many campuses, the campaigns to get the commitment signed may include more than one generation of student leaders, but at Pitt some of the campaign leaders were also able to lead the implementation phase, at least for a year or two.

Having such a fast success with the campaign also came with some drawbacks, as several students noted. Pitt's RF student leaders worked very effectively with essential staff and administrators but put less time into student engagement and education. Pitt has institutionalized its Real Food Calculator work through two paid positions, several for-credit internships, and a full-time staff person with Sodexo who is tasked with identifying and implementing product shifts to meet the 20 percent by 2020 goal. But, several students working on the implementation phase shared concerns that two years after the Chancellor signed the Commitment, most students on campus still did not know what Real Food meant. This characteristic of Real Food Pitt may also reflect the priorities of student leaders with respect to Real Food Challenge goals and principles. Compared to the other universities in this study, Pitt students were more focused on the benefits of product shifts, in order to contribute to the overall Campus Commitment campaign of shifting $1 billion in spending, than they were on the RFC principles such as building a

youth food justice movement and connecting with historically oppressed populations around food justice concerns.

4.2 The Ohio State University

Located only a two-hour drive from as the University of Pittsburgh, The Ohio State University (OSU) Real Food group had very little in common with the Pitt campaign. OSU is Ohio's Land Grant University, home to a large and influential College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences that houses a great deal of expertise in both conventional and alternative agricultural production. OSU's agricultural and corporate connections offered both opportunities and challenges for organizing around food system reform. Between fall semester 2013 and spring semester 2017, the OSU Real Food initiative evolved from promoting community and dining partnerships and educating students to assertive actions designed to force the president's hand. The RF OSU group won a great deal of attention and important concessions, but ultimately made a decision that made winning the RFC Commitment all but impossible to achieve. Figure 4.2 provides an overview of the scope of the OSU group and its campaign.

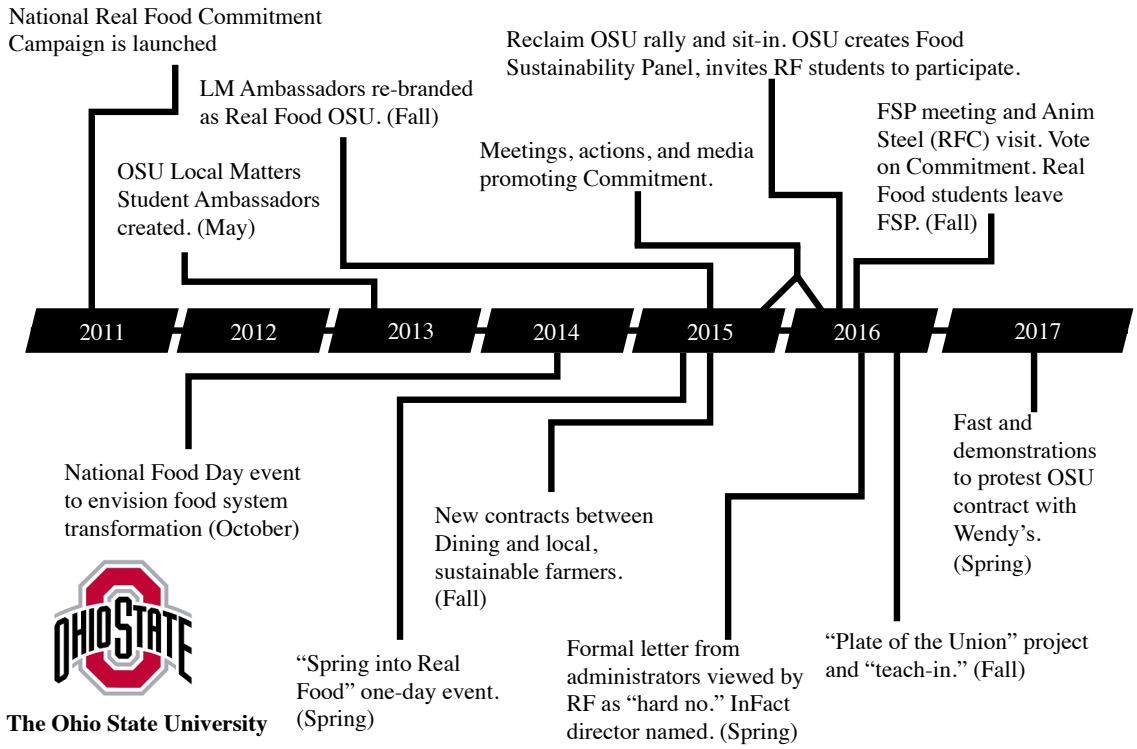

Figure 4.2: Real Food OSU Timeline

4.2.1 Origins and early phase

What eventually became the Real Food group at OSU began as a locally defined organization embedded in a community nonprofit organization. Local Matters, a Columbus organization that seeks to "to create healthy communities through food education, access and advocacy," welcomed individual OSU students as volunteers, in a variety of capacities (Local Matters 2018). In 2013 a very capable student who had been working with Local Matters on the Franklin County Local Food Council suggested the creation of a formal student group. Local Matters leaders agreed and created a formal program for OSU volunteers called Student Ambassadors in May 2013. Students involved in this early stage of campus food advocacy described the group's role as "project-based" with a strong education focus. Early efforts included organizing campus

farmer's markets and conferences, and collaboration with many community and campus partners. The Local Matters Student Ambassadors worked closely with OSU dining services and helped establish relationships with local producers, including an organic cooperative that resulted in new contracts with OSU dining.

When the Local Matters Student Ambassadors group was created in 2013, it included about seven or eight core members. Several leaders were pursuing their studies within the School of Environment and Natural Resources, with coursework including foods systems and sustainable agriculture studies. This common coursework provided a number of student leaders with opportunities to learn about food sustainability issues together, and to build relationships with faculty with experience relating to natural and social science aspects of food systems; a few even had the opportunity to explore Real Food Calculator metrics as part of a class. While other core members joined with different majors, all of the OSU student leaders had areas of study related to the work of Real Food, including nutrition and dietetics, environmental studies, and geography.

Continuing the community connection facilitated by Local Matters, the Student Ambassadors' big kick-off event was held in the fall of 2013 at a neighborhood church, in collaboration with many community partners. Not long after, timed with National Food Day in October, the group organized a follow-up event at the same church. As one student described:

> We got together a couple of hundred community members and other food system stakeholders at a local church—the same one, actually—and cooked a giant, beautiful meal for everyone and really started to engage in this discussion of what it would look like to change the food system from the ground up, and what it would look like to do that here on a local scale, here in Columbus. And that was really powerful… I would say that was one of the bigger moments of getting the

> campaign off the ground, because of the sheer number of people we got and the community we built in that moment.[39]

At weekly meetings, students worked to educate other members of the OSU community about the Real Food movement and its goals. While the OSU students were not yet formally affiliated with RFC, an RFC regional field organizer began communicating with the students about the RFC Campus Commitment and how they might win it at OSU. Students learned about the RF Calculator and they began talking with staff in dining services about doing an audit of OSU food purchasing using that tool.

The OSU Local Matters group ended the 2013-14 academic year with a celebratory rally on OSU's "Oval," the school's primary quadrangle bordered by stately buildings that include the main library and the president's office. The students created skits, re-wrote lyrics to the school song, and created artwork celebrating the importance of Real Food, all with a positive tone focused on Real Food as an opportunity. As one student described:

> Our tone at the time…was celebratory–-like, President Drake! Come celebrate Real Food with us! [We were] seeking to bring people in from definitely a less radical perspective than what we have now. But at the time it was a really beautiful and I think useful tactic for bringing people together around food in an uplifting and not too intimidating way. We got a lot of people who might not have come to a different march or rally but came out for ours.[40]

Over the next two years that tone gradually shifted, as students faced what felt to them an uphill battle to gain cooperation from key university decision makers. Early in the 2014-15 academic year, students sought a meeting with "Dr. J" (Javaune Adams-Gaston, Senior Vice President for Student Life). RF OSU leaders held several meetings with her in which they explained what food purchasing in support of systemic change in

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[39] Interviewee OSU 1.
[40] Interviewee OSU 1.

agriculture could look like. As one student reported, Dr. J often responded by pointing to "project-based" initiatives that OSU already had in process, but that, in their view, did not go far enough toward fostering "true agricultural transformation." They also requested a meeting with President Drake, who would be one of the two signatures required for a Real Food Commitment. During this time, the group also engaged in "actions" recommended by RFC organizers as ways to keep the issue in front of the president. These actions included the delivery, in February, of valentines that said "We love Real Food! We don't love corporate consolidation!"

Utilizing the RFC calculator to audit food and beverage purchasing requires that students have ready access to invoices, and the RFC organization has helped facilitate cooperation from the major food services contractors with Real Food student leaders. However, OSU's dining services is self-operated, which means that its staff can decide themselves whether to cooperate with RF students. After an initial "yes" from the director of dining regarding access to invoices during the 2014-2015 academic year, he changed his mind. Students suspected he had checked with administrators above him and been told not to cooperate. At that point, RF OSU student filed an open records request and eventually received some invoices containing significant redactions.

The OSU Local Matters Student Ambassadors wrapped up the 2014-15 academic year with a daylong conference called "Spring Into Real Food" on April 3, 2015. While the students' formal affiliation at this time was still Local Matters, the language, speakers, and content of the event reflected their growing ties to Real Food Challenge, which several students had learned about through workshops and summits, and their interest in pursuing the RFC Commitment at OSU. Speakers included OSU faculty and

dining services staff; regional farmers and dairy producers; representatives of sustainable dining initiatives at other universities; and Real Food Challenge organizers (OSU School of Environment and Natural Resources 2018). As one student remembered, "[it] brought together two to three hundred stakeholders from the Ohio food system and even folks from neighboring states and schools to talk about logistics of how we would actually implement the Real Food commitment at Ohio State. So, this was really, really beautiful—we had workshops, we had breakout groups…"[41] The head of dining services, Zia Ahmed, participated as a speaker and Dr. J attended as well, which led students to believe they were making headway in demonstrating to key administrators the feasibility and value of signing the RFC commitment. At the same time, at that event one student reported that Mr. Ahmed had said it was likely OSU would sign the commitment, and then a short time later Ahmed reportedly told a community ally at the conference that there was no way the university would sign (the ally reported the exchange to the RF OSU students), raising concerns about his sincerity.

In addition to making some headway in pleading their case with administrators, the Spring Into Real Food conference produced some concrete changes in campus food procurement. By working with an executive chef in dining, the students were instrumental in sparking a pilot program between OSU dining and local producers including Great River Organic cooperative and others—sustainable sourcing relationships still in place today. One regional producer described the significance of the students' participation in the contract they had with OSU dining in this way:

[41] Interviewee OSU 1.

> Real Food at OSU is one of the reasons we have been granted a contract with Dining Services... Their participation and their voice was a big part of why we could work through this… They were a huge part.[42]

After about two years of education and outreach work, as one student explained "it was really fun and we learned a lot but we began thinking more broadly about the Ohio State food system and the Ohio food system and the greater national and global inequalities that are being reflected here, in our everyday life. And we felt like our little initiatives weren't doing enough to create systemic change."[43] In addition, by spring semester 2015 staff members at Local Matters felt it was time for the student group to move its affiliation to a different organization because the process of checking in with the Local Matters board of directors regarding each planned activity of the student group had become cumbersome. As explained above, the Student Ambassadors had recently attended national Real Food Challenge meetings, were impressed by the group, and had developed ties with other Real Food leaders, so they decided to move their affiliation to RFC, creating Real Food OSU in the summer of 2015 (Real Food Challenge at OSU 2015).

The students' relationship with Local Matters continued informally, and throughout the following years some continued to seek advice from a Local Matters staff member with extensive community organizing experience. Local Matters' continued involvement with RF OSU included accompanying students to an early meeting with "Dr. J" and attending RF OSU events and occasional strategy sessions. One Local Matters staff person continued to meet one-on-one with RF OSU student leaders seeking advice through 2017.

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[42] Interviewee OSU 10.
[43] Interviewee OSU 1.

While students were formally establishing the new group Real Food OSU in the summer of 2015, they hosted an RFC strategy meeting on campus that included 50-70 Real Food student leaders from other schools and RFC field organizers. The national organization seemed to be interested in increasing its direct support for the OSU campaign, recognizing the importance of securing such a large, public university and also the challenges the campaign would entail, based upon the response of administrators so far. During that meeting, the group decided on an action in which they delivered a "party" to President Drake's office, complete with balloons that spelled out "Real Food" and party hats. At this point in time the students described the campaign's tone as still largely positive and optimistic, as in "Come celebrate Real Food with us!"

The first meeting RF OSU secured with President Drake took place at the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year. Students assumed that Dr. J had already filled in President Drake about the RF OSU group and its goals. RF OSU students had delivered copies of the RF Commitment, detailed information about RF standards, and their rationale for promoting the Commitment, to President Drake's office on multiple occasions. They also had authored opinion editorials published in the OSU student newspaper, *The Lantern*, and had organized several rallies near the President's Office. As a result, RF OSU students walked into the meeting with President Drake expecting him to be well informed about their request and about the Real Food commitment, and to be open to discussion. However, the meeting was brief—about 15 minutes—and President Drake did not seem well informed about their proposal. They perceived him to be friendly but non-committal about the RF commitment, while Dr. J, in the students' view,

played the “bad cop” role, cautioning the students to move very slowly with their initiative.

Around the same time, during fall semester of 2015, RF OSU students met a number of times with Zia Ahmed, head of dining services, with whom they felt they had a good working relationship. It seemed that whenever they communicated with Dr. J she would re-direct the students back to Ahmed and suggest additional individuals they should meet with, rather than responding directly about signing the Campus Commitment, which they perceived to be a stalling tactic. Dining Services staff shared the students’ interest in tracking and evaluating food purchasing but realized they had a lot of work to do to increase transparency in their supply chain because of their reliance on large distributors that were not providing them with sourcing information. Staff in dining services identified transparency and potentially higher costs as the biggest barriers to using Real Food standards to move purchasing toward more sustainable sourcing at OSU. The RF students tried repeatedly to set up a follow-up meeting with President Drake, without success.

In February 2016, RF OSU again hosted a national RFC gathering. Students remember this marking a shift in the campaign’s strategic approach and tone. This gathering was focused on campaign tactics generally and how to “escalate” tactics in order to garner more attention. Students developed an idea for an action based on one of RFC’s messages: “There’s no time to lose for real food.” They made giant clocks and wore them around campus to engage people in the issues and solicit petition signatures for the RFC commitment. For the first time, the group planned not just to deliver something to President Drake’s office but also to refuse to leave until they got what they

wanted—a firm meeting scheduled with him. But, a police officer was called to the office and threatened the students with arrest if they did not leave, and they had not prepared for or discussed how to respond to possible arrest. They chose to leave, and the police presence contributed to a further shift in tone in their campaign. One student present remembered:

> It really shook everyone because that was such a shift in tone that the university would call the police to make us leave a public building when we're trying to have a conversation about food. It just seems, in theory, so nonthreatening. That also made us realize that maybe we have more power than we were giving ourselves credit for. And that we struck a nerve, here—if we're pushing the bounds of what corporate ag interests are comfortable with, then this is something important, something we need to keep pushing on.[44]

Some students also reported that training they engaged in with RFC on organizing theory and movement toward an emphasis on racial justice aspects of food justice also contributed to their shift in approach. They learned about Momentum theory,[45] which suggested to them that positive frames (do this great thing with us) would be less effective than negative ones (e.g., change what's wrong with OSU's practices and the food system more broadly). The racial justice focus came both from a shift in priorities of RFC as an organization and what it highlighted through its training opportunities, and also through RF OSU students' investigations into the history of OSU specifically and Land Grant Universities (LGUs) more generally. OSU Real Food students began investigating and discussing historic racial inequalities in access to OSU agricultural education and agricultural land in Ohio. They also began paying more attention to contemporary, local issues of inequality connected to gentrification that many believed

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[44] Interviewee OSU 1.

[45] Momentum theory is a theory of organizing that integrates structure-based and mass participation forms of mobilization; it is promoted by Momentum, a "training institute" and "movement incubator" (Momentum 2018).

the university was driving through its policies and practices. As described above, the chosen majors and courses of RF OSU students facilitated their research into the history of OSU, as well as institutional food purchasing and sustainable food systems more generally.

While gradually shifting the group's messaging and strategic plan toward a more confrontational posture, RF OSU continued to pursue campus support for the Commitment through formal channels. RF OSU included a Student Government Association (SGA) officer who submitted "A Resolution to Support the Signing and Implementation of the Real Food Campus Commitment"[46] to SGA, which was voted on and approved in early 2016. With SGA support in hand but still no movement from the president's office, RF OSU "…took some time to rap and process—what does it mean that we're now drawing a police presence, that we're now adapting and rearranging our narrative to reflect more of these local and regional issues?"[47] As they were reflecting on next steps, in March 2016 they received a letter from President Drake's office that they interpreted as a final "no" in response to their request for him to sign the RF commitment.

At this point, RF OSU student leaders felt that they had done due diligence and pursued their goal through all the appropriate channels, to no avail. For that reason, and because they were in communication with other progressive student groups that had experienced similar responses from OSU's administrators, they decided to "escalate" the campaign through a coalition of groups that all felt they had not been given a fair hearing by the administration. In the view of one RF student, "pretty much every group

[46] The full text of OSU Undergraduate Student Government Resolution 48-R-41 is available online (https://usg.osu.edu/posts/documents/doc_312016_61732596.pdf).
[47] Interviewee OSU 1.

demanding social justice-related changes, every group had been shut down in a similar way."[48]

Not all students involved in RF OSU interpreted the letter from President Drake as a hard "no," or agreed with the decision to escalate tactics. In the words of a student who left the group, "From my point of view, the fact that they had received a letter was kind of legitimizing Real Food…It was promising, at least, and they could have continued without using grassroots tactics. But to them it signaled that they should really amp up their actions and make sure enough pressure was being put on the administration."[49] Some faculty and staff allies agreed with this student, and felt that the Real Food student group could have continued to make significant (albeit slow) progress toward Real Food purchasing by working with dining services. One faculty ally, however, agreed with the RF OSU leaders that the administration's response was an effort to dilute or coopt their movement, channeling it into administrative structures that would likely result in very little reform.

There was no more direct communication between administrators and Real Food OSU following the March 2016 letter. As a result, RF OSU students were not aware that OSU leaders had recruited Brian Snyder, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, to a new post at OSU as director of InFact, short for Initiative for Food and Agricultural Transformation. This step was apparently what President Drake and Dr. J referred to in the letter to RF OSU in the following statement:

> While we support the [Real Food] initiative in spirit, we will continue to independently design goals and strategies that can be customized to the needs, challenges and opportunities of our institution and our local community… As we seek to achieve this aspiration, we will continue to engage students in a variety of

[48] Interviewee OSU 1.
[49] Interviewee OSU 9.

> ways, including on work groups and research teams. Likewise, as is always a critically important component of efforts at the university, we will create an assessment plan to track and monitor progress toward our goals.
> (reported in Herbener 2016)

4.2.2 Escalation

Following the March 2016 letter, RF OSU leaders planned a collaborative protest in coalition with United Students Against Sweatshops, OSU Coalition for Black Lives, Still We Rise, and International Socialist Organization. The event took place on April 6, 2017 and began as a "Speak Out" on The Oval. The students involved named the coalition "Reclaim OSU," referring to their desire to reestablish a voice for students in organizations like the ones represented there. An announcement advertising the event read "After a year of systematic silencing of our voices and demands, we are creating our own space for student and community voices to be heard" (Kington 2017). The concerns expressed included OSU's delays in creating a Women's Center on campus and implementing other steps that had been recommended to address sexual harassment and assault; the university's role in gentrification in the surrounding area and its impact on Columbus residents; professors who had been "silenced" for various reasons; and the concerns of Real Food OSU.

At some point during the "Speak Out," participants decided to move the activity indoors, into Bricker Hall, where President Drake's office is located. At first, the activity inside Bricker was relatively low-key, and students reported that staff inside told them they could stay through the night, to which they responded "we plan to stay until President Drake will see us and address our concerns." According to one of the students who was present, early on "people were speaking out, people were singing and dancing

traditional dances; it was a really beautiful space."[50] However, the climate shifted following a staff decision to lock the doors and not allow media or food inside, and an altercation occurred when someone tried to sneak some food in through a door. Police were guarding the door and, according to students, started shoving students and some were knocked to the ground, as was the food. Afterward, the situation settled down again and several administrators entered the building and said they were standing in for the president. The students had made a decision ahead of time that any negotiation with administrators would have to be with the entire group, as some had experience through past confrontations of individuals being singled out by administrators and, once isolated from the group, pressured to give in.

At some point in the early morning hours, one administrator told the students that he did not know when they would be kicked out of the building and that they might face expulsion or arrest. The police chief came into the building and tensions rose. One administrator in particular, according to the students, used rough language and suggested the police might throw them out, using force. Anxiety levels rose among the students; some had come prepared to be arrested, but many were seniors, very close to graduating, and were not prepared for expulsion. As a result, the students decided to leave the building, to avoid putting some in a position they were not prepared for. Outside of Bricker, supporters had gathered in an impromptu "tent city" which raised students' spirits, but overall they were very discouraged by the administration's response. One student remembered it this way:

> …we were forced out, and a lot of people were very upset, crying and grieving over the fact that instead of sending the president down to hear why people are so upset that they're willing to occupy a building—why they feel so alarmed at

[50] Interviewee OSU 1.

> university policies--instead of caring about us as humans their response was 'no and we're going to arrest or expel anyone who dissents or brings up these issues.' And I think that was the final nail in the coffin for a lot of people who for a long time had been on the fence about OSU or thought 'well, I still like it here.' No—the university does not care for them and will not fight for them, or change any policies to make their lives better. So that was a very radicalizing moment I think for a lot of folks.[51]

A video of the administrator referring to expulsion and arrest was posted on YouTube. Unflattering coverage in the *Columbus Dispatch* and a formal letter signed by more than 400 faculty, staff, and graduate students criticizing the administration's response to the sit-in put the university on the defensive (Edwards 2016; Huson 2016). The occupation of Bricker Hall in April 2016 was the last major event of RF OSU that academic year, and it was the only time the group worked closely in coalition with the other progressive groups on campus, although they continued, the following year, to stay in touch and provide some support for each other's actions.

Shortly following the Bricker Hall occupation, two current and one former RF OSU students were invited to participate on a new committee created by the university in association with the InFact program area of focus on sustainable agriculture. The Food Sustainability Panel charge was drafted by the Provost, Dr. Bruce McPheron, and Vice President for Student Life, Dr. J, in April 2016 and delivered to people asked to be the first to serve on the panel, a group of about eight faculty and staff. In May 2016 the panel was expanded to about twenty, including additional staff and faculty as well as students, including the three students who were or had been involved with Real Food OSU (with student alternates, as well). One of these students had stopped participating in RF OSU following the decision to escalate the campaign in response to the March 2016 letter

[51] Interviewee OSU 1.

explaining that OSU's plan for advancing local and sustainable food that would not include signing the RF campus commitment.

The Food Sustainability Panel (FSP) was charged with the task of putting in place a process for implementing OSU's stated sustainability goal that at least 40 percent of the food served in the dining halls will be local and sustainably sourced by 2025 (The Ohio State University 2016). One of the first items they turned their attention to was developing working definitions for "local" and "sustainable." Early on the panel also committed to a goal of 100 percent transparency in food sourcing for the university, which is consistent with RFC's promotion of regular auditing using its calculator tool.

RF UGA students and RFC staff members felt that the invitation of RF students onto this panel was the university's response to the occupation of Bricker Hall. It is unclear whether or not that was the case; the occupation occurred shortly before the new staff person hired to lead InFact arrived on campus. OSU formally announced this new position in Food Sustainability on March 3, 2016, well in advance of the occupation. RF OSU students and RFC staff felt the students had won concessions through the occupation (expedited assembly of the FSP and three seats for RF OSU), but several faculty and staff members sympathetic to the student group felt that the hard feelings and tension between the students and the president's office made the process of getting the panel off the ground more challenging. Setting aside how and why the panel was created, two RF student leaders, with two additional RF students identified as alternatives and a third student who had previously been part of the group, were included on the founding Food Sustainability Panel. Those roles became an important part of RF OSU's work during fall semester of the 2016-17 academic year.

RF OSU had a second major project during fall semester, 2016. The group received a $5,000 grant to participate in the "Plate of the Union" campaign leading up to the presidential election. Students organized an educational event on The Oval to connect issues surrounding food and the food system with electoral politics, and the heavy workload involved required much of the group's energy that semester. RF students also pursued their objectives through academic routes at this time, working with the faculty member teaching Sociology of Food and Agriculture to focus the class project on institutional food purchasing. Several students in the class completed research projects directly related to efforts to introduce Real Food standards in OSU dining services and the process by which students advanced support for the Commitment on campus.

At the same time (fall 2016) the Food Sustainability panel began its work, meeting and discussing its charge and the need to develop metrics for what would count as "local" and "sustainable" for OSU. The RF OSU students on the panel advocated using the RF Calculator, arguing its status as the best available and nationally respected auditing tool, as evidenced by its use guiding the food and beverage purchasing guidelines for AASHE's STARS reporting system. Panel leaders agreed it made sense to consider the calculator, along with other nationally recognized tools and metrics and best practices in Ohio's agricultural region. As a result of the RF students' advocacy and facilitated by a past professional connection between RFC's executive director Anim Steel and Brian Snyder, FSP Co-Chair, the panel arranged and funded a visit from Steel so that he could make a presentation about the benefits of Real Food standards to the panel and a second presentation to a broader audience of interested parties.

Accounts of Steel's presentation and its effectiveness differ significantly between RF OSU students and staff, on the one hand, and other panel members (including both those sympathetic to RF goals and those who were less so), on the other. These differences in accounts of the presentations highlight contrasting perspectives between core RF OSU students and other supporters of sustainable food at OSU. RF students felt they and Steel had prepared extensively and presented a strong case for the use of Real Food's standards as metrics for OSU purchasing. Other attendees, including several who considered themselves strong supporters of RF and said they had hoped Steel's visit would lead to a panel decision to use the calculator, were disappointed by his presentation and felt he was poorly prepared for some key questions. These individuals said they had been expecting a clear description of RF criteria and its rationale; examples of how other, similar universities had used the calculator to advance local and sustainable purchasing goals; and a clear case for how the RFC criteria made sense for Ohio and its particular agricultural context. Instead, in their view, the presentation was short on evidence and specifics, and heavy on "political" perspectives, particularly regarding racial injustice. One panel member shared the following response:

> I remember being pretty disappointed because my gosh—imagine the enormity of this, seven or eight months after all of this trouble had gone down here on campus, that here we were with the panel that was established by the provost and the vice president for student life actually hosting the executive director of the RFC, and there had been plenty of lead time, up to this meeting, and so I was pretty disappointed… [His] presentation actually could have turned the whole thing around. But…he did not address some of the concerns that the panel had. He seemed focused more on making, frankly, the political arguments that stand behind RFC in this meeting. It was not a time to make political arguments. It was really a time to be completely forthcoming about the program and how it works.[52]

[52] Interviewee OSU 12.

Following the dinner presentation with the panel on November 17, Steel gave his presentation a second time the following morning, to a broader audience in a multipurpose room of Thompson Library (OSU's main library). Following the second presentation, the panel met and Real Food students pushed for a vote, which some panel members characterized as a "straw poll," on the following question: will the panel recommend to President Drake that he sign the RF campus commitment as a way of meeting 20 percent of the 40 percent OSU goal? A number of panel members felt that taking this vote was premature, as the panel had not yet considered any other programs and their metrics—Real Food was the first national program it considered. Nonetheless, both FSP co-chairs voted "yes" and the poll narrowly missed its mark, by just one vote. Following that narrow loss, the two committed RF OSU students (and their alternates) decided to step down from the panel.

4.2.3 Outcomes and competing perspectives

The Food Sustainability Panel was the forum through which RF OSU decided, in essence, to end its efforts to work "within the system" at OSU. As one student described, "This was another chance to try to do it the quote-unquote right way--the way that admins tell us to, the way that is socially, less-negatively sanctioned [laughs]. And to go through the channels that universities tend to go through."[53] RF students felt very frustrated that some of the other members of the panel, in their view, seemed to have a very limited understanding of food sourcing and food systems, and, as a result, were slow to recognize the importance of clearly defining terms like "local" and "sustainable." They also were frustrated that a few members expressed concerns about including social

[53] Interviewee OSU 1.

aspects of sustainability—particularly racial and worker justice issues—in sustainable food metrics. Finally, they were disheartened by what they perceived to be the slow pace of decision-making by the panel. Several faculty members felt that student impatience was fueled, in part, by the fact that they were seniors and eager to complete the work they had begun before graduating. The students explained the decision differently; in the words of one RF OSU leader:

> So we decided that we could either stay on this panel and do, at best, a really wishy-washy, abbreviated version of the commitment, because they wanted to pick and choose the parts that they liked and then do their own thing. Yeah, we could do some good—potentially, maybe. But the rate of change was so slow and the dedication to the things we deeply valued was not there. It felt like we were participating in the cooptation of a movement. It was just not what we wanted to be spending our time doing, and we would rather leave the panel than coopt the work that we were trying to do. Even if we're not shifting the purchasing patterns, right now, directly, we're building a culture of organizing and protest and activism on campus that is allowing a space for dissent--and then within that space, an ability for students to think about alternate ways of OSU existing…The consensus in our Real Food group was that that was much more valuable. Power's always going to come from grassroots community organizing, from relationship building, from working with the people most directly affected by injustice. I know we gave away an opportunity to work with some of the top people at the university, but that wasn't the work that we needed to be doing, to nourish our hearts and our souls, as well as our bodies. And that's why we decided to leave.[54]

Faculty and staff who had been working with the students felt frustrated and disappointed when they stepped down from the panel. Some understood what they perceived to be "impatience" on the part of the students, acknowledging the slow pace of bureaucratic processes at OSU. One faculty member very familiar with but not serving on the panel also reported that a number of panel members had not made much effort at all to understand the Real Food standards, which seemed to be a significant contributor to the students' conclusion that panel participation was not worth their time anymore. Some wondered if RFC national staff members had pressured the students, but none of the

[54] Interviewee OSU 1.

student leaders themselves suggested this had been the case. A staff person on the panel remembered the students explaining that they felt they had to be true not just to RFC principles but also a broader social justice coalition they belonged to at OSU. However, some panel members supportive of the RFC campus commitment disagreed with the RF OSU students about where the panel stood following Steel's presentations, as reflected in this statement:

> I'm confident it would have worked. Had the students not decided… I don't know where the pressure was coming from. I didn't sense that Anim [Steel] was applying the pressure, although some of my colleagues here were convinced that he was the source of the pressure, I don't think he was. I do know that had he given a better presentation, we could have come out much better, and had the students not taken sort of a second hard line to force a vote--which, albeit, almost passed--if they had not forced that vote then, I'm pretty certain we could have achieved it.[55]

One factor that RF students and faculty and staff agreed had contributed to their decision was a lack of trust on the part of the students that stakeholders outside of RF OSU were committed in the same way and to the same goals as they. One faculty member interpreted their decision in this way:

> They did not trust that progress would be made without actually having the signed commitment in place. I asked them, "what if you got everything you wanted except for the president signing the RFC Commitment? Would that be OK?" And they said "no." They did not seem to trust that progress would be made without the signed commitment.[56]

What was the impact of the RF-OSU students' decision to give up on an institutional process for advancing Real Food Standards? From the perspective of faculty and staff on the panel who were supportive of using Real Food standards, they believed that the decision meant President Drake likely would never sign the RFC Commitment and that the Real Food standards would not have as strong a role in shaping OSU's plan

[55] Interviewee OSU 12.
[56] Interviewee OSU 6.

for meeting its 40 percent goal as it could have had. Faculty, staff, and at least one student on the panel (not affiliated with RF OSU) have noted that they have continued to refer to RF standards as they develop definitions for local and sustainable and criteria for food purchasing, and some argued they may even develop more rigorous standards, tailored to Ohio's agricultural context. Some panel members were deeply disappointed that the RF OSU students chose not to continue with that process, as reflected in this statement:

> I think there's very much a commitment to incorporate work from the Real Food Calculator [for example, among the panel members]. I feel it's unfortunate that the students left… there is no chance [now] of the administration listening to them … the panel was created to move toward what they were asking for… [Making progress is] about creating new sets of relationships. The 40 percent goal is for the whole university--not just dining halls--so all those relationships take time. Leaving the panel means [the Real Food – OSU students] will not be part of the work to build those relationships.[57]

Faculty and staff on the panel who were sympathetic to RFC's vision and standards acknowledged that some panel members had problems with aspects of the Real Food standards, including exclusions relating to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and corporate consolidation. Some also said they anticipated pushback from administrators about these exclusions as well as the exclusion of products from confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). However, these individuals also believed the challenges were not insurmountable, and that trusted staff and faculty on the panel could have brought President Drake around to signing the Real Food Campus Commitment to guide 20 percent of the 40 percent total goal for OSU.

All faculty, staff, and students who were interviewed felt that winning the RF Commitment was no longer an option following the decision of RF OSU students to

[57] Interviewee OSU 6.

leave the panel. However, their exit did not mean that Real Food standards were no longer consulted by the FSP. As the Metrics Working Group of the panel began discussing criteria for OSU in 2017, RFC standards were consulted regularly. As one Panel member described:

> …essentially when we're deciding what local and sustainable means, we're still using a lot [from] RFC. So basically, as we're deciding in our working group what do we want to count as local, it always comes up 'RFC already did this; let's make sure we use what they've done.' In our working group meetings we have the RFC guidelines on our table—everyone on the panel has it in front of them... So it's not like we're disregarding RFC's work--we're just trying to work as much as we can within the confines of the Ohio food system.[58]

Thus, RF OSU students succeeded in convincing panel members to carefully consider RFC standards. At the same time, some panel members worried they would need to downplay the presence of RF standards in the recommendations they develop, because of the history of the RF OSU campaign:

> The more stringent [the criteria] are, the less likely the board [of trustees] is going to be able to sign it. Especially because there's already contention between the Real Food Challenge and the president of the university. So I'd imagine there's going to be resistance to sign something that basically followed everything that RFC says.[59]

Further, a faculty member on the panel noted that the process of getting everyone on the panel in agreement about priorities is really challenging:

> From my perspective, I think that everyone that is involved [in the FSP] is very much committed to the underlying principles of what the Real Food Challenge is about, but trying to mold something that might fit better with whatever the needs of OSU are or address some of the concerns that the administration had; kind of a retooled version specifically for OSU… [That said], one of the biggest challenges is that the most important parts of sustainability is different for different people...For example, some want to emphasize small Ohio farms while others care more about ecological or ethical issues. How you make these all work together is very challenging.[60]

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[58] Interviewee OSU 7.
[59] Interviewee OSU 7.
[60] Interviewee OSU 8.

It is difficult to assess fully the impact of the four-year OSU Local Matters/Real Food campaign. One concrete outcome was the creation of purchasing contracts between some new local and organic producers and OSU. One producer interviewed was enthusiastic about the institutional relationship and eager to see it expand. The decision of RF students to leave the Food Sustainability Panel was concerning to at least one local producer, who had the impression that shorter distances might be prioritized over sustainable production methods, to the detriment of certified organic producers. An organic producer also expressed concern that panel members might adopt metrics for sustainable production that were vague and lacked meaning, as the term "sustainable" has become widely used by producers to encompass a very wide range of practices.

The full consequences of the decision students made to leave the Food Sustainability Panel will not be clear until the FSP completes its metrics and recommendations. Regardless of specific outcomes, one faculty member whose work intersects Real Food goals feels that, overall, the work of RF OSU helped promote more robust discussion of sustainable food issues on campus:

> What they have done has been very helpful. The students' work brings awareness. There's no denying the value of passion; when you have an abundance of passion on this topic, you can't help but draw attention to it.[61]

In addition, it is clear that in its support of the RF OSU campaign, RFC succeeded in advancing its movement-building objective. While a very small group, several students described their commitment to food justice and sustainability as work they would be pursuing "their whole lives."

[61] Interviewee OSU 11.

The following semester, Spring 2017, RF OSU coordinated with two former OSU Real Food leaders who stayed in Columbus following graduation to continue advancing food justice work. A former RF OSU leader had begun working for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Columbus on a campaign to pressure Wendy's to sign the Fair Food agreement,[62] and the RF OSU seniors who had left the FSP felt it was a good time to embrace the worker rights aspect of Real Food. OSU was home to a Wendy's restaurant in its medical center, and Real Food OSU, the Student Farmworker Alliance, and CIW collaborated on a series of actions in March and April 2017 designed to pressure OSU to cancel its contract with Wendy's if it continued to refuse to sign the Fair Food agreement. A week long fast undertaken by 20 OSU students and an ongoing presence outside Bricker Hall produced a meeting with OSU administrators but no agreement to cut the Wendy's contract. That weekend, about 200 activists from within and outside Columbus joined the students in a rainy march to protest Wendy's continuing contract (Edwards 2017).

Real Food OSU's decision to work in coalition with CIW and Student Farmworker Alliance was consistent with their earlier strategic decision to escalate confrontational tactics and prioritize partnerships with like groups over university relationships. An RF OSU student described participation in the Wendy's contract actions in this way:

> It feels really beautiful and powerful in a way that we haven't felt before, or as a different manifestation of that power, because here we are exploring what food means from a spiritual perspective and to put your body on the line for something you deeply believe in. And to respect the hunger and suffering of farmworkers as they are in the fields, often having to go to work hungry because they are paid

[62] The Fair Food Standards Council oversees the Fair Food Code of Conduct; a detailed description of the program may be viewed here: http://www.fairfoodstandards.org/resources/fair-food-code-of-conduct/.

> inhumane wages…So the least that we can do, and the most that we can do, here and now, is to be involved in this movement, and give it everything that we have. Because, I don't know, why else are we doing this work?[63]

4.3 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The campaign to win the RFC commitment at UNC Chapel Hill (UNC) consisted of two "waves," the first led by a student group called Fair, Local, Organic (FLO), and the second managed by Real Food UNC, an outgrowth of FLO. Like the Real Food campaign at OSU, early efforts at UNC focused on making connections with local and sustainable growers and building relationships with dining services. After proposing the RFC Commitment to Chancellor Thorp in 2013 and receiving a tepid response, FLO members dropped the Commitment campaign and refocused their energy on supporting Carolina Dining's efforts to identify and pursue product shifts toward locally based and more sustainably produced products. In 2016 a small group of students connected the campus group formally to RFC and made a second attempt to get the university to agree to RFC's Campus Commitment, winning the campaign in May 2016 with the signature of a new Chancellor, Carol Folt. Figure 4.3 provides a timeline with key moments from the two campaign waves.

[63] Interviewee OSU 1.

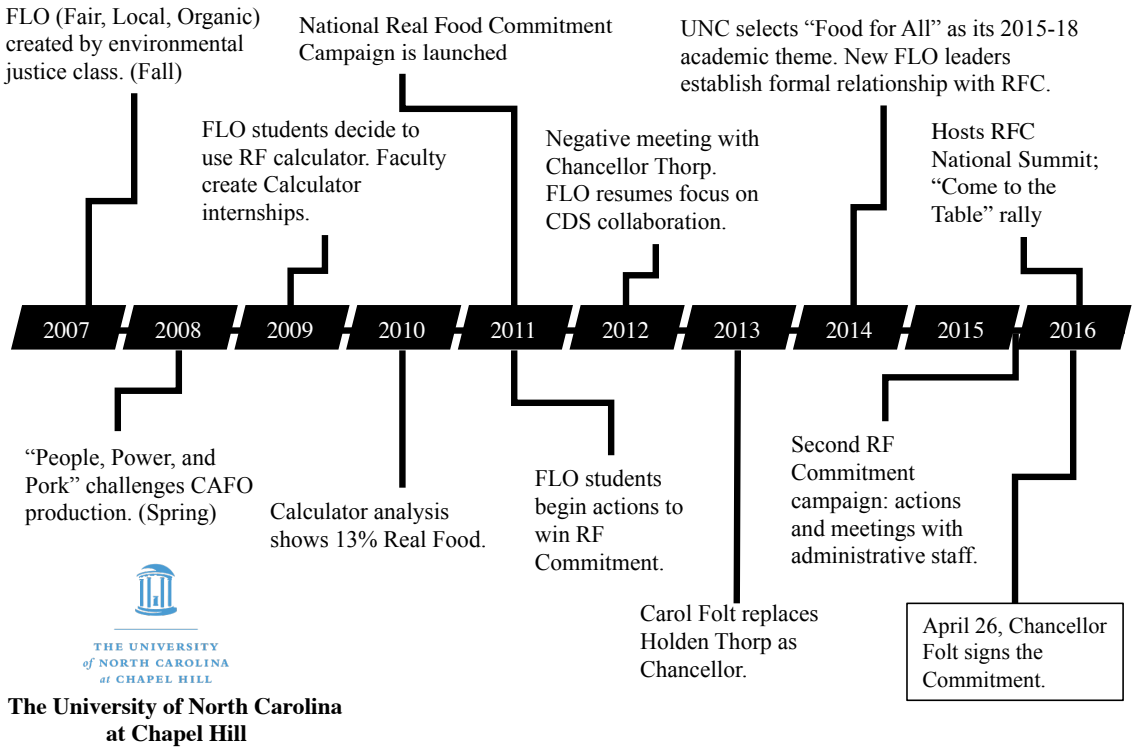

Figure 4.3: Real Food UNC Timeline

4.3.1 Origins, launch, and first attempt

In 2007, a group of students at UNC in an environmental justice class taught by Anthropology Professor Flora Lu created a new student group called FLO (Fair, Local, Organic) Food in order to establish direct links with North Carolina farmers and help connect students to the regional food economy (Hannapel 2016). They had additional support from faculty members whose research and teaching intersected with food systems issues (mostly in anthropology/sociology and public health), and they worked closely with Carolina Dining, UNC's dining services (contracted with Aramark). FLO hosted many local food-related events on campus and educated students about the food system and differences between the vendors they invited to campus and large-scale, corporate agriculture. One very popular event FLO Food hosted was called "People, Power, and

Pork," which featured barbeque from locally, humanely, and sustainably raised hogs. The event directly challenged Smithfield Foods, one the world's largest producers and processors of hogs raised in CAFOs. FLO students had learned that Carolina Dining was tracking the Smithfield pork purchased by UNC as "sustainable" because it originated less than 150 miles away, in Tar Heel (Philpott 2008). The event provided activists with opportunities to discuss worker and environmental concerns associated with commercial hog production in North Carolina (Hannapel 2016).

Beginning in 2009, several members of FLO connected with RFC through national and regional events and decided to use the RF calculator to evaluate the current status of Carolina Dining food and beverage purchasing. The creation of for-credit internship positions through Environmental Studies at UNC to support student work on the RFC calculator with Carolina Dining provided the labor for the tedious work of auditing endless stacks of invoices. Students worked with a social science faculty member to create the internship positions, very similar to the positions created at Pitt. While FLO members collaborated with RFC on the calculator audit and decided to pursue a commitment campaign, the students decided to maintain their own, local, identity, retaining the name "FLO" rather than changing it to Real Food UNC. In December 2010, two RFC calculator student interns presented their findings: nearly 13 percent of the food and beverages sourced by Carolina Dining could be counted as Real (Hannapel 2016).

In 2011, RFC developed the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment as a tool for campus campaigns to use to secure a firm commitment to ongoing progress from university administrators. Because UNC students had initiated advocacy for sustainable

sourcing around the same time that RFC was established, FLO Foods at UNC was in a good position to be one of the earliest schools to win the Commitment. With encouragement from RFC, FLO students began a letter-writing campaign and other actions, including "unconventional gifts," to persuade then Chancellor Thorp to sign the RFC commitment. "Unconventional gifts," sometimes referred to by campaigns as "inconvenient gifts," were a series of actions developed by RFC that were designed to educate and keep pressure on the chancellor. Each week, a food item highlighting one of the four areas characterizing Real Food (community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane) was sent to the chancellor's office with a letter explaining that aspect of Real Food and why UNC should support purchasing aligned with those values.

In March 2012 FLO students succeeded in securing a meeting with Chancellor Thorp and went in with high expectations, having completed many months of preparation and information sharing with his office. They were deeply disappointed to find that he did not seem to have read any of the information they had been sending, and expressed little enthusiasm for the prospect of committing to the RFC 20 percent goal, despite the fact that their calculator data indicated that UNC was already pretty close to reaching it and their arguments that the Commitment could make the university a regional leader on this issue, with potential public relations benefits. As a result of the meeting, FLO students felt it was very unlikely that Thorp would agree to sign the Commitment. FLO student leaders considered taking additional steps to attempt to change the chancellor's mind. However, they decided they could accomplish more by continuing to work closely with Carolina Dining, with whom they had a very good working relationship—in

essence, working toward 20 percent Real Food without a formal commitment from the administration.

In February 2013, several FLO students attended a national RFC summit that kept group members aware of and connected to the growing RFC network of campaigns, but at that time FLO leaders still did not feel that formally aligning with RFC made sense for their group. They were concerned they would have difficulty maintaining the local character of their group if it became part of a national movement. However, the continued, active presence of FLO at UNC provided the continuity through which a second wave of students decided, in 2015, to make a second to secure the RFC Commitment.

4.3.2 Movement toward RFC and a second campaign

In 2012 the first generation of FLO students were graduating, but the group had a strong presence on campus that facilitated engagement of incoming students each year. North Carolina's Farm to Fork initiative, supported by the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), a partnership between North Carolina's two land grant universities and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, provided a context in which FLO could maintain momentum. CEFS is a national leader in sustainable agriculture and community-based food systems research and education (CEFS 2009). Reflecting these statewide trends and the strength of the FLO group, UNC selected "Food for All" as its 2015-18 university-wide academic theme, which created a significant opportunity for students to further advance Real Food objectives. In this context it was relatively easy for professors and students to justify continuation of UNC

student internships to run the RFC Calculator and devote attention to a range of social and environmental issues associated with food production.

During the 2014-15 academic year, one of the UNC students working as a Calculator intern with Carolina Dining established regular communications with RFC staff members in order to sort out difficulties using the tool. This student came to understand RFC as a grassroots network with shared leadership, managed by young people very much like the students running FLO: "I realized that I was just as much RFC as the executive director of RFC."[64] A close friendship with an RFC regional organizer also supported this student's growing relationship with RFC. Another factor that helped convince UNC students to formally affiliate with RFC and pursue the Commitment a second time was the potential for that network to amplify food sustainability wins at UNC on a regional, and even national, level. This new wave of student leaders became convinced that the RFC network was important because of the ways it could leverage progress at UNC as a model for other large, public universities in the Southeast. Further, in 2013 a new chancellor, Carol Folt,[65] was installed at UNC and she seemed more interested in engagement with student initiatives than had Chancellor Thorp.

A stronger connection between UNC students and RFC, along with a growing sense that institutionalizing progress through the Commitment was needed, led UNC students to agree to host a regional RFC summit in February 2016. The summit included a march inviting Chancellor Folt to "Come to the table" and sign the Commitment. A vice chancellor with responsibility for auxiliary services attended the march, signaling the

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[64] Interviewee UNC 1.

[65] Chancellor Carol Folt earned her PhD in Ecology at the University of California at Davis. None of the interviewees at UNC pointed to Dr. Folt's academic training as a factor in her support for the Real Food Commitment, but it is reasonable to expect that it would have supported her understanding of the ecological health aspect of Real Food standards.

new chancellor's openness to considering the Commitment. During the summit, the UNC Real Food student team developed a campaign strategy for securing the Commitment, and leaders focused on expanding the group of committed students.

Immediately following the summit, Real Food UNC implemented a series of actions developed by the national organization as way for students to "escalate" campus campaigns. Like the campaign at OSU and FLO students during the first Commitment campaign, Real Food UNC leaders sent "unconventional gifts" to the chancellor's office comprised of a basket with a food item associated with one aspect of Real Food standards and a letter from the group explaining the food's origin and why Carolina Dining should consider it a priority. Students adopted this tactic both to keep their "ask" in front of Chancellor Folt and also to provide further details justifying the importance and legitimacy of the RF Campus Commitment. However, in one student's words, the gift baskets "were not received in the way they were intended."[66] One staff member in particular expressed frustration that students had sent the baskets and letters directly to the chancellor, feeling that taking this step without consulting with the group of administrative staff members who had been meeting with them was disrespectful. This individual perceived the basket deliveries to be aggressive and inappropriate—a form of "protest." He also felt they were unnecessary, given that high-level staff already were negotiating with students about signing the Commitment. Some administrators at UNC, like their counterparts at Pitt, felt that teaching students how to negotiate in order to win the initiatives and commitments they wanted--without engaging in "activist" tactics--was part of their responsibility for educating the young people on campus.

[66] Interviewee UNC 1.

As described above, at UNC many faculty members were connected to food systems issues in some way, and the "Food for All" academic theme brought these faculty members, along with interested students and staff, together on a regular basis. This organizational structure and strong food system expertise among supportive faculty members at UNC supported student efforts to educate and advocate for Real Food standards in university food purchasing. In addition, several faculty members served in an advisory capacity to the Real Food UNC group in a way that was absent at the other three universities in this study. At least one faculty member attended meetings with administrative staff about the Real Food Commitment, alongside students. As one student put it, referring to a faculty mentor and ally, he "always backed us up."[67] In addition to providing expertise and moral support, faculty members also sometimes served as "buffers" when tension developed between the campaign leaders and an administrator. Faculty members were able to guide students in their response to difficult situations because the student leaders took their advice and feedback seriously.

In addition to consulting with and accepting suggestions from faculty allies, student leaders at UNC also shared examples of strategic choices they made on their own that they believe facilitated their success. For example, seeking to build stronger relationships directly with administrative staff persons, one student leader chose to do homework regularly sitting just outside the main dining hall. This was a strategic decision with the purpose of "bumping into" dining services and auxiliary services staff informally in order to have the opportunity to establish better rapport, and the student felt that the tactic accomplished that objective.

[67] Interviewee UNC 8.

Faculty members also worked with administrators and national RFC staff to negotiate modest changes in the Commitment document itself in order to address concerns about the steps that would follow after signing the Commitment. On April 26, 2016, Chancellor Folt signed the Real Food Challenge Campus Commitment on behalf of UNC. At the signing ceremony, Folt noted that the university was a National Grand Prize winner for campus sustainability according to the National Association of College and University Food Services (Wakeman 2016). Thus, Chancellor Folt seemed to agree with the students that leadership in food sustainability could bring favorable attention to the university.

4.3.3 A favorable environment and persistent campaign

What explains the successful outcome of the second wave with respect to the Campus Commitment, where the first wave had failed? Student leaders and closely involved faculty and staff pointed to many of the same key elements but placed different relative importance on them. All agreed that the student campaign and student leaders' flexibility, faculty and administrative support, and an academic environment that provided opportunities for advocating food system reform all contributed to the positive outcome. In addition, UNC's efforts were supported by broader statewide initiatives at the time that provided significant political and economic opportunities for the campaign. Outside the university these included strong state investment in advancing farm-to-institution purchasing and relative flexibility for the administration to pursue sustainability commitments. Inside the university, a supportive group of people at Aramark (the Carolina Dining contractor) and a generally progressive student population contributed.to the favorable environment for advancing Real Food.

As described above, at the time that FLO was created at UNC, in 2007, North Carolina's land grant universities were investing in a large-scale effort to advance "farm-to-fork" initiatives and sustainable agriculture through the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. Military bases in North Carolina were advancing similar programs, with an eye to farmland preservation around the bases as well as base carbon emissions reduction goals. Several staff and faculty members and a farmer in the sustainable agriculture community all indicated that these political and economic opportunities, along with strong student and faculty interest and engagement, explained why UNC already was close to reaching the 20 percent mark for Real Food at the time that the winning campaign was launched.

North Carolina's highly conservative political context did not seem to significantly influence its consideration of the Campus Commitment.[68] The Real Food Campus Commitment was modeled after the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, and UNC was a charter signatory of that Commitment. That step signaled UNC's relative independence from the state's political context, as well as its willingness to participate in formal commitments similar to the Real Food Commitment. As one staff person described, UNC seemed to have the ability to implement progressive programs as long as it could do so without significant budgetary effects and without attracting the attention of the legislature.

One obvious difference between FLO's first attempt at the Commitment and the later campaign was the change in chancellor. Several staff and faculty members

[68] In May 2016, when Chancellor Folt signed the RFC Campus Commitment, North Carolina had a Republican Governor and its State House and Senate were both Republican-controlled (NCSL "2016 State and Legislative Partisan Composition," Retrieved March 6, 2018: http://www.ncsl.org/portals/1/documents/elections/Legis_Control_2016.pdf).

interviewed felt that Chancellor Folt was eager to sign the Commitment and that she viewed it as advantageous for the university. One recalled hearing that UNC auxiliary representatives (presumably with the chancellor's support) had communicated to Aramark representatives a willingness to incur modest increased costs, if needed, in association with the RFC Commitment. While Real Food student leaders never met directly with Chancellor Folt, some noted they had noticed a difference in communication styles between the two chancellors. For example, in contrast to Thorp, Folt initiated regular email communication with the campus community soon after arriving on campus.

While the FLO group that met with Chancellor Thorp in March 2012 did not get his support for the RFC Commitment, they were not discouraged and they continued auditing purchases and providing product shift recommendations to Carolina Dining Services staff. Their work certainly laid the groundwork for the strong support from dining staff that the later Real Food leaders enjoyed. As was the case at Pitt, auxiliary services at UNC wanted clear assurances that the Commitment was feasible and that Carolina Dining staff members were confident that the goal of 20 percent by 2020 could be reached.

4.4 The University of Georgia

The Real Food group at the University of Georgia (UGA) began around the same time that the OSU group got underway, in 2010. Like RF groups at OSU and UNC, Real Food UGA began with a focus on local farmers and finding ways to connect them and their produce with the campus, through events and through dining services, while mobilizing and educating students about the benefits of Real Food. Unlike OSU and UNC, the UGA

group was part of the RFC network from the beginning, inspired by campaigns at other schools. UGA, like OSU, is a Land Grant University that houses the state's largest College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. This aspect of the UGA campaign's context had a powerful influence on its trajectory. Figure 4.4 summarizes the progression of Real Food UGA.

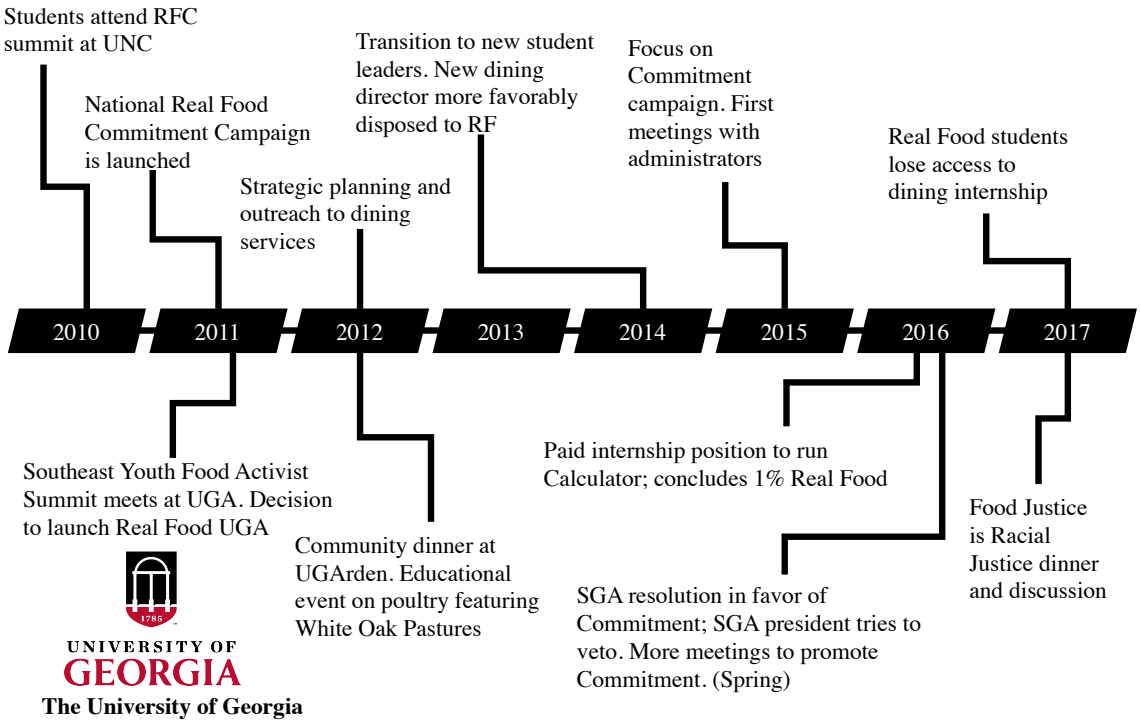

Figure 4.4: Real Food UGA Timeline

4.4.1 Launch and early campaign

UGA students formed the Real Food group at a time when there was a great deal of student activity on campus surrounding environment and sustainability. In 2010, UGA created its first Office of Sustainability following a student-led campaign that resulted in a successful referendum for a Green Fee to fund the office (University of Georgia 2015a). Leaders of that campaign had created an umbrella organization, the Go Green Alliance,

to facilitate coordination between UGA's many small, environmentally oriented student groups.[69] In the fall of 2010 UGA student Kate Klein learned about RFC through student Rachel Spencer at a Go Green Alliance meeting. Rachel invited her to go to a regional training event for RFC at UNC and they traveled to it together. There were about 30 students at that event, which was focused on community organizing skills. It included a history of student movements and student activism, opportunities to practice organizing techniques, and opportunities for networking with students at other schools.

In early 2011, Klein and Spencer helped coordinate the third annual Southeast Youth Food Activist Summit at UGA. The summit brought about 250 students from across the Southeast, and UGA students were energized as they learned about examples of initiatives to promote fair, local, and sustainable food on other campuses. Following that summit, toward the end of spring semester 2011, these two students and Sara Black, another UGA student who attended the summit, held a meeting for UGA students interested in food systems issues. At that meeting, the three initial leaders decided they would form Real Food UGA (RF UGA).

Thus, RF UGA was launched in 2011 in the context of a great deal of activity and some optimism regarding student-led environmental initiatives at UGA, and with a structure on campus—the Go Green Alliance—that facilitated the connections among students with overlapping interests. However, one of the early leaders of RF UGA described coordination among groups within the Go Green Alliance as somewhat tense, because member groups varied quite a bit in their goals and preferred tactics. Real Food

[69] A list of organizations affiliated with Go Green Alliance was not available at the time of writing, but UGA's Office of Sustainability lists 21 student groups related to sustainability, including Real Food UGA. Retrieved on June 13, 2018 (https://sustainability.uga.edu/get-involved/student-organizations/).

leaders leaned toward the "radical" end of the spectrum and often were members of other progressive groups on campus, including the Beyond Coal campaign that sought to pressure the administration to close down UGA's coal-fired boiler. These students were comfortable engaging in confrontational tactics, including marches and rallies, and they published several strongly worded opinion editorials that challenged UGA's administration when it failed to act. Other UGA groups, such as Students for Environmental Action (SEA), preferred to work through formal channels, in collaboration with administrators, and were not in favor of direct action.

Early RF UGA leaders struggled to determine the best course of action to advance Real Food's goals. They learned that the newly created UGA Sustainability Plan included a goal of 35 percent local and sustainable food purchasing, without metrics, so one option was to focus on influencing those metrics, which could be based on the Real Food Calculator (University of Georgia 2015b). Doing so would require building relationships with Dining Services staff, while also building support among students for what they would propose. As a result, the students spent much of their time in the first two years of Real Food UGA developing those relationships, while figuring out a plan of action for advancing RFC objectives. In one student's words, "…that first year we focused a lot on figuring out a plan of action, getting to know the system, putting on events, trying to cultivate a student mentality around the fact that sustainable food should not just be about organic—it should be about labor, it should be about scale, it should be about economics…"[70] Similar to OSU and UNC, RF UGA's earliest events included farmer's markets on campus and dinners highlighting local food. For example, in its first year, RF-UGA organized a 100-seat dinner at the UGArden, an educational farm that seeks to

[70] Interviewee UGA 11.

"build a community of students centered on a sustainable food system" (The University of Georgia CAES 2018).

For early RF UGA student leaders with experience in activism at UGA, this process of developing a plan and thinking through what would work at UGA was strongly influenced by their experience with other campus campaigns, particularly the Beyond Coal campaign, which had not made much progress despite, in the students' view, a relatively low-cost "ask" supported by a great deal of research. One early RF student leader described UGA's context in this way:

> I was confident we could not pull off some kind of mass energy uprising, the way that RFC talked about the campaign, because students at UGA are really apathetic and conservative, for the most part. And so I don't think it would have worked if we had tried to run a campaign with student outrage over the food system…[71]

In other words, the early leadership of RF UGA included students experienced in and comfortable engaging in disruptive forms of protest, including rallies and marches, but they were skeptical that a confrontational approach was an effective one for advancing Real Food purchasing at UGA.

Some student leaders also were mindful of the potential for negative consequences for students who directed critical statements at the university. Many RF UGA leaders were part of prestigious cohorts at UGA including the Honors and Foundation Fellows programs; some were also selected as Udall Scholars (a national award), Truman Fellows, and Blue Key Honor Society members. As students who were academic leaders, many RF UGA students worked to take advantage of their connections to administrators to advance the campaign. However, this proximity to administrators also sometimes made them feel more vulnerable to negative feedback from their targets.

[71] Interviewee UGA 11.

One student pointed to an incident in 2013 in which a student activist argued strongly, in a student newspaper opinion piece, that her views on UGA's aging coal-fired boiler and its poor record on energy issues had been censored in university publications (Hatzenbuhler 2013). Following the student's public criticism, the director of UGA's honors program, David Williams, spoke harshly about this student to one of the RF UGA leaders, saying that if others chose to behave in that way, they could expect to lose the support and respect of administrators.

All RF UGA students interviewed described UGA as a challenging environment for progressive organizing. In addition to their experience that confrontational tactics did not seem to produce results at UGA, some students also were feeling "burned out" from failed efforts that had required many hours of hard work. In response to the hostile climate, they formed what began as a loose coalition with other progressive organizations, which they jokingly referred to as "Dumbledore's Army."[72] UGA students later named this network the Progressive Action Coalition (PAC). More broadly, another contextual factor that some felt undermined student support for confrontational tactics in the early stages of RF UGA was a shift among progressives after President Obama won the presidency in 2008. With a progressive in power, generally supportive of environmental protections, it seemed harder to drum up outrage. As one student put it, "it was the Obama years and people didn't know how to have a sustained sense of emotional urgency."[73] Degree of threat, as well as opportunities, has been important for

[72] "Dumbledore's Army" is a reference from J.K. Rowling's (2003) *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, in which Harry leads a group of student wizards in an underground effort to learn how to defend themselves after the leadership of their school is taken over by people allied with "dark forces." The choice of this reference by UGA progressive student activists reflects their feeling that they were operating in a very hostile environment.
[73] Interviewee UGA 11.

mobilization in environmental movements (see, for example, McAdam et al. 2001); an early UGA Real Food leader felt the return to a presidential administration supportive of environmental protection and progressive issues more broadly undermined threat-based mobilizing frames.

All of the factors described above resulted in the early RF UGA leadership choosing a variety of educational and relational strategies to advance progress toward Real Food purchasing in the dining halls, rejecting many of the "actions" recommended by the national RFC organization. However, while UGA's unfavorable environment for progressive activism influenced the early leaders' decision to refrain from confrontational tactics, it did not lead them to frame their messaging in ways that might be more palatable to administrators. UGA's early RF student leaders embraced the broad food system reform goals of RFC, in addition to the campaign objective of getting the Commitment signed, and their educational outreach and conversations with university staff reflected that orientation. Further, RF UGA students were not always aware of or fully considered the implications of the political context of agriculture in Georgia, which is heavily commodity-based, as they evaluated what frames and strategic approach would be most likely to win the RFC Campus Commitment. For example, in 2012, RF UGA hosted Will Harris, owner of White Oak Pastures, the largest regenerative meat-producing farm in Georgia, to promote the possibility of serving White Oak pastured chicken in UGA dining halls. White Oak chickens[74] are pasture-raised and cost four to five times the price of conventional poultry. At the time of this event, students indicated they had not yet considered and discussed the best strategy for messaging about poultry,

[74] White Oak chickens and turkeys are Step 5+ rated by the Global Animal partnership and are Certified Humane, exceeding RFC calculator standards (White Oak Pastures 2018).

given the power of the Georgia poultry industry--an industry built upon the kind of poultry production that RFC standards explicitly disallow in Real Food calculations. Conventional poultry is Georgia's largest agricultural commodity, and it represents billions of dollars annually to the state's economy (Georgia Department of Agriculture 2018).[75] In other words, RF UGA students began challenging Georgia's largest (in dollars) industry, consistent with RFC principles and Real Food standards, before having fully considered how that aspect of Georgia's political and agricultural environment might influence their campaign.

RF UGA's early relationship with dining services was challenging. When the students first contacted dining at Real Food in 2011, Jeanne Fry was the director and she was not at all open to the kinds of changes that the students suggested. Students who met with her reported uniformly negative responses, some logistical and cost-oriented but also just a sense that UGA dining was doing quite well—winning national awards and keeping students happy—and so they had no need to take on a new initiative. In addition, Fry stated to students on tours of the dining facilities that about 20 percent of the food served was local or sustainable. That number apparently reflected the inclusion of conventionally produced Georgia broilers (chickens raised for meat). Thus, although no formal metric had been created for the university goal of 35 percent "local or sustainable food" in the dining halls, staff in dining services had informally adopted metrics for reporting their local and sustainable purchasing practices that were quite different from RFC standards. Despite Fry's attitude, several students were able to work with the purchasing manager to get access to purchasing data. During the 2014-15 academic year,

[75] In 2012, the year that Will Harris was invited to speak at UGA, Georgia's poultry and eggs farm gate value was more than $5.7 billion. Retrieved June 13, 2018 (http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/center/caed/documents/CAEDFarmGateValueReportfor2012B.pdf).

three students (as volunteers) tried to make sense of the information available and found it highly challenging, as the paperwork provided to them often did not contain enough information about the sources for students to be able to determine what food qualified as Real using RFC's calculator. In addition, in 2015 RF UGA hosted a group from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), an organization that has successfully advanced a "Fair Food Program" that "ensures humane wages and working conditions for the workers who pick fruits and vegetables on participating farms" (Fair Food Program N.d.:para. 1).

4.4.2 New leaders and the second wave

With the graduation of several early leaders of RF-UGA in 2014, several students reported that the group went through a sort of "identity crisis," trying to figure out the next course of action. Cathy Micali, a nutrition and dietetics major, and Rachel Usher, an ecology major, stepped up to provide leadership. Another emerging leader in the second wave, Elizabeth Wilkes, knew about Real Food before deciding to attend UGA; as an invited Foundation Fellow, she was "recruited" by Sara Black, an early RF leader who also had been a Foundation Fellow and who wanted to ensure the continuity of RF at UGA. In addition, both Black and Wilkes were ecology majors—one graduating, one entering. Because of this connection, Wilkes got involved in RF UGA immediately, in her freshman year.

The second group of RF UGA leaders shared in common with early leaders a strong commitment to the full RFC vision and reluctance to compromise their messaging in order to work effectively with administrators. However, most of the first group of leaders, while comfortable with confrontational tactics personally, were convinced that

that approach would backfire at UGA. In contrast, some (but not all) in the second set of leaders embraced RFC guidance to "escalate" the campaign, hopeful that getting "louder" would demonstrate power to the president's office and convince him to sign the commitment.

The second group of RF UGA leaders described the work of the early team as a process of laying groundwork, building a relationship with food services, and educating and engaging the community through food-oriented events. Toward the end of fall semester, 2014, Jeanne Fry left her position in dining services and was replaced by Bryan Varin as Interim Director (then later, Director), who was much more experienced with sustainable food system issues and more open to working with RF UGA students than Fry. At this point, the RF student leaders felt they were really beginning to make progress with dining services, identifying steps they could take to slowly increase the amount of Real Food served. Several RF students met regularly with Varin, who expressed interest in advancing more vegetarian, nutritious, and sustainable options in dining halls. In addition, after Varin replaced Fry, students were able to gain access to more detailed invoices in order to "run" the Real Food Calculator. He worked with the Real Food students to create a paid student internship position for fall 2016 to complete the calculator work. Through that position, an RF student leader completed UGA's first RF calculator analysis at the end of the fall 2016 term, concluding that less than one percent of UGA's purchasing was "real" by RFC standards.

The low number produced by the Calculator review surprised the Dining Services Director. RF students thought that surprise likely resulted from the differences between Real Food standards and what UGA had been considering to be "local." One area of

difference was distance; RFC's community-based criteria uses 250 miles as the limit, whereas UGA had considered anything from a neighboring state to be "local." Perhaps more significant was the difference in how animal products were handled. RFC standards exclude products that originate in Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) because of concerns about environmental, worker, and environmental justice impacts of this kind of operation. As described above, the 20 percent figure Fry quoted regularly appeared to include conventional poultry, disallowed by RFC standards.

While the first comprehensive RFC calculator analysis was underway, other students were working to engage the support of UGA deans and to secure meetings with the Office of President Morehead and Provost Whitten, who would be the two signatories on the RFC commitment if the students could persuade them to participate. As described above, many RF UGA leaders were outstanding students, and they hoped to leverage their personal and academic connections to gain the support of academic deans, including the Dean of Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of Health and Consumer Science, and the Dean of Odum School of Ecology. Most gave noncommittal responses, making clear that they had no authority with respect food purchasing decisions or the decision regarding signing the RFC commitment. At the same time, RF UGA students continued soliciting petition signatures from students and faculty members in relevant fields to demonstrate strong campus support when meeting with administrators. The group also continued educating the campus community about their vision of Real Food, particularly the social justice aspects of it. They felt that most people still understood sustainable food to be about organic certification and environment issues but not about labor, land distribution, and the effects of corporate consolidation.

Like students at UNC and OSU, most RF UGA students took courses exploring various aspects of food systems and sustainable agriculture, and many were pursuing majors including ecology, environmental sciences, geography, social sciences, and environmental health sciences that connected with Real Food's objectives and concerns. Along with workshops sponsored by the national RFC organization, students reported that these UGA courses and faculty expertise were important to their ability to understand complex food system issues and develop a strong case for the RFC Commitment in preparation for their meetings with administrators. In addition, at least two faculty members collaborated with RF students on educational events, including film screenings.[76]

While some UGA faculty members were very helpful to the education of students, RF UGA students did not view any faculty members as "active allies," or individuals who might actively support their campaign. From the students' perspective, the faculty members who were supportive of their goals felt their campaign goal, getting the Commitment signed, while worthy, was unlikely to be successful. Some students also sensed, on the part of faculty, concerns about being associated with the campaign for fear of reprisals; some felt this concern so strongly that they hesitated to identify sympathetic faculty members in their interviews. Several faculty members interviewed shared that they did, indeed, believe there could be serious consequences for speaking critically about conventional agribusiness at UGA, and that people were afraid to be associated with an initiative like RF UGA. Another connected this sentiment to a broader sense that, at that time, faculty members had to be very careful to avoid being perceived to be

[76] The documentary films shared by RF UGA through educational events included *Food Chains* and *Under Contract*.

"liberal" and steering students toward activism. Thus, in addition to a fear of repercussions some of the early RF UGA students felt about challenging UGA administrators, faculty and dean allies also felt constrained with respect to the ways in which they felt they could endorse RF UGA and its campaign. One student put it this way:

> They know what we're trying to do, but they would just…it was just depressing--they kind of gave a sense of 'well, good luck with that!!' I thought maybe they could be advocates for us, but these are really complicated politics, and, I don't know if it's like their jobs are on the line… I definitely was instructed to not repeat some things.[77]

A few faculty members remembered sharing advice with students relevant to the agricultural and political context shaping UGA priorities, but students did not refer to that advice in their accounts. The second wave of RF UGA leaders felt they had a powerful case, and they were energized by RFC's principles and the solidarity they felt with other food justice activists. Student and faculty petitions in hand, RF UGA leaders pursued meetings with administrative staff with great persistence. The process was frustrating and slow, as described by one student:

> They did kind of offer us a little bit and then kind of take it back or ignore us. We [were] offered meetings and then they would just keep pushing the date or saying 'this week isn't good, try us in two weeks.' Essentially they were just completely stalling us. So, there would be moments when we felt like we were moving forward, and then we would just totally hit a wall.[78]

After months of work to set it up, students finally met with Arthur Tripp, Assistant to President Morehead, for the first time in late fall, 2015. One student recalled his response as being generally favorable until the specifics of signing the Commitment were described; the student perceived that Tripp viewed the formal Commitment as

[77] Interviewee UGA 9.
[78] Interviewee UGA 9.

problematic. Another student interpreted Tripp's response throughout as that of a highly skilled "spin doctor," listening but unwilling to provide a clear response.

During spring semester 2016 several RF UGA students secured a second meeting with Tripp. In this meeting, students shared a map of colleges and universities that had signed the Commitment and a map of farms near UGA that would meet Real Food standards. The students felt they made a very well researched pitch and that Tripp's response, encouraging them to do further research, was a stalling tactic. Around the same time, RF UGA student Rachel Usher, a presidential scholar in the Odum School of Ecology, used her position as a top scholar to secure a meeting with Provost Whitten. The group prepared a pitch highlighting the dietary benefits of their proposal to appeal to Whitten's training as a public health scientist. According to the students who attended, she raised two primary objections in the meeting: first, that the Commitment would legally bind UGA to a promise it might not be able to keep, which is a common objection to RFC campaigns; and second, that the RFC Commitment might be a problem for the Board of Regents, the governing body of the University System of Georgia. This was one of the first indicators to students that administrators had concerns about how RFC would be perceived by external stakeholders important to the university. The students also felt she was dismissive and did not take them seriously; they felt very frustrated because of all the research and preparation they had put into the materials they provided Provost Whitten and Arthur Tripp. As one student remembered it, "I guess I was just really disappointed in our university, that these are your top performing undergrads, who are coming to you, with the brains you helped to train, and you are just saying 'This is adult

land, you need to go play in your sandbox.' Which was the general gist of all the big meetings we had."[79]

Another objection that Tripp and Whitten raised in their meetings with RF UGA students was that the RFC Commitment was unnecessary because UGA already had committed to a goal of reaching 35 percent local and sustainable food by 2020. Like students at OSU, the RF UGA group felt that the pre-existing "local and sustainable food" commitment at UGA was used as an excuse to reject the RFC commitment. As one student described:

> At first it felt like a win—like wow, the university is already interested in this. But I feel like it came back to really haunt us, in our meetings, with people like Provost Whitten and Arthur Tripp just because it didn't make sense to them, like 'you want something that we're already doing.' But that wasn't true—we wanted them to do an addendum or be more specific about the criteria. They just kept going back to 'oh we're already doing this.'[80]

At this point in the campaign, with no clear indication from the president's office that any amount of research was going to move their case further, one student reported pressure from RFC staff to "escalate" tactics along the lines of the OSU campaign and occupy President Morehead's office. RFC organizers made this recommendation in the context of planning a farmer's market event in April 2016. During this event, students displayed a large canvas version of the RFC commitment for attendees to see and sign, and sent an invitation to the president's office. The visual banner was a compromise—an alternative to "sitting-in"-- because the UGA students did not think that occupying the

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[79] Interviewee UGA 8. *Note:* Provost Whitten and Arthur Tripp ignored repeated attempts to communicate with them about RF UGA, including multiple emails and in-person requests made at their offices. After multiple attempts to reach him, Associate Vice Provost and Director of the Honors Program David Williams responded to my interview requests by responding that he was unable to participate. The dean of Odum School of Ecology also failed to respond to repeated email, phone, and in-person requests for an interview.
[80] Interviewee UGA 8.

president's office would help their cause. At least some felt they had received a "soft no" but not a "hard no" from the president's office, and that such a confrontational approach would undermine the campaign. While no one from President Morehead's office attended the event in an official capacity, one office staff member attended out of personal interest, making clear she did not represent the president.

An additional avenue that RF UGA pursued to demonstrate strong campus support was securing a Student Government Association (SGA) resolution to support the RFC Commitment. David Williams recommended this approach to students, saying he felt that President Morehead would take SGA support seriously. Many campus RFC campaigns pursue an SGA resolution as a demonstration of student body support for the initiative, and RF UGA students had seen this tactic used effectively at other universities. RF UGA's relationship with SGA began with cooperation and then changed abruptly. In March 2016, students took their proposal to the SGA and the vote approving the resolution was almost unanimous. The resolution (28-27 of the 2015-2016 academic year) supported the request of RF UGA that President Morehead and Provost Whitten sign the RFC Campus Commitment (Huller 2016). When RF UGA leaders reached out to the SGA president after the vote to ask about next steps and when the resolution would reach President Morehead's desk, he responded that he had to check in with several offices first, including Arthur Tripp's. About two weeks later, the SGA president tried to veto the resolution but was unable to do so because the window for a veto (one week) had closed. RF UGA students believed the abrupt change of position of the SGA president was the result of communication with Tripp, who, they assumed, had told him that President Morehead was not in favor of the RFC Commitment. The SGA president wrote,

in an email to RF UGA students, that he had decided to veto the resolution because UGA already had a more ambitious local and sustainable food commitment in its sustainability plan—the same response students had received, at times, from Whitten and Tripp. Real Food UGA students were unsure whether the SGA president honestly misunderstood the difference between Real Food standards and the UGA commitment (with no metrics attached), or whether he was simply stating the position he had heard from the administrators with whom he consulted.

At the beginning of fall semester 2016, RF UGA students continued pursuing several avenues. One, they followed up with SGA, which now had new leadership and membership. They had a signed resolution from March 2016 but were again met with resistance from the SGA president, who, in one student's view, basically indicated there was no way President Morehead would sign the RFC Commitment, even though the previous year's SGA had formally endorsed it. Second, RF UGA students also were busy working with RFC staff to plan its national summit, to be held at UGA in September. The plan was to use the summit and the opportunity for greater student numbers it provided to increase pressure on President Morehead to meet with the students, who by that time were having difficulty getting another meeting with Arthur Tripp. The summit took place the weekend of September 23, 2016, and connected RF UGA with progressive groups in Athens, RFC staff, and other RF student leaders throughout the United States. The summit gave the UGA group an opportunity to demonstrate greater numbers, and the weekend included the march described on the opening page of this dissertation, calling on President Morehead to "come take a seat at the table!" Students carried chairs over their heads that were painted with words and images representing different facets of Real Food

Challenge principles, including worker rights and humane treatment of animals. Chants included "Up, up, with the Real Food nation; Down, down, with the exploitation!" One of many tweets originating at the summit read "Where there is the greatest opposition, the greatest resistance," referring, presumably, to the resistance of UGA's leadership to the RFC Commitment.[81]

At least one faculty member, who had previously worked with students on film screenings, attended some of the summit activities and was impressed by the group's diversity and its commitment to "making the issue less white."[82] Like many RF students at OSU and UNC, students at UGA reported feeling energized and inspired by RFC summits. In the words of a UGA participant at the September, 2016 national summit in Athens, "We're all like souls. We eat a lot of really good food when we do the summits and cook together and we have tea at nighttime and its just really nice to be able to have that when we work so hard, and face all this money and power and people who don't really want to talk to us."[83]

Following the summit, RF UGA increased pressure on administrators in the same way that the campaigns at OSU and UNC had done—sending "unconventional gifts" weekly to the president's office. Arthur Tripp's office returned the baskets with a note indicating that the office could not accept gifts. Students also followed up on suggestions made about additional contacts in their meetings with Tripp and Whitten, including meeting with the new Dean of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Sam Pardue. A single student held an initial meeting with Dean Pardue in November,

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[81] Real Food Challenge staff person Katie Leblanc's Twitter feed, accessed March 22, 2018, https://twitter.com/katieleblancrfc/status/779789589343068160.
[82] Interviewee UGA 5.
[83] Interviewee UGA 6.

2016, and he seemed open to the group's ideas and proposals. At the end of this initial meeting he made a commitment to raise the issue of the RFC commitment in his next meeting with Provost Whitten, scheduled for December 2016.

In October 2016, as the RF UGA students continued to try to secure more meetings with administrators, two students took advantage of an opportunity to connect with them informally through an award ceremony to which one of the students, along with a guest, had been invited. Also present were friends who were not affiliated with RF UGA. At the event, David Williams approached the two RF UGA students, with whom he was well acquainted, and began asking questions about Real Food in a way that suggested concern. These students later heard from a friend who was seated at President Morehead's table that during the dinner, other people seated at the table asked questions of the president about a student group on campus that wanted to ban "GMO chicken" (presumably RF UGA). The student reported that President Morehead's response included the fact that one of the group's leaders was a Foundation Fellow (presumably referring to Elizabeth Wilkes) and that he had expressed concerns about this to the head of that program, David Williams. He shared this not realizing that a friend of Elizabeth's was seated at the table. Upon hearing about this exchange, the students attributed Williams' unusual behavior earlier that evening to having heard concerns from President Morehead about Foundation Fellows participating in RF UGA. Several RF UGA students described this event as a "clarifying moment" when they came to believe that powerful people were pressuring the president's office to quell the RFC campaign. RF students reported that shortly after this event, Dr. Williams, who previously had supported RF

UGA's efforts to get an SGA resolution passed, suggested that they stop pursuing that route and that they "change their tone."

In December 2016, as students had secured a tepid agreement from the new SGA leadership to provide some support for their efforts to engage more students in Real Food issues, they followed up with Dean Pardue to see how his conversation with Provost Whitten had gone and to let him know they had SGA support. His response was less favorable than it had been initially. The primary objection he shared was that the reporting requirements of the Commitment required resources UGA dining services did not have, and he urged the students to continue working informally with dining services. Students were very frustrated by his response because they already had provided free labor and done the legwork to create a position in Dining Services specifically to ensure it would have the required capacity for auditing and reporting on its food purchasing.

Soon thereafter, during spring semester 2017, students experienced another, related disappointment—this one originating with Dining Services. As described above, an RF UGA student completed the baseline RFC calculator audit during fall 2016, through a paid position that RF UGA students were largely responsible for creating. That student, Lori Hanna was studying overseas spring semester 2017 so two other RF UGA students applied for the position. There was a long delay in filling the position and neither RF student was considered, which baffled the students, as they both had a strong understanding of the regional food system as well as the RFC calculator. It appeared that the Dining Services Director decided to broaden the role of the position and not tie it specifically to the RFC calculator, but he did not give RF UGA students any explanation

of why the change was made or why the two RF UGA students were not invited to interview for the position.

4.4.3 Progress, outcomes, and perspectives

By the beginning of spring semester 2017, RF UGA students felt they had received a "soft no" from the president's office. As RF UGA tried to figure out next steps with Dining Services and how to win the Commitment, given the level of opposition it seemed to face, they significantly expanded their community coalition partners. On campus, they worked on a Points of Unity document with the Progressive Action Coalition (PAC). Some students felt that this coalitional work not only was consistent with their commitment to social justice more broadly, but also that it would build their visibility and power with the UGA administration because RF UGA itself was a very small group. Real Food OSU had collaborated with other progressive groups for marches and sit-ins, in part, also to increase their numbers. However, at UGA the PAC did not escalate tactics to the level of occupying the president's building, as did students at OSU.

First and second wave RF UGA leaders held a variety of perspectives on past and future tactics and what strategic approaches would be most likely to win changes in food procurement. Further, different students held different priorities. Some felt that, absent getting President Morehead to sign the RFC Commitment, students should work behind the scenes to make changes in collaboration with dining services. Other students cared most passionately about the broader vision of RFC—systemic change in agricultural production related to food justice issues. One student leader described that priority in a way very similar to core leaders at OSU:

> What I feel called to do and what I'm currently doing with Real Food national is, y'all need to take this stuff seriously (poultry contract farming); this is the

> epitome of corporate farming…If we're really going to win food system transformation, this is what's up… I think until we name, until we render this visible…—these abuses, these anti-competitive practices—that can't happen unless we're talking about it. …You have to name what the bad is. And some people may disagree but that's what I've been feeling really hugely lately.[84]

Real Food student leaders at UGA worked to advance Real Food issues and the Campus Commitment in the least hospitable environment of the four campuses examined in this study. UGA had a limited history and contemporary presence of progressive student activism; administrative staff were unwilling to explore the Commitment in detail, despite a supportive Dining Services director and SGA support; students, faculty, and members of the sustainable agriculture community in Georgia all reported a strong affiliation between UGA and conventional agribusiness; and the power of conventional agricultural interests resulted in an atmosphere in which some faculty members felt they could not openly express support for Real Food goals and principles. In sum, as one faculty member put it, "It is really hard to convince this institution that money is well spent toward the direction of sustainable agriculture initiative, at all."[85] Certainly, any RFC student campaign would have experienced difficulty advancing its objective in this environment.

Most RF UGA students attributed their difficulty in making progress to UGA's connections to conventional agriculture. Some students also shared their experience that UGA, generally speaking, seemed to have a culture that was not particularly open to progressive, student-led initiatives, and several students reported hearing similar frustrations from faculty and staff. Many students in RF UGA also pointed to UGA as a

[84] Interviewee UGA 9.
[85] Interviewee UGA 13.

campus that tended to be challenging for any group trying to mobilize students around a progressive issue.

Several UGA faculty members interviewed agreed with students about the influence of the conflict between UGA's connections to agribusiness and Real Food standards on their campaign. In addition to the perceived influence of agribusiness at UGA, a few faculty members also noted a general conservatism in the culture of UGA's leadership; as one stated: "In general, UGA tries to keep a low profile—it doesn't want to draw fire."[86] Many faculty members and students assumed that the administration's reluctance to sign onto any kind of progressive, external commitment, including carbon reduction targets or the Real Food Commitment, was in part a result of concerns that these steps would, in fact, "draw fire" from members of the Board of Regents or Georgia's elected officials, who influence appropriations and other forms of control over the university.

In addition to the politically challenging context at UGA, the Real Food Commitment may also have been perceived negatively because reaching the 20 percent benchmark by 2020 would have been extremely challenging. Once students succeeded in gaining access to dining invoices and completed an assessment using the Real Food calculator, UGA's baseline finding of less than 1 percent Real Food certainly did not help their case, particularly when the university's 2015 sustainability plan had set out a near-term goal to "purchase 35% of food items served on campus through local and sustainable sources" (The University of Georgia 2015b:18). Clearly, if UGA were to use RFC's standards for evaluating "local" and "sustainable" food, the university would have a very difficult time meeting the RFC target, let alone its own, higher 2020 goal.

[86] Interviewee UGA 12.

In contrast to Pitt, where RFC goals were not perceived as threatening, and UNC, where the Food for All initiative and state-supported farm-to-institution initiatives provided political and economic opportunities, Real Food UGA students struggled to decide what they would prioritize and consider to be "success" and how best to advance their objectives. Several students wondered if the campaign's moderate "escalation" in 2016 undermined the progress students had made with dining services, because a student not affiliated with RF UGA was chosen over two RF UGA students to replace Lori Hanna. Students really struggled to figure out what kind of strategic approach and tactics would be most likely to win the Commitment, given their perception that powerful agribusiness interests were at least part of the resistance from UGA administrators. As one described:

> How do we fight something like that? How do we organize around that? Because there's so much money involved and as unfortunate as that is, money talks, and we don't have resources like that to fight that. So that's where we are right now—trying to figure out how we can build power around us, instead of looking to the people above us—looking to them for power.[87]

By the 2016-17 academic year, a number of UGA leaders, like students at OSU, were developing a stronger commitment to social justice goals and related coalition partners on campus in their community. If they could not successfully fight the UGA administration, they could work in solidarity with a variety of people in Athens who shared their desire to raise awareness about connections between food justice and racial justice and to expose the negative consequences for contract farmers and other workers of Georgia's conventional poultry industry, as well as related concerns surrounding corporate consolidation in agribusiness.

[87] Interviewee UGA 6.

Some students from the "first wave" who have since graduated pointed to different strategic directions that might have proven more effective in advancing the Commitment campaign. Several noted that some of the RF UGA leaders had connections with families that had some clout with the UGA administration as donors, and wondered if engaging progressive UGA donors as allies would have been more effective than student "actions." Two others thought that RF UGA needed to engage students who eat in the dining halls, getting the actual clients to demand more Real Food, and do so in a more strategic way. For example, rather than engaging a group of dining hall customers in a rally clearly organized by RF UGA, the group could facilitate individual and regular "comment cards" submitted to dining services by students, each requesting different kinds of Real Food.[88]

Faculty who supported RF UGA goals and members of the sustainable agriculture community in Georgia agreed that the decision, implicit or explicit, to simultaneously challenge conventional agribusiness—particularly conventional poultry—and seek to gain administrative support for the Commitment was destined to fail. Based upon their experiences advancing sustainable agriculture in Georgia, they felt that the students could work with Dining Services to make incremental, steady increases in Real Food purchasing, OR they could educate and raise awareness about the problem with conventional poultry production in Georgia, but they could not do both simultaneously. Two faculty members made very similar statement along these lines:

> I don't think that UGA's unmovable. I really don't. I just keep coming back to, we are embedded in a particular political context, that it behooves us to recognize. And so how do we push that envelope, recognizing the context that we're in.[89]

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[88] None of the eight students interviewed with RF UGA were (at the time) using UGA's dining services.
[89] Interviewee UGA 13.

> The people who are successful at this [kind of initiative] are able to walk the line and present it in a way that [administrators] can digest. And I don't think students necessarily understand that. And you're young, you're idealistic, everyone should be thinking like-minded, and this is not the case.[90]

4.5 Summary of Cases

At all four universities, at least some interviewees pointed to contextual factors they felt supported or impeded the RF campaign on their campus. Pitt was the only campaign in which student leaders decided not to try many of the actions recommended by RFC, including "unconventional gifts" and rallies, although UNC and UGA leaders also held back from the most confrontational actions that were recommended. At UNC, OSU, and UGA, many of the same tactics were employed, but with different results. OSU used the most contentious tactics, escalating their demands to the level of a sit-in, which may have won some concessions. UGA students adopted many tactics recommended by RFC, judged that further escalation would backfire, and made little progress. At UNC, the second Commitment campaign adopted the same tactics as UGA leaders but softened their stance when administrators responded negatively, benefitted from strong faculty involvement, and enjoyed a much more favorable context.

In each case, *no single variable* was responsible for winning, or failing to win, the RFC Commitment campaign. In chapter five, which follows, I analyze the findings in reference to the theoretical framework described in chapter two. I briefly discuss all elements that had some effect on outcomes, describe additional variables I had not predicted would be as significant as they appear to have been, and highlight the variables I argue best explain the differences in campaigns and outcomes described in this chapter.

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[90] Interviewee UGA 1.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLAINING OUTCOMES: COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF FOUR REAL FOOD CHALLENGE CAMPAIGNS

On a rainy morning in Athens, Georgia, as I set up my digital recorder and notebook to begin an interview, I was asked if I would remind the interviewee which universities were included in my study and what my primary research question was. The immediate response was, in essence, "well, two of those are land grant universities and two are not. Of course the land grant universities are going to push back on this." The explanation that emerged from my research was much more complex, but this retired faculty member's intuition pointed to one significant contextual variable. To what extent did Land Grant University (LGU) status and the characteristics, connections, and commitments associated with that status influence the ability of Real Food student leaders to advance their campaigns? How much did this aspect of university context matter, in comparison to other aspects of university context, campaign organization, and the many strategic decisions the student activists made? What was the role of the national SMO Real Food Challenge in those strategic decisions?

At all four universities in this study, highly committed and capable students, with similar RFC training and access to the same organizing "toolkit," pursued campaigns that had a lot in common but also included clear differences in strategic choices. This chapter highlights key differences in the *opportunity structures* of the universities, in the *organizational and cultural context* of the campaigns, and in the *strategic decisions* taken by student leaders that influenced campaign outcomes. In this chapter I also discuss how several variables not predicted in my theoretical model--campaign *identity and culture*,

and particular ways in which RFC influenced them--also help explain the differences in outcomes described in chapter four. The final section in the chapter summarizes the key variables that, I argue, best explain this variation.

5.1 University Context

Slaughter (1997) has noted a gap in research examining the role of external groups, including foundations, government agencies, and corporations, in departmental re-structuring and other university policies that influence curricular change. In fact, scholarship examining the relationships between either external or internal aspects of campus context and student campaign outcomes is highly limited. Arthur's "organizational mediation model" is an exception; it predicts how alignment between two contextual variables--administrative openness/flexibility and university mission—with framing and tactics influences outcomes (Arthur 2011). This study adopted a broad view of "opportunity structure" for the RFC campaigns that included multiple layers of variables, both *internal* and *external* to the campus environment. External factors expected to influence the campaigns included regional agricultural context, political context, and commitment to conventional agribusiness (associated with LGU status). Campus culture, administrative openness, dining services support, relevant academic programs, and availability of allies were internal aspects of the campaign environments expected to influence RFC campaign outcomes. In this section I first provide a brief overview of contextual variables that emerged in interview data; the sections that follow provide more detailed discussions of each aspect of university context examined.

Administrative openness to student-led initiatives, generally, appeared to influence the responses of administrators to RFC campaigns at all four universities. The

effect of this variable was influenced by a contextual factor that concerns the orientation of the university to a particular set of influential stakeholders: university commitment to conventional agribusiness. The effects of campus culture on campaign progress were highlighted most strongly at OSU and UGA, where RF leaders felt that conservatism and a limited presence of student activism constrained their opportunities and effectiveness. Similarly, some participants reported that a general atmosphere of progressivism supported mobilization and progress at Pitt and UNC. Degree of support from dining services influenced the rate of progress of the campaigns completing Real Food Calculator baseline studies but that support, on its own, was less important to campaign outcomes than the orientation of administrators toward the campaigns.

Interviewees pointed to two additional internal contextual variables that might have influenced campaign dynamics: the administration's orientation toward national commitments, generally, and the presence of a pre-existing university commitment to local and sustainable food (LSFB) procurement. The former was mediated by commitment to conventional agribusiness; targets at OSU and UGA used the latter to re-frame and undermine the legitimacy of the RF campaigns' arguments.

University commitment to conventional agribusiness also mediated the availability and influence of faculty and staff allies on campus at OSU and UGA. On the two campuses with low or moderate commitment to conventional agribusiness, one had university academic programs related to food systems and the other did not, but in both cases--presence (UNC) and absence (Pitt)—RF students felt that this factor supported their campaign, just in different ways. On the two campuses with strong commitment to conventional agribusiness, those commitments impeded student utilization of staff and

faculty allies, most clearly at UGA. In addition, strong commitment to youth leadership, promoted by RFC, and students' evaluation that faculty had little power to influence the president/chancellor, also influenced the way in which students at UGA and OSU utilized potential faculty allies. As a result, while relevant academic programs supported student knowledge and ability to present relevant arguments in support of the RFC, whether or not the presence of those programs supported the advancement of the Commitment campaigns depended upon other aspects of the university context, as well as strategic choices.

Finally, while in each case some interviewees discussed constraints and opportunities associated with the university's agricultural context, this variable, on its own, had little effect on campaign outcomes. Given the flexibility in RFC standards and the many alternatives for reaching the 20 percent target, agricultural context and its relationship to the feasibility of increasing Real Food purchasing was more likely a strategic response made by targets resistant to the Commitment than a significant logistical barrier. In an otherwise supportive context, a promising Calculator audit supported the campaign; in an unfavorable environment, a low audit number served to highlight the conflict with the university's commitment to conventional agribusiness and RFC standards. This finding is consistent with the quantitative results discussed in chapter 3. Because it is possible to meet the 20 percent target in a variety of ways, agricultural context influencing availability of Real Food is not one of the most significant factors influencing LSFB scores or Real Food commitment.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of variation in the four cases for the contextual variables examined in this study. In the sections that follow, I provide a more detailed

discussion of the results for external aspects of opportunity structure, followed by internal. It is important to note that there is no clear line of division between these two broad categories, particularly where governance boards are concerned. Further, there is overlap and interaction between categories. Finally, as noted above, none of these contextual variables influenced the campaigns in isolation; in other words, other variables mediated their effects. Where those interactions occurred among contextual variables, I discuss them in the sections that follow. In cases where strategic variables interacted with contextual factors, I defer discussion of those interactions to sections 5.3 and 5.4.

Table 5.1: Variation Among Contextual Variables Across Universities.

		PITT	**OSU**	**UNC**	**UGA**
External	***Agricultural Context***	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Moderate
	Commitment to Conventional Agribusiness	Low	High	Moderate	Very high
	Political Context	Conservative	Conservative	Strongly Conservative	Strongly Conservative
Internal	***Campus Culture***	Moderately liberal	Evenly represented	Strongly liberal	Moderately conservative
	Administrative Openness	Very high	Moderate	Somewhat high	Low
	Academic Programs & Allies	Highly modest, not utilized	Moderate, some constraint	High, heavily utilized	Moderate, allies constrained
	Dining Services Support	Strong following director shift	Strong	Very strong	Strong following director shift
	Baseline Calculator estimate	9%	Undetermined	18%	< 1%
	Related Public Commitments	No climate commitment; no LSFB target	Climate Commitment; pre-existing LSFB target	Climate Commitment; no LSFB target	No Climate Commitment; pre-existing LSFB target

5.1.1 External factors

Because Real Food initiatives may be more feasible in regions where products meeting RFC standards are more readily available, I expected agricultural context to influence the level of difficulty and opposition faced by RF campaigns. As discussed in chapter three, a quantitative, national analysis of LSFB scores demonstrated regional variation but failed to clearly tie that variation to farm-to-institution infrastructure. One of the potential reasons I proposed for this finding was that colleges and universities can increase their Real Food purchasing in many different ways, including through conventional distributors that have responded to interest in LSFB purchasing by creating "Buy Local" or third party certified sourcing options that are available in any region. Similarly, the comparative study of RFC campaigns showed that a perceived supportive agricultural context may have modestly influenced target responses (both positively and negatively) but was not strongly associated with Real Food Commitment Campaign (RFCC) outcomes.

In addition to agricultural context, I predicted that the extent to which each administration viewed the RF campaign as a threat to their interests would influence target response and campaign outcomes. Social movements that seek to "displace" their targets or whose goals are highly threatening are less likely to be successful (Ash 1972; Gamson 1975; Steedly and Foley 1979; Frey, Dietz, and Kalof 1992; Toffolon-Weiss and Roberts 2005). RFC Commitment campaigns do not, of course, seek to displace university leaders. However, they do challenge powerful agribusiness interests. As a result, leaders of universities with a commitment to those interests are likely to view cooperation with Real Food as risky. Perceived threat is likely to be influenced both by

the views of external stakeholders and the extent to which the administration must be responsive to their concerns. In this section I describe the importance of the university's commitment to conventional agribusiness to RF campaign progress, and present a more complex view of political influence than state party dominance alone. Figure 5.1 summarizes the findings for two key external contextual variables. These variables influenced campaign outcomes directly and also through their effects on potential allies on campus.

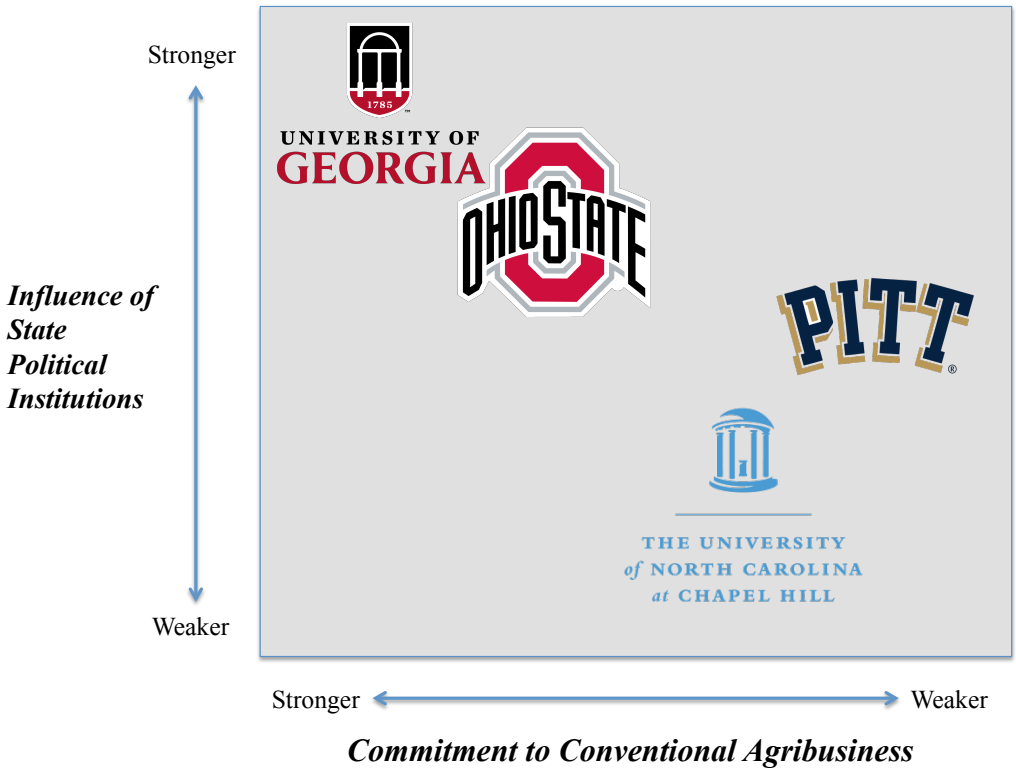

Figure 5.1: Comparison of Cases with Respect to Two External Contextual Variables

5.1.1.1 Agricultural context

At all four universities in this study, dining services staff raised logistical and cost questions and challenges associated with auditing and increasing purchasing that meets

RFC standards. Faculty, staff, and students at UNC pointed to robust support for farm-to-institution initiatives in North Carolina as very helpful to the FLO and Real Food progress there. However, this variable clearly was not of greatest importance, on its own, for shaping opportunity structure, because Pitt students were able to advance Real Food in an urban environment with limited regional agricultural production. Pitt's outcome demonstrates that agricultural context is not necessarily a limiting variable for winning Real Food Commitments.

At OSU, the early successes that the Local Matters Student Ambassadors won, facilitating new purchasing contracts between central Ohio organic producers and OSU, demonstrated to students and to dining services staff that OSU had opportunities to expand Real Food purchasing. Further, OSU's 2015 target of 40 percent locally and sustainably sourced food, discussed below, suggests that decision-makers at OSU were optimistic about opportunities for expanding this kind of sourcing, albeit without having defined those labels. Thus, at OSU the agricultural context, on its own, also was not a strong factor shaping the target's response or campaign outcomes.

At UNC, several interviewees noted that the process of expanding Real Food purchasing became easier when dining services identified distributors or aggregators selling products that met RFC community-based standards without disqualifiers. As the quantitative portion of this study demonstrates (see chapter three), it is difficult to assess this aspect of university context with available datasets. However, among the four states represented in the comparative study, North Carolina is at a clear advantage with respect to a supportive context for LSFB purchasing as a result of its Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS). CEFS is a partnership of North Carolina's two LGUs (N. C.

State and N.C. Agricultural & Technical State University) along with the state's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS is a national leader in education, research, and extension in sustainable agriculture and community-based food systems (CEFS 2016). Faculty and community farming interviewees at UNC pointed to CEFS and its Farm-to-Fork initiative to demonstrate the importance of North Carolina's agricultural context to Carolina Dining and FLO Foods' success with advancing Real Food purchasing. A faculty member close to the RF campaign felt that this context, and the Food for All UNC theme it helped facilitated, were one of the most significant factors influencing Chancellor Folt's decision to the sign the RFC Commitment (RFCC).

While Georgia also has a "Georgia Grown" initiative to promote the state's agricultural products, its agricultural sector is heavily focused on commodity and conventional poultry production.[91] A growing number of small farmers using humane and sustainable production methods in Georgia tend to sell directly to consumers and restaurants able to pay a high premium for local and sustainable production—prices far higher than what UGA would be able to pay. For example, a staff person in dining services reported hearing from Athens area organic and small-scale producers that they were selling 100 percent of their crop at top farmer's market prices, so it would not make any sense for them to negotiate institutional sales with UGA.

While there are demonstrated logistical hurdles to expanding Real Food purchasing, community-based Real Food can originate as far away as 250 miles from campus, and Georgia has a very active k-12 Farm to School initiative managed by a partnership including The Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Department of

[91] In 2012, the area cultivated for vegetables, fruits, nuts, and greenhouse plants accounted for just 4.3% of the total harvested cropland in Georgia (USDA 2012a). North Carolina's portion is almost twice that proportion, at 7.4% (USDA 2012b).

Agriculture, Georgia Organics, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Cooperative Extension Service (Georgia Department of Education N.d.). In addition, in recent years a number of public and private organizations have expanded Georgia's "food hubs" which connect small and medium-sized produce farmers to storage and distribution centers, facilitating farm-to-institution options.[92] This program demonstrates that many informed stakeholders see opportunities for schools—and, presumably, universities—in Georgia to expand their purchasing of Georgia grown produce in a cost effective manner. Interview data suggests that a more significant obstacle to the RFCC in Georgia was the sharp contrast between Georgia Grown and Georgia Farm-to-School programs, which do not constrain products beyond geography, and the RFC standards, which exclude some of Georgia's largest vegetable producers and all of its conventionally produced poultry and eggs. Most interviewees at UGA and in Georgia's sustainable agriculture community believed strongly it was this difference, rather than logistical hurdles, that influenced the administration's response. The fact that dining services, following a change in leadership, was open to the Commitment also supports RF UGA students' assertion that the 20 percent goal at UGA was *feasible*—just not *desirable*--to decision-makers.[93]

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[92] For example, in 2016 the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia opened a $6.4 million food hub in Rabun County (Food Bank of NE Georgia 2018), and The Common Market expanded its local food distribution service to Georgia (The Common Market N.d.).

[93] UGA students reported that Dining Services staff persons made clear to them that they could help push for the Commitment with President Morehead but if the students were able to accomplish they would be fully on board with implementation. This is no way suggests that implementation would have been easy, and there were stakeholders very supportive of Real Food principles who pointed to the logistical challenges of Georgia Grown purchasing. One example provided was a failed attempt to identify a way to purchase Georgia blueberries for UGA. Ironically, Georgia blueberry farms large enough to supply UGA flash freeze and package their berries in units too large for the university to feasibly store.

5.1.1.2 University commitment to conventional agribusiness

This chapter opened with a retired professor's intuitive response to this question: why did RF Commitment campaigns win at Pitt and UNC but not at OSU and UGA? Most study participants in Georgia agreed with this individual's assessment, sharing their belief that UGA's strong commitment to conventional agribusiness influenced the administration's opposition to the Real Food Commitment campaign. The administrative leaders who were involved in RF campaigns at OSU and UGA were unwilling to participate in this study, and the formal response to Real Food's petition at OSU does not point to any disagreement with RFC's standards. However, almost all campaign leaders and allies at UGA and a portion at OSU pointed to conflicts between the content of RFC's mission and the Calculator standards and conventional agricultural interests as a significant factor in the universities' responses. The campaigns at Pitt and UNC faced obstacles, but they did not appear to be related to opposition to RFC standards.

At Pitt, where the only academic connections to food systems were in dietetics, administrators did not appear to believe that RFC standards were at all controversial or potentially risky. Western Pennsylvania is not a major agricultural region and Pitt is a highly urban university located in the heart of Pittsburgh. While this setting made it challenging for RF students to demonstrate the feasibility of the 20 percent Commitment goal for Pitt, they felt the complete absence of an agricultural presence on campus worked in their favor. Pitt did not appear to have external stakeholders who might be threatened by Real Food's message and mission, contributing to a supportive opportunity structure for the RF campaign.

One way to examine the ways in which the specific objectives and framing of the RF campaigns influenced target response is by comparing them to other student campaigns on the same campus. A former student activist at Pitt noted the difference between advocating divestment from fossil fuels and advocating Real Food in Western Pennsylvania. While conventional agribusiness does not have a strong presence in the region, the fossil fuel industry does, and the natural gas industry has been a high profile "valued corporate sponsor" to Pitt athletics.[94] Students believed that the fossil fuel industry had power through Pitt's Board of Trustees and as a major employer and donor in the state, and that the industry's influence had made Pitt's Divestment campaign a harder sell than was Real Food. Chancellor Gallagher has met with Pitt Divestment leaders about their campaign and has encouraged them in their efforts to address the Board with their concerns, but the final decision about changes in investments lies with the Board of Trustees, which has not yet agreed to any divestment (Burgman 2017).

At OSU, faculty and staff working in areas relating to sustainable food systems acknowledged tension between conventional and sustainable agriculture at OSU but felt the Real Food Commitment was feasible, if very challenging, to secure. The Food Sustainability Panel (FSP) described in chapter four included students, staff, and faculty who openly discussed all aspects of RFC standards, and a number of supportive staff and faculty members felt that adoption of metrics very similar to RFC standards was (and still is) a strong possibility there.

OSU's board of trustees in 2017 included the managing partner of a major commercial grain and beef producer and Chairman of the Board of the J.M. Smucker

[94] For example, Peoples Natural Gas has presented the Pitt-Penn State football series (http://explorevenango.com/pitt-penn-state-series-to-be-known-as-the-keystone-classic-presented-by-peoples-gas/).

Company, a large food corporation (The Ohio State University 2018a). However, OSU also has received significant donor resources for its research and teaching in sustainable agriculture. In 1996, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) awarded OSU a $1.575 million grant to establish an Endowed Chair in Ecological Agriculture and Sustainable Management (WKKF 2018). The Foundation's selection of OSU as home for one of its first investments of this kind "was driven both by readiness (partnership with community, providing matching funds) and past relationships."[95] Thus, while OSU remains closely connected to conventional agribusiness, it also has attracted significant donor investment by demonstrating a commitment to expanding its sustainable agriculture program.

North Carolina is home to several powerful conventional agriculture corporations, but this presence did not seem to have significant influence with UNC administrators or faculty. Despite the presence of one of the world's largest conventional pork producers (Smithfield), administrators at UNC did not appear to be concerned about perceptions that embracing the RFC Commitment would invite criticism from conventional agribusiness representatives. Further, faculty never expressed concerns about working closely with FLO and the Real Food campaign or about critiquing conventional food production. Faculty, staff, and students at UNC all felt free to criticize conventional agribusiness at UNC.

UNC's characterization of the work of the late epidemiology professor Steve Wing, whose research and activism directly criticized North Carolina's large hog farm operators, provides an example of the university's independence from conventional agribusiness. A tribute article published on UNC's Gillings School of Global Public Health web site described Dr. Wing as a "hero" who "trained his students to be

[95] Linda Jo Doctor, WKKF, e-mail message to author, May 9, 2018.

thoughtful, respectful, committed community activists and scientists" (UNC 2016). The Food For All academic theme, discussed below, provided further examples of UNC's open embrace of scholars whose research and teaching includes environmental and social justice concerns associated with conventional agricultural production and trade.

In contrast to UNC, where faculty as well as students felt free to challenge conventional animal production, at UGA, faculty members and community sustainable agriculture allies felt strongly that criticizing Georgia's conventional agriculture industry was highly politically sensitive and a sure way to shut down communication with UGA's leadership. While OSU students received a formal response from administrators and won participation on an advisory body, UGA students were unable to secure a process for engaging openly about RFC standards and never received a formal response to their proposal from administrators. Many interviewees felt this was, at least in part, due to the high degree of sensitivity of UGA's administration to Georgia's conventional agriculture stakeholders. As described in chapter 4, several faculty members reported that they would be uncomfortable openly criticizing Georgia's conventional agricultural sector and could face sanctions for doing so.

RF students and faculty allies felt that the importance of conventional agribusiness to UGA and it influence on UGA's leadership significantly constrained the ability of a food system reform campaign to make progress there. In contrast to the endowed chair related to sustainable agriculture at OSU and the faculty members' open support of Real Food principles and willingness to challenge conventional agriculture at UNC, at UGA students and faculty described an atmosphere in which it was unsafe for

faculty members and deans to openly question aspects of conventional agricultural production. One faculty member close to UGA's work in agriculture put it this way:

> The dominant philosophy [in CAES] is we've got to increase food production and the only way we can do it is more chemicals and more GMOs, and anything that deviates from that is open to criticism.[96]

As discussed in chapter four, several RF UGA students heard from a friend about a conversation between President Morehead and a powerful stakeholder about "GMO chicken" and complaints that UGA Foundation Fellows would engage in an initiative that calls into question Georgia poultry production. While the student's account is impossible to corroborate, it is consistent with the context described by both students and faculty at UGA. Most faculty members were careful to close their office door before our interviews began. One shared several specific stories illustrating an environment unfriendly to advancing sustainable agricultural interests, and then indicated I could not use them in the dissertation, as there was a possibility they could be traced back to their source. This faculty member described having gotten into hot water in the past for critical statements about conventional agribusiness. In reference to making statements at UGA that might not be well-received by "Big Ag," another faculty member remarked "people here are scared to death."[97]

As stated above, UGA administrators were unwilling to participate in this study and have not openly shared their views on RFC standards. However, a related UGA student campaign produced some public statements that demonstrates the support of UGA's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) and the dining service director's preference for conventional battery cage egg production. In 2015, the

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[96] Interviewee UGA 17.
[97] Interviewee UGA 13.

UGA affiliate of a student group called "Speak Out for Species" launched a campaign to pressure UGA's dining services to switch to cage-free eggs. In the UGA student newspaper, the dining services director confined his discussion to cost concerns but poultry science professor Bruce Webster argued that raising hens in battery cages is preferable to cage-free production with respect to both health and environmental impact (Wong 2015). No staff or faculty members interviewed for the article expressed support for the students' proposal. The group's faculty advisors both work in UGA libraries, which may suggest that UGA staff/faculty further removed from CAES and food system research may have felt freer to openly support students challenging conventional agribusiness.[98]

At UGA, a single dean was the only administrator at UGA willing to participate in this study who had actually met with RF students. For this reason and because President Morehead's office never responded formally to the RF Commitment proposal, it is difficult to provide direct evidence for the reasoning behind the UGA administration's responses to Real Food UGA. However, a publicly documented conflict at Virginia Institute of Technology illustrates the dynamic that faculty and students at UGA believe shaped President Morehead's response to the RF Commitment campaign. In March 2009, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) published a press release commending Andy Sarjahani, Virginia Tech's sustainability coordinator for dining services, for purchasing cage-free whole eggs from a local provider in Virginia. The Virginia Farm Bureau saw the announcement, was concerned, and immediately requested a meeting with Virginia Tech officials about what their representatives believed to be a move toward a 100 percent cage-free policy at the university. A Virginia

[98] See the web page for Athens & UGA Speak Out for Species: http://sos.uga.edu/local.html.

Farm Bureau spokesperson was quoted as saying that a cage-free policy would be "condemning conventional agriculture" (Sutton 2009: Para. 12). Farm Bureau officials had misinterpreted the HSUS press release, which was later removed from the HSUS web site, to suggest that Virginia Tech was moving toward 100 percent cage-free egg products. In fact, Sarjahani had committed to purchasing 100 percent of dining services' *whole eggs* from a cage-free, local source, but whole eggs comprised just 10 percent of total egg product purchased, with 90 percent sourced from conventional, liquid egg product (Sutton 2009). The Virginia Farm Bureau's swift response to the HSUS press release and its access to top officials at Virginia Tech demonstrates the kind of influence that UGA Real Food advocates and allies believe conventional agribusiness interests in Georgia hold with UGA.

Compared to OSU and UNC, UGA also has a more modest presence of sustainable agriculture and alternative perspectives in food studies. In comparison to OSU, UGA's CAES offers fewer majors, minors, and courses in sustainable agriculture for undergraduates; organic gardening in the horticulture department and at the UGArden are notable exceptions. As stated above, OSU has attracted donor support for an endowed chair in sustainable agriculture; UGA does not have a similar position. A comparison of integrative programs in food systems also demonstrates lower commitment to sustainable agriculture at UGA than at the other two universities with research and teaching related to food systems. As described above, UNC adopted food systems inquiry as its "university-wide academic theme" for 2015-18 (UNC 2018:Para.1); similarly, in addition to its Endowed Chair position in Sustainable Agriculture OSU's Institute for Food and Agricultural Transformation (InFact) is a university-wide "Discovery theme" (The Ohio

State University 2018b). UGA's Sustainable Food Systems Initiative (SSFS) also seeks to integrate research, teaching, and outreach associated with sustainable food systems (UGA CAES 2018). However, UGA's SSFS, located within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), is an informal initiative, rather than a university-wide theme or institute.

5.1.1.3 Political Context

Because the four universities in this study are all high profile or "flagship" public institutions, I expected the political context in which each university is embedded to influence the willingness of administrators to openly support a commitment that most observers would view as "progressive." State elected officials and members of Boards of Regents influence policies and practices of public universities and may even sanction faculty members and administrators when they take issue with their statements or actions (Kezar 2006; deBoer 2016). A comparison of the four cases examined here suggests that the relationship between political context and university response to Real food campaigns reflected not just political party dominance but also the relative strength of the influence that political actors and governing boards exert on the institution's leadership and policies. Further, related to the orientation toward conventional agribusiness discussed above, "political sensitivity" of the agrifood movement in that state significantly influenced opposition to the Real Food campaigns.

During the time period of the four RF campaigns in this study (2007-2017 or a portion thereof), the political leadership of each of the four states was majority Republican, with the exception of Pennsylvania, where a Democrat won the governor's office a few months before the RF Pitt students won their campaign (see Table 5.2 for

state representation in 2015). While all four universities were located in states with Republican majority legislatures, they varied with respect to their ability to pursue initiatives and make a formal commitment viewed to be "progressive" without provoking criticism from external stakeholders. In addition, as discussed above, the particular form of "progressive" initiative—in this case, one promoting food system transformation—significantly influenced the political sensitivity surrounding the campaigns.

As discussed in chapter three, the results of a national, quantitative analysis suggested a weak, negative association between conservative political context and LSFB purchasing scores. The comparison of RFC cases suggests that the weakness of that result might be explained, in part, by two mediating factors: the relationship of the university to the state's political leadership structures, and its commitment to agribusiness. The small number of LGUs in the quantitative sample and a lack of data on institutional relationships with state politics impeded quantitative analysis of these additional factors, but the qualitative study points to their relevance.

Table 5.2: Political Party Leadership in the Home States of the Four Universities, 2015

	Governor	State House	State Senate
Pennsylvania	Republican/Democrat[i]	59% Republican	60% Republican
Ohio	Republican	66% Republican	70% Republican
North Carolina	Republican[ii]	62% Republican	68% Republican
Georgia	Republican	67% Republican	68% Republican

Source: The Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States 2015.*

i. Democrat Tom Wolf took office in January 2015 (two months before Pitt leadership signed the RFC Campus Commitment)
ii. Democrat Roy Cooper took office in January 2017 (nine months after UNC Chapel Hill leaders signed the RFC Campus Commitment)

Pitt was sensitive to concerns of board members, but an absence of concerns about RFC standards and effective strategic choices by students prevented their influence from impeding the campaign's success. As described in chapter four, Pitt administrators invited a member of the board of trustees to meetings with the RF student leaders once the leadership had fully vetted their proposal. At this point in the campaign, the RF students felt that senior administrators were close to a decision in favor of signing the Commitment. The board member raised concerns about potential legal liability if Pitt were to miss the 20 percent mark, and the students effectively addressed that concern with an addendum prepared in collaboration with RFC representatives. Thus, administrators at Pitt appeared to be sensitive to how the RF Commitment would be viewed by the University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees, 12 of whose members are selected by Pennsylvania's political leadership (see Table 5.3). Once students addressed his concerns, the board member acquiesced. He never raised concerns about the content of the Commitment or RFC standards, suggesting that, consistent with student interpretation, Pitt leaders did not see food reform as politically sensitive in their context.

At OSU, several faculty and staff members were open about their assessment that the CAFO and GMO exclusions in the RFC standards would almost certainly raise concerns by university leadership, although they did not specifically refer to The Ohio State University Board of Trustees or forms of political influence on the President's Office. While there was some reticence on the part of a few faculty members to speak openly about their views on the RFC campaign, others were comfortable openly discussing sustainable agriculture, food reform, and the slow pace of change to build a stronger sustainable agriculture presence at OSU in interviews. Several expressed their

feeling that promoting alternatives to conventional agriculture was a slow and incremental process at OSU, and that food production was a politically sensitive issue in Ohio. As one faculty member stated, "Like healthcare, food is uber-political-- because it is about something fundamental."[99] That said, they pointed to InFact, the Food Sustainability Panel, and a growing number of faculty members working in sustainable agriculture as signs that change toward Real Food objectives was possible at OSU.

UNC appeared to be the least vulnerable of the four universities to external scrutiny of its consideration of the RF Commitment. While one staff person pointed out that UNC had to be careful to avoid attracting attention from North Carolina's conservative legislature that might reinforce its image as a "hotbed of liberalism," interview data and corroborating evidence suggested that the leadership and faculty of UNC felt a great deal of independence from North Carolina's political environment. One administrator stated that they had to be careful about dining plan costs, as rising tuition or fees would attract attention, but that, if justification were needed, UNC leaders could effectively pitch the RFC initiative as good for North Carolina's rural economy.

At UGA, students and faculty members shared stories that they felt reflected a strong influence of the state's political conservatism on campus. Within the classroom, one student reported that a professor in an environmental health class relating to food systems would not allow her to make a brief announcement about a Real Food educational event because the professor did not think that something "political" should be announced in class. When asked whether UGA's leadership would consider the RFC Commitment, not a single faculty member thought it possible as a result of university stakeholders who would oppose it. In reference to UGA administrators generally, one

[99] Interviewee OSU 11.

remarked "[They] never want to take stands that they think will alienate the Board of Regents or legislators…They don't want to rock the boat."[100]

Thus, while all four of the RFC campaigns were conducted at high-profile public universities in states with conservative political leadership, the sensitivity to that external context for university administrators in general, and the likelihood of attracting unwelcome criticism for an initiative that might be viewed as "progressive," varied quite a bit, and seemed to be associated with the particular relationship of each university with political institutions, as well as the agribusiness connections discussed above. This variable is very difficult to characterize because it is rare for a university president or any administrators to speak openly, on record, about political influences on their decision-making processes. At the same time, in Georgia the unusually close relationship between the legislature and UGA is something of an "open secret," even if hard to document or fully characterize. At UNC the freedom of administrators to sign environmentally progressive commitments and both public and private statements demonstrated a much higher degree of autonomy from its conservative political context, at least for sustainability-related decision-making. Pitt was sensitive to potential concerns of board members, and at OSU a few staff/faculty members spoke openly about the need to address RFC's GMO and CAFO exclusions with important stakeholders.

These findings suggest that variation in public university governance can be an important aspect of the opportunity structure influencing the outcomes of student activism. Fully characterizing the relationship between university decision-making and political context is highly challenging and beyond the scope of this dissertation, but one possible contributing factor to variance is governance structure. A comparison of

[100] Interviewee UGA 5.

governance structures is provided, below, in Table 5.3. UGA is the only case examined here in which a *state-wide* Board of Regents, whose members are all appointed by the Governor, both oversees the institution and is responsible for selecting its president. Pitt appears to have the weakest formal relationship between its board and state politics; in Ohio the governor appoints OSU's board members; and at UNC the governor and the legislature share that role.

Table 5.3: Characteristics of the Four Universities

	State Higher Education Institution	**University Governance**
Pitt	Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, with a Board of Governors and chancellor, establishes system-wide policies (such as tuition and fees) for 14 institutions.[i]	Pitt has its own Board of Trustees, with 36 voting members; 12 board members are appointed by Commonwealth of Pennsylvania officials.[ii] Pitt's Board of Trustees was responsible for electing Chancellor Gallagher (University of Pittsburgh 2014).
OSU	Ohio Department of Higher Education, led by a chancellor and advised by a small Board of Regents. Ohio's governor appoints the department's chancellor (Farkas 2018).	OSU has its own Board of Trustees. The Ohio governor appoints all 17 members, including 2 student members "with advice and consent of the senate."[iii] The OSU Board of Trustees selected President Drake (Binkley 2014).
UNC	The 17-campus University of North Carolina system is led by a Board of Governors, with 28 voting members all selected by the North Carolina General Assembly.	UNC at Chapel Hill has its own 13 member Board of Trustees. The governor appoints 4 members, the system Board of Governors appoints 8, and the final member is the SGA president. The UNC system Board of Governors selects the chancellor of UNC at Chapel Hill.
UGA	University System of Georgia, governed by Board of Regents (BOR), oversees . The Governor of Georgia selects all Board members.	The University System of Georgia, led by a chancellor who is selected by the governor, and its Board of Regents (BOR), oversees all state institutions. UGA does not have an independent Board of Trustees. Georgia's BOR appoints the UGA president.

i. Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. Retrieved on July 17, 2018 (http://www.passhe.edu/Pages/default.aspx).
ii. University of Pittsburgh Office of the Chancellor. Retrieved on July 17, 2018 (https://www.chancellor.pitt.edu/governance/board-trustees).
iii. Ohio State University. Board of Trustees. Officers and Committees of the Board. Retrieved on July 17, 2018 (https://trustees.osu.edu/rules/bylaws-of-the-board-of-trustees/ru-1-02/).

Finally, a comparison of earned media between campaigns suggests that the general openness of off-campus news outlets to progressive organizing may be an

important element of external context to consider, but a full analysis of earned media and its effects is beyond the scope of this study. The limited extent of earned media outside campus newspapers and social media by the campaigns precludes an in-depth analysis, but the difference between OSU and UGA is suggestive. Campaigns at OSU and UGA both utilized resources from RFC to generate press releases and solicit coverage for Real Food events on campus, and the OSU group was consistently much more successful in earning media in the Columbus paper and on local public radio. Even in the UGA student newspaper, *The Red and Black*, the only coverage provided for the 200-person "Come to the Table" march in 2016 was a series of photos (no written story), and there was no local coverage, despite wide circulation of press releases. Some of these differences may be associated with differential success cultivating relationships with local media, but they may also reflect differences in the orientation of local media. These differences are important to consider because of the significant role of media in shaping movement framing and public perception (Gamson 2007).

In summary, at UGA a strong commitment to the state's conventional agribusiness sector combined with an unusually strong sensitivity to the state's political institutions contributed to a highly unfavorable organizing context for the RF UGA campaign. At OSU, there were (unspecified) external stakeholders with concerns about aspects of RFC standards but their perceived influence was not as great as the perceived influence of opponents to agrifood reform at UGA. At Pitt, the lack of political sensitivity regarding agrifood reform made the political context less important, and at UNC administrators seemed to have a great deal of freedom to take positions that might be unpopular with political leaders and agribusiness.

5.1.2 Internal factors

As described above, the four universities selected for comparison in this study shared many institutional characteristics: all are "flagship" public institutions (considered top choices among public options in their states); all are very large, with undergraduate populations ranging from around 19,000 at Pitt and UNC to about 38,000 at OSU; and all are governed through highly hierarchical and bureaucratic administrative structures. However, despite many similarities in administrative structures, like all universities they differ with respect to organizational history, culture, and decision-making processes, in addition to the differences in political and agribusiness influences discussed above. Some of these differences influenced the relative difficulty students faced in their campaigns to advance the Real Food Commitment.

Interview data suggested that administrative openness to student input and initiatives and relevant academic programs influenced outcomes in all four cases. The influence of campus culture, specifically student political orientation and orientation toward activism, was more strongly suggestive for OSU and UGA than for Pitt and UNC but was difficult to clearly demonstrate. Figure 5.2, below, describes differences among the four cases with respect to administrative openness and one aspect of campus culture: student political affiliation.

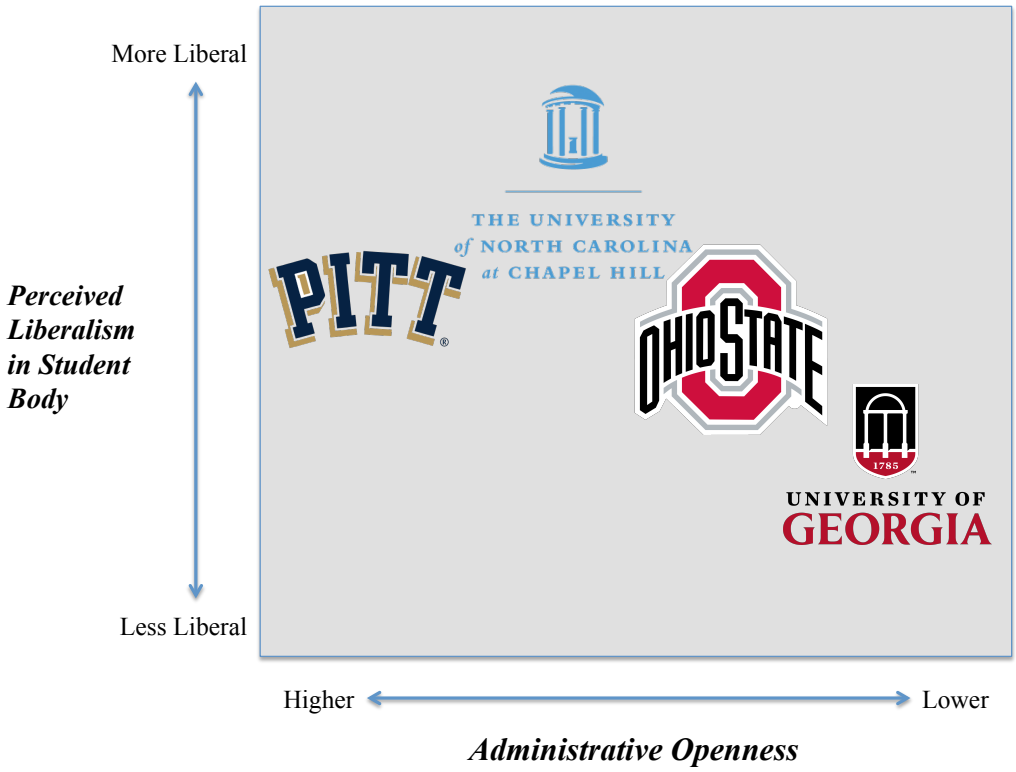

Figure 5.2: Comparison of Cases with Respect to Two Internal Contextual Variables

The influence of relevant academic programs and potential faculty allies was not consistent across cases: at three of the four universities relevant coursework supported RF campaign progress in a variety of ways, but its influence on winning the Commitment was mediated by commitment to conventional agribusiness. Dining services support was a prerequisite to advancing Calculator work and gaining administrative consideration of the Commitment, but it did not help advance campaigns in contexts that were otherwise unfavorable. For each of these variables, strategic factors also mediated their influence; those influences are discussed in section 5.3. The role of allies also is discussed in greater detail in section 5.3 because their *utilization* by the campaigns was as important as their availability.

5.1.2.1 Campus culture: student political orientation and activism

"Campus culture" is a broad concept that is not clearly defined or well understood (Peterson 1990). Characteristics of campus culture may include an institution's mission, primary areas of academic emphasis, political and values orientation of the student body and the faculty, communication and decision-making norms, and student life on campus, including the prevalence of Greek life and student activism (Tierney 1988). Campuses that have hosted activism in past are more likely to be sites of activism in future, and the campus' political and organizing culture may help explain why student activism occurs on some campuses more than others (Van Dyke 1998). If aspects of campus culture influence the emergence of activism, it may also influence the ability of student leaders to mobilize effectively, which may influence outcomes. The results of this study suggest that the universities' perceived political and organizing cultures influenced mobilization and outcomes in the RFC campaigns to differing degrees, and those effects were mediated by strategic factors.

According to perceptions reported by recent graduates and compiled by an online college planning service, on a scale of 0-100 where 100 is "most liberal," UNC was rated 71.4, Pitt scored 60.4, OSU scored 53.3, and UGA was rated 39.[101] RF students at the more conservative universities (OSU and UGA) were more likely to point to political and organizing culture as influential to their campaigns than were the RF leaders on the more liberal and politically active campuses (Pitt and UNC). Movement framing that aligns

[101] Source: MyPlan/Undergraduate Rankings/Political affiliation of the students. Retrieved on May 20, 2018 (https://www.myplan.com/education/colleges/college_rankings_14.php?sort=1&offset=0). The scores reflect survey data collected from students who attended the university in question; the higher the score, the more liberal the study body is reported to be.

well with a community's widely held beliefs can help activists succeed (McCammon et al. 2001). OSU and UGA students struggled to match RFC frames with the "widely held beliefs" on their campuses, which tended to be more conservative than at the other two universities. It may be that students at Pitt and UNC, where Real Food principles and objectives resonated readily with the student body, did not point to student culture as an important contributor because they took it for granted.

At Pitt, as described in chapter four, a small group of students won the RF Commitment very rapidly and they adopted a highly assimilative approach. While a liberal-leaning student body may have been helpful to the campaign and the response it received from administrators, many interviewees highlighted administrative openness and mobilizing structures (described below) but none pointed specifically to a progressive-leaning student body as important. However, as discussed in chapter four, the presence at Pitt of more contentious forms of advocacy that included prominent graffiti and rallies may have supported the RFC campaign indirectly, by underscoring the "professional" manner of the RFC leaders to administrators. UNC also had a generally progressive student body, but assertive forms of protest were not a common occurrence on campus. The most likely way in which campus culture supported the RFC campaign at UNC was in facilitating student interest and support. However, it was difficult to gauge the impact of this variable because interviewees seemed to take this aspect of UNC's culture for granted, and did not reflect upon its influence (or not) on the RF Commitment campaign.

While campus culture was rarely cited as a significant influence on Real Food campaigns at Pitt and UNC, students at OSU and UGA students discussed the importance of this variable extensively. At both, RF leaders felt they faced a more difficult task

mobilizing others and winning support for the RF Commitment as a result of a student body that (in their view, and as measured by MyPlan, above) leaned politically conservative. I expected the student body's general orientation toward progressive causes to facilitate RFC mobilization but not necessarily influence outcomes, because LSFB initiatives may be framed in a wide variety of ways, including in relation to regional economic development. Students at OSU and at UGA framed Real Food in ways that aligned well with other progressive groups on campus but sometimes alienated students interested in a more conventional view of food sustainability (see framing discussion in section 5.3).

In addition to their perception that the political bias of the student body influenced their campaigns negatively, RF leaders at UGA also felt that the limited "culture of activism" on campus made their campaign more difficult to win. As one early RF student leader summarized: "There is not a lot of organizing, generally speaking, at UGA."[102] As described in chapter four, some UGA students felt they were part of a tiny minority on campus, surrounded by a more conservative student population and leadership. One student spoke of the demoralizing experience of activists participating in an "Occupy" tent city in late 2011. The tents were vandalized so thoroughly one night—slashed with knives—that the demonstration site at UGA's iconic "Arch" was abandoned.

Perception of a hostile environment can have a negative impact on mobilization and the ability to sustain a campaign if it undermines students' sense of efficacy—their sense that change is possible and that their participation matters (Piven and Cloward 1977; McAdam 1982; Winston 2013; Brown 2017). However, despite a campus culture most strongly described by students as unfavorable to RFC organizing, UGA was able to

[102] Participant UGA 4.

sustain an active campaign for 10 years. Students at UGA also were able to identify other progressive groups with which to partner and, at times, collaborate as well as commiserate. Further, at both UGA and OSU RF leaders secured SGA resolutions in favor of their initiatives. But the RF groups at OSU and UGA had difficulty growing their membership, which led them to liaise with other progressive groups on campus. Campus culture influenced some of the strategic choices of the campaigns, which influenced outcomes (see section 5.3).

The campaign leaders at the four universities interviewed for this study were not able to provide numbers for student or faculty petitions—how many support signatures they had generated—which makes it difficult to compare levels of student support and whether they are consistent with political affiliation. However, another way in which student political culture may have influenced outcomes is through target response. Along with administrative openness, discussed below, did the general campus political and organizing cultures influence the pressure administrators felt—or did not feel—to respond favorably to the RF Commitment? The results of this study do not provide a clear answer, but the data do support the importance of administrative openness, more generally, which I turn to next.

5.1.2.2 Administrative openness

As discussed in chapter two, the emergence and dynamics of social movements within organizations, like those aimed at states or corporations, are influenced by the "openness" of target institutions--part of the opportunity structure that shapes movement activity. For campaigns targeting a university administration, its openness, generally, to student petitioners is likely to influence target response and campaign progress. Arthur

(2011) operationalized college administrative openness and flexibility using two factors: one, willingness to consider input from students and faculty, through participation on key committees as well as informal channels; and two, flexibility toward organizational change. Because RFC prioritizes student leadership, in this study the aspect of administrative openness of interest was *openness to student input and initiatives*, and it was operationalized as: student representation in university governance; commitment to student leadership in university life; and responses of administrators to the RFC campaigns (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Administrative Openness to Student Input and Initiatives

	Formal university statements	Administrative structures	Interview data
Pitt	"We are committed to educating the whole student…Pitt students become perceptive, reflective, contributing individuals within our diverse community of faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students."[i]	Students hold positions in the University Senate through the Senate Council (number unavailable).	Highly open to well-researched student proposals; response varies based on perceived feasibility. View student proposals as opportunities to mentor students in administrative processes and negotiation.
OSU	"Our departments and the programs within them foster student learning and development, enhance the educational experience and prepare students for citizenship in a diverse global society."[ii]	Students hold 41 of 137 seats in the University Senate. Since 1988, the Board of Trustees has included two non-voting student members.	Openness to meeting with students (including president) but slow to respond. Administrators channel student proposals into formal committees and programs.

Table 5.4 (continued)

	Formal university statements	Administrative structures	Interview data
UNC	"Our mission is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders."[iii]	No university senate or council; shared governance statement outlines cooperation between faculty council and administration. SGA is the only connection between students and administration.	Highly contingent upon chancellor. Openness to faculty participation in student-initiated proposals.
UGA	"Together we commit: To inspire students to engage meaningfully, grow intellectually, and build character so they will create thriving communities."[ix]	University Council includes Ex Officio positions for SGA president and vice president and student seats elected by each school and college (number unavailable).	Open to meetings at provost and dean levels (with long delays) but not president. Response to some SGA-supported proposals but others ignored (no formal response).

i. University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost. 2018. "Student Resources." Retrieved on February 5, 2018 (https://provost.pitt.edu/student-resources)

ii. The Ohio State University Office of Student Life. 2018. "The Office of Student Life: Creating the Extraordinary Student Experience." Retrieved on February 5, 2018 (https://studentlife.osu.edu/about/).

iii. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2018. "Mission." Retrieved on February 5, 2018 (http://www.unc.edu/about/mission/).

ix. University of Georgia Student Affairs. 2018. "Committed to Inspiring Students." Retrieved on February 5, 2018 (https://studentaffairs.uga.edu/annual_report/2017/)

As described in Table 5.4, Pitt was the only university of the four that specifically referenced student contributions to the campus community in formal statements; comparable statements about student growth at the other three refer to contributions students will make *following graduation*. Of course, formal statements such as these are not necessarily representative of the experiences that students have on campus. However, in Pitt's case the experiences reported by RF Pitt leaders and the administrative staff who met with them about the RF Commitment were consistent with the university's formal statement. Two administrative staff people interviewed highlighted Pitt's commitment to

mentor students through the process of advocating organizational change. They viewed helping students learn how to advocate their interests in a "professional and reasonable" manner to be part of their responsibility as administrators. As discussed in chapter four, administrators at Pitt spoke favorably about students who adopted an assimilative, cooperative approach to advocacy, and expressed disapproval of more contentious tactics.

Pitt administration's openness and Pitt students' direct representation in the university senate may be a result, at least in part, of demands made by student movements in the 1960s. One Pitt administrator attributed the openness of Pitt leaders to student ideas and initiatives to the occupation of the computer lab in 1969 by 30 black students demanding the university create an Africana Studies department and create more opportunities for black students. He felt that the university's leadership had learned from that episode that it was preferable to keep students in negotiation through formal channels, in order to avoid contentious student protests and demonstrations. During the 1969 computer lab lock-in, which was peaceful and "orderly," then-Chancellor Wesley Posvar met with black students and agreed to the demands that they had been discussing with him over the previous year (Koenig 2016). Administrative staff at Pitt pointed to this "culture of shared governance" as one of the reasons that RF Pitt was able to make its case successfully through negotiation.

In addition to interview data and formal statements of the university, Pitt publications openly acknowledged and seemed to celebrate student leadership related to sustainability. In August 2016 the Pitt Chronicle, a newspaper published by the university (not a student newspaper), published an article that described students as "key" to expanding sustainability at Pitt. The piece detailed five successful initiatives developed

and managed entirely by students, including Real Food Pitt (Reger 2016). While hard to pin down with precision, a variety of sources, print and personal, all agreed that Pitt provided strong support for student initiatives, as long as they felt they were feasible. Even with more controversial campaigns, such as fossil fuel divestment, which the VC complained about to Real Food students, university administrators have been in regular communication with the student coalition advancing this objective (Burgman 2017). Further, as described in chapter four, Pitt administrators also demonstrated a willingness to learn from the RF students that was not apparent at any of the other universities in the study.

At OSU, students also are directly represented in the university senate, which may also be a legacy of the 1960s student movement.[103] RF OSU students were able to secure multiple meetings with the senior vice president for student life, "Dr. J," and eventually secured a meeting with President Drake. These administrators responded to two years of RF OSU advocacy with a formal letter addressed to the student group that explained the university's reason for choosing not to sign the RFCC and providing a general description of its plans to address the goals and objectives of RFC through OSU-specific initiatives and programs. As described in chapter four, several RF students were given seats on a new panel tasked with developing definitions, metrics, and an implementation plan for meeting OSU's goal of 40 percent local and sustainable food purchasing.

In general, openness to student initiatives and proposals, as indicated by access to administrators, should support the ability of RF campaign leaders to advance their arguments. However, this assumption is complicated by the question of cooptation. Did

[103] OSU had an active chapter of Students for a Democratic Society and experienced student unrest in 1970 that closed the university for two weeks (Backderf 2015).

the response of OSU's administration to the RF campaign reflect relative openness to student input and initiatives, or an effort to "coopt" and dilute the Real Food objectives? Interviewees disagreed about opportunities to advance the RFCC through the Food Sustainability Panel (FSP).

The Real Food Campus Commitment itself explicitly calls for institutionalization of its program and the creation of a Food Systems Working Group to oversee implementation. As discussed in chapter four, some members of OSU's FSP felt that this group had a strong chance of adopting RFC standards and perhaps even persuading President Drake to sign the Commitment, given more time to complete a thorough investigation of alternative metrics and progress toward establishing a comprehensive picture of OSU's current Real Food purchasing. In contrast, RF student leaders and RFC staff believed that the Panel was very likely to coopt RFC standards and objectives, perhaps reflecting RFC goals superficially but ultimately failing to reflect their full intent. One faculty member who has advised a number of progressive student campaigns at OSU supported that concern based upon personal experience at OSU. This interviewee felt that institutionalization risked "death by committee," citing an example in which the administration responded to protests following racist graffiti in 2012 by creating a "No Place for Hate" initiative that failed, in this individual's view, to make progress toward meeting student demands.

In contrast to the other three cases, at UNC students appear to have no formal representation in university governance outside of SGA leadership. UNC also was the only one of the four cases in which a change in top leadership (chancellor) provided an opportunity to examine the influence of that individual on administrative openness to

RFC. When the first group of FLO leaders decided to advance the RFC Commitment as part of its work to expand local and sustainable purchasing by Carolina Dining, Holden Thorp was serving as chancellor and had been in that position since 2008, the year after FLO was formed. As described in chapter four, FLO students were deeply disappointed in his unenthusiastic response when they met with him in 2012. Carol Folt followed Thorp as chancellor, and FLO students described her as someone who was more open with the university community, including students. While Chancellor Folt never actually met with the student leaders advancing Real Food, staff members familiar with the Commitment campaign indicated she had been very open to the students' proposal. Thus, in the case of UNC leadership seemed to have a significant influence on administrative openness and response to Real Food.

Chancellor Folt's public statements point to a positive orientation toward advancing the university's sustainability portfolio and also toward the role of students in that work. In the university's finance and operations post about signing the Commitment, Folt was quoted as saying "It's really important because [sustainability initiatives] not only suit our desire to make things better for the planet, they're economically better for us, they create better habitats, and the students are involved with faculty and staff" (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 2016).

The structure for shared governance at UGA parallels that of Pitt and OSU, with student seats on the University Council in addition to SGA representation. However, the experience of RF UGA students was not at all consistent with a *culture* of shared governance. Many UGA students, in both waves of the campaign, reported that they did not feel respected or taken seriously in their meetings with administrative staff, despite

extensive preparation for the meetings and (in their view) a professional manner. The fact that most of the RF UGA leaders were top scholars whose academic work was celebrated in UGA publications deepened their frustration with what they perceived as unwillingness on the part of UGA's leadership to seriously examine and consider their proposal. Many students expressed sadness and anger at the response they had experienced from Provost Whitten and Arthur Tripp. In the words of one RF UGA leader, "I was just amazed at the dismissiveness of the undergraduate population here. We give a lot of money to the school, and you can't listen to the kids who are rising to the top of their studies? And give them an open ear? So I find that really discouraging."[104]

In addition to a general sense that they were not taken seriously, UGA was the only case where RF students reported concerns about the independence of the Student Government Association (SGA). As described in chapter four, RF UGA students believed that President Morehead's office influenced the position of the SGA president regarding their resolution. After checking in with a number of university offices, the SGA president informed RF UGA students that he intended to veto the Real Food Challenge resolution, despite its almost unanimous support by SGA.[105] Thus, while the formal governance structure at UGA gives students representation, the RF UGA students did not find that voice to be independent of UGA's administrative leadership.

In contrast to OSU, the other campaign that did not secure a Commitment, RF UGA never received a formal response from university leadership about its proposal, despite formal endorsement by the SGA. At OSU, the administration clearly believed it needed to at least signal to the RF students, and perhaps to the campus community, that it

[104] Interviewee UGA 8.
[105] RF UGA students corroborated this series of events with emails exchanged with the SGA president.

had listened to the students and had taken their proposal seriously. At UGA, administrators gave no indication they felt they needed to respond to the student campaign at all. One faculty member felt this response at UGA was strategic, intended to make it difficult for students to wage a campaign by withholding a "hard no:"

> The administration does not take a confrontational approach with students… This may create obstacles for RF to create a narrative to mobilize people who are pissed off. It also makes it hard for the students to know where they stand.[106]

RF UGA students did, in fact, express a great deal of uncertainty about next steps after receiving a number of vague signals and statements, in late 2016 and early 2017, that suggested the UGA administration was unlikely to support their proposal. An administrator that some had described as a mentor, David Williams, had shifted from an encouraging to a discouraging tone. After he met with Provost Whitten to discuss the RFC proposal, the Dean of CAES also shifted from a cautiously optimistic tone to advising students to work on incremental progress with Dining Services, and they were subsequently unable to secure additional meetings with the president's assistant. Thus, at UGA the RF campaign operated in the least favorable environment with respect to openness to student initiatives (see Figure 5.2).

Finally, the difference that UNC students experienced across two different chancellors with respect to Real Food raises an additional factor to consider, briefly mentioned in chapter two: how the chancellor's response to the campaign might have been influenced by the organizational decision-making environment at that particular moment in time (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972). FLO students met with Chancellor Thorp during Spring 2012. At that time, he was "engulfed" by a major athletics scandal that consumed an enormous amount of his time and energy (Nocera 2013). Thorp

[106] Interviewee UGA 5.

announced he had accepted a position at Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri the following academic year. Did the highly challenging task of leading UNC through a major ethics investigation, coach firings and NCAA penalties influence his lack of interest in Real Food? While not very satisfying to either scholars or activists, it is worth considering that sometimes campaigns may lose—or, at least, stall—for reasons that have very little to do with the campaign itself.

5.1.2.3 Academic programs and allies

I expected the universities with academic and research units on campus that align with RFC standards to have greater opportunities to enlist faculty and staff allies that could provide support to the campaign. Having both "insider" and "outsider" allies can increase the salient knowledge base and the problem solving capacity of a campaign and expand tactical opportunities, which can support positive outcomes (Ganz 2000, 2007, 2009). Further, insider, or "institutional activists," may be particularly important in advancing change when the issues are complex, which is certainly the case for food system reform (Santoro and McGuire 1997). Thus, I expected the presence of faculty with knowledge both of food system concerns and of the political dynamics and decision-making processes of the university to positively influence outcomes--if leveraged effectively by campaign leaders.

Academic programs that align with RFC goals and principles also can support campaign progress by contributing to a *discursive opportunity structure* (Koopmans and Statham 1999). In this study, the presence of academic programs related to food systems on campus had positive effects in some cases and negative effects in others

because they were mediated by another variable—commitment to conventional agribusiness. Interview results suggested that faculty allies were unnecessary/irrelevant at Pitt; they had a positive effect on the outcome at UNC; and they were present but constrained and underutilized at OSU and UGA. Commitment to conventional agribusiness--as well strategic factors—mediated the influence of potential faculty allies on campaign outcomes at the LGUs.

Table 5.5 summarizes relevant academic programs and faculty participation at the four universities. The discussion that follows highlights ways in which presence and absence of programs and allies influenced RF campaign outcomes.

Table 5.5: Academics and Availability of Allies

	Academics Aligned with Sustainable Agriculture	Faculty petition supporting RF Commitment?	Perceived constraints on faculty	Faculty presence in RF campaign
Pitt	*Limited:* (Environmental Studies and Dietetics)	Yes	Not Applicable	No presence
OSU	*Strong:* School of Environment & Natural Resources Kellogg Endowed Chair InFact Program	Yes	Moderate Faculty openly supported student right to sit-in	Moderate presence
UNC	*Strong:* Social Sciences Food for All theme Public Health	Yes	None	Strong presence
UGA	*Moderate:* Social Sciences Several faculty members within CAES Public Health	Yes	Very high	Weak presence

At Pitt, campaign leaders won the Commitment in a context with little relevant academic expertise and almost no participation of faculty. Some Pitt students felt that the *absence* of food system expertise actually helped them in that university leaders had such

limited familiarity with controversial aspects of RFC standards that they were unable or unlikely to raise specific objections to Real Food. RF leaders heard very few, if any, concerns about RFC standards and their rationale in their meetings with administrators. One student characterized meetings with administrators in this way:

> A lot of it was just sort of clarifying stuff for them, and it never felt like there was anything—I might be remembering wrong—but I don't remember them finding anything really wrong with the criteria, and I think the reason is that they're just not—the administrators were just not—coming from a super-informed place on food and food production.[107]

One exception to the generally favorable response was concerns raised by faculty members about the Calculator's GMO exclusion. This objection did not influence the Commitment campaign because it occurred after Chancellor Gallagher had already signed it, but it could have created problems for implementation. Several nutrition and dietetics professors expressed concern that a GMO exclusion could contribute to negative perceptions that might undermine support for nutritionally beneficial GMO crops such as vitamin-enriched rice. RF Pitt students responded by organizing panel presentations and discussions on GMOs to advance understanding.

At OSU, many Real Food students were in majors directly related to sustainable food systems, and the readings and research they completed through those courses supported their understanding of the issues of central concern to RFC. Several OSU faculty members noted that the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) has been slowly expanding the proportion of its faculty engaged in sustainable agriculture, although conventional approaches still dominate. The School of Environment and Natural Resources, housed within CFAES, includes a recently created sustainable agriculture specialization within the Natural Resource Management major,

[107] Interviewee Pitt 1.

which several Real Food OSU students pursued. However, as noted above, students felt that faculty members were somewhat constrained in their ability to openly support RFC because the frames they adopted were highly critical of the conventional agriculture approaches still prevalent at OSU.

At UNC, the *presence* of related academic programs supported the Real Food Commitment campaign. A number of faculty members in several different departments held both relevant expertise and a strong commitment to critical analysis of conventional food systems. In addition to their contribution to a robust mobilizing structure (see section 5.2), scholars with expertise in food systems within the social sciences and public health supported student learning and facilitated the creation of the Real Food Calculator student internships. The engagement of these faculty members reflected a close connection between the mission of Real Food Challenge and their chosen areas of specialization in research and teaching. As described in chapter 4, an environmental justice class gave birth to FLO Food in 2007. The presence and strength of faculty and courses relating to food systems along with the supportive statewide farm-to-institution initiatives, discussed above, provided a strong discursive opportunity structure for the RF campaign at UNC. The Food For All theme reflected strong faculty and student interest in advancing food-related coursework and research at UNC. It also enabled RF student leaders to highlight the relevance and appeal of Real Food to the UNC community. As one student stated, "I used my involvement in Food For All to advance Real Food."[108]

At UGA, as at OSU and UNC the Real Food students benefitted from opportunities to take relevant courses that helped them understand the food system issues

[108] Interviewee UNC 1.

RFC works to reform. In addition, at UGA, as at UNC and OSU, students occasionally received strategic advice from supportive faculty members or staff. Interestingly, students were less likely to include mention of this advice than were the faculty members with whom they had met; students were more likely to refer to advice received from RFC staff. The strategic advice offered by faculty members at UGA did not appear to have influenced students' strategic decisions.

UGA students described a robust effort to reach out, through email, to all professors who might have an interest in Real Food and they gathered names and brief statements of support to use in meetings with administrators. However, they did not feel that faculty held any power with administrators. As described in chapter 4, RF UGA leaders consulted with David Williams in the Honors Program and with several deans for strategic advice, but they did not report receiving active support from them that aided the campaign. Several students felt that faculty members and deans were constrained by UGA's negative response to their campaign, which they attributed to the university's commitment to conventional agribusiness. One student interpreted the limited support from deans and faculty members in this way:

> I think deans and professors are afraid to stick out their necks, because it's hard to get a job as a tenured professor or as a dean; they don't want that coming down on their heads. It was never explicitly said to me, but just sort implied from things I heard…I get it, you know? It would be hard to stick your neck out after you get a great job… There were some who would definitely talk to us about what we were doing—but I don't think ever wanted to stick their neck out far, like…I don't know if we could have gotten a professor to go with us to meet with Provost Whitten.[109]

While students at UGA believed that faculty would not have felt comfortable openly supporting their campaign or attending meetings with them, they did collaborate

[109] Interviewee UGA 8.

with faculty members who had related research and teaching interests on educational events, usually speakers or films followed by discussion. In addition, while some faculty members in environmental health were uncomfortable allowing students to promote RF UGA events in their classes, several faculty members in social sciences did allow these classroom promotions when they were related to the subject of the class.

At both OSU and UGA, the negative influence of commitment to conventional agribusiness appeared to mitigate the potential positive effects of the presence of many faculty members with expertise relating to Real Food perspectives—potential allies. This negative effect seemed to be much stronger at UGA than at OSU. In addition, prioritization of youth leadership and partnerships with justice groups over faculty and staff allies on campus also constrained utilization of this potential resource at OSU and UGA (discussed below in section 5.3).

5.1.2.4 Dining services support

Interviewees noted several aspects of dining services at the universities that influenced the process of advocating the RF Campus Commitment. Notably, contrary to the prediction of RFC staff and student leaders, having a self-operated structure instead of a contracted system did not facilitate student access or influence; it may even have had a negative influence. Pitt's dining services contract was with Sodexo and UNC's was with Aramark. In both cases, the management corporation was less influential in shaping cooperation and support from dining services than was the particular individuals in charge. These results were consistent with a pilot version of the quantitative analysis of LSFB scores presented in chapter 3. Statistical analysis of more than 200 institutions

found no relationship between dining services management (e.g., self-operated or the corporate vendor) and LSFB score.

In both campaigns that won the Commitment the university administrators responsible for overseeing dining services contracts were very supportive and helpful, as reported by student interviewees. UNC students enjoyed a positive working relationship with Carolina Dining staff throughout both waves; Pitt students enjoyed greater support after a change in leadership in the head of campus dining. At OSU, students worked steadily to build a relationship of trust with the head of dining services and felt they made significant progress. Their work produced new relationships between dining and regional growers, but OSU dining services was initially unwilling to participate in evaluating invoices using the Calculator. After the Food Sustainability Panel was formed (which included the Director of Dining Services), it agreed on a goal of 100 percent transparency in sourcing. When the RF students decided to leave the institutional progress for creating Real Food metrics by stepping down from the Food Sustainability Panel, they compromised their working relationship with dining services. At UGA, leadership also was important, as students were able to create an internship position to support RFC calculator work after a more supportive director came on board. However, that relationship was constrained by the UGA administration's negative response to the RF campaign.

Calculator results also may have influenced campaigns, but in association with other factors. At Pitt and UNC the favorable calculator results supported students' arguments that the 20 percent Commitment was feasible. However, had there been opposition to RFC at either university, the Calculator result could just have easily been

used to justify *not* signing—"we do not need the Commitment." In contrast, UGA's extremely weak calculator result may have further strengthened opposition to the Commitment. With only one percent of UGA's food and beverage purchasing qualifying as Real, the calculator results underscored one of the primary conflicts between RFC standards and UGA's interests—conventionally produced poultry and eggs. The low number may have further strengthened the administration's already negative view of the RFC proposal, as it highlighted the large gap between the criteria that UGA's dining services had been using informally to promote its "Georgia Grown" offerings and the standards associated with Real Food. Thus, at UGA supportive leadership in dining services aided efforts to complete the initial Calculator work but, ultimately, that audit likely had a negative influence on the campaign's ability to win the Commitment.

In summary, at all four universities supportive dining services staff facilitated Calculator work because of the need for access to invoices and support for identifying Real Food providers. However, this factor alone was less important than the administration's orientation toward the campaign's and the Real Food Commitment. Opposition associated with university commitment to conventional agribusiness was more influential than supportive dining services for UGA.

5.1.2.5 Public commitments to sustainability

Two contextual variables that I had not included in the theoretical model emerged from interview data: pre-existing local/sustainable food purchasing targets, and general willingness to participate in national "sign-on" opportunities for university presidents. The two universities that signed the RFCC had not previously set specific targets for LSFB purchasing, and the two with campaigns that did *not* win the Commitment did

already have LSFB targets in their sustainability plans. With respect to willingness to participate in national programs, however, the results were mixed: in the two Southeastern universities, the results suggested the possibility that a general willingness or unwillingness to "sign on" to external programs may have had some influence, but at the Midwestern universities, the evidence is reversed: Pitt had not signed the Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment (but did sign the RFCC), and the reverse was true at OSU (see Table 5.6, below). The results at Pitt and OSU may be associated with difference in the political sensitivity of food systems versus fossil fuels, as discussed in section 5.1.1.2, above. Willingness to sign commitments in general, and willingness that depended on the topic, was likely associated with the political and conventional agribusiness variables discussed above.

Table 5.6 Prior Formal Commitments

	Presidents Climate Leadership Commitment	Internal Target for Local & Sustainable Food Purchasing
Pitt	Not signed	No target prior to RFCC
OSU	Signed 2008[i]	40% set in 2015[iii]
UNC	Signed 2007[ii]	No target prior to RFCC
UGA	Not signed	35% set in 2015[iv]

i. Second Nature, retrieved on April 11, 2018 (http://reporting.secondnature.org/institution/detail!3097/##3097)

ii. Second Nature, Retrieved on April 11, 2018 (http://reporting.secondnature.org/institution/detail!2417/##2417)

iii. Ohio State University, The. Panel on Food Sustainability. 2016. "Purchase of Local and Sustainable Food by 2025." Retrieved September 10, 2017 (https://www.osu.edu/assets/downloads/SustainableFoodReport09152016_508.pdf).

iv. University of Georgia. 2015b. "Campus Sustainability Plan." Retrieved March 9, 2018 (http://sustainability.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/UGA-Sustainability-Plan-Fall-2015.pdf).

Students at OSU and at UGA reported that when they first learned their universities already had set targets for local and sustainable food purchasing, they were encouraged and felt that was a positive sign for the RF campaign. However, their sense of its impact changed when administrators used those university targets to argue that the Real Food Commitment was unnecessary. Similarly, at OSU the pre-existing 40 percent goal complicated RF OSU's messaging about committing to 20 percent Real Food. To the students involved in the campaign, the difference between the university target and the RFCC was very clear; Real Food set out very specific criteria and a detailed process for implementing auditing, reporting, and continual progress. OSU's target was just that—a *target*, with no definition for local or sustainable associated with it. Students felt that administrators used OSU's pre-existing target to support their argument that developing the university's own plan for advancing local and sustainable food purchasing was actually more ambitious than adopting the RFC approach through the Commitment. One of the faculty members interviewed also felt that the vague 40 percent objective undermined the students' messaging.

RF OSU students articulated the differences between OSU's 40 percent goal and the RFC Commitment in an article in *The Lantern* about OSU's decision not to participate in RFC and in a letter to the editor after deciding to step down from the Food Sustainability Panel (Herbener 2016; Real Food OSU 2017). The January, 2017 letter included the following statement:

> …the Real Food Campus Commitment's finely tuned, meticulously researched standards would create a system that is not only socially and environmentally just, but also transparent. The commitment creates a structure in which students — not simply Dining Services or administrators — work alongside frontline communities, food-movement leaders and producers to hold the university

> accountable, preventing the abuses and "greenwashing" that too often comes with self-reporting.
>
> Indicators of such greenwashing include exaggeration, vagueness and weak verification, according to University of Oregon's Greenwashing Index. So how does OSU stack up? A goal of 40 percent local and sustainable food purchasing by 2025, all without clear definitions of those words and no established method of verification? Check, check and check. The combination of ambitious goals with loose metrics, not to mention the exceedingly long timeline, set the stage for a weak circle of accountability, at the very least. (Real Food OSU 2017:Para. 7-8)

As indicated by the above quote, after several months of meetings and narrowly losing the vote to get Panel support for endorsing the RFC Commitment for meeting 20 percent of the 40 percent target, the RF students had concluded that the Panel was more intent on "greenwashing" than committing to the kinds of standards reflected in the RFC Calculator tool. However, as discussed in chapter 4, a number of staff, faculty, and other students had more confidence in the process and future outcomes of the Panel, and did not assume, as the RF students had, that "greenwashing" would necessarily be the result if the Commitment were not signed.

It is difficult to assess the impact of pre-existing local and sustainable food purchasing criteria on the OSU and UGA campaigns. Certainly, the students were frustrated by the way in which administrators used them to downplay the value of the RFC Commitment. Students at OSU and UGA had opportunities to meet and share stories about their campaigns, and through that communication they realized that the two campaigns shared this particular challenge. However, none of the students reported learning about other campuses that had effectively managed this target response ("we already are doing this; we do not need RFC"). In section 5.3.2, below, I discuss how greater strategic capacity might have supported this kind of problem solving.

5.1.3 Summary: Opportunity structures and campaign outcomes

The results of this RFC campaign comparison suggested that the context or opportunity structures of the four universities significantly influenced campaign progress and explains, in part, the difference in outcomes between the two "winning" campaigns and the two that did not secure the Commitment. The two most significant external variables were political influence and commitment to conventional agribusiness, with interaction between the two, which influenced level of opposition to the campaigns. Political and agribusiness context also influenced outcomes through their effects on ally availability, most significantly at UGA. As strategic decisions and cultural factors also shaped the role of allies in the campaigns, that variable is discussed further in section 5.3, below. In addition to ally availability, the internal contextual variable with the greatest impact on campaign outcomes was openness of administrators to student initiatives. The orientation of the student body toward progressive activism influenced students' perceptions of campaign difficulty but its effects on outcomes were difficult to assess from the results of this study. Finally, prior established LSFB commitments at OSU and UGA negatively influenced the effectiveness of RF framing there by providing a *discursive opportunity* for targets opposed to the Commitment; they reframed the students' petition as unnecessary and even as less ambitious than RFC.

On the basis of these contextual factors alone, Pitt clearly had the most favorable context for an RFC campaign; UNC's was generally favorable, and more so after a change in chancellor; OSU's was challenging; and UGA's was the most challenging or least favorable. Thus, as expected, opportunity structures significantly influenced outcomes. However, the strategic actions and culture of the campaigns mattered, as well;

success was not assured by Pitt and UNC's contexts, and OSU won an administrative response and the opportunity to shape LSFB metrics, despite its challenging context. The following sections examine the ways in which mobilizing structures, strategic variables, and campaign culture interacted with the opportunity structures, providing a more complex and complete explanation of outcomes.

5.2 Organizational Factors

Social movements must create or appropriate coordination structures in order to function effectively (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). On college campuses, mobilizing structures can provide stability for campaigns to extend beyond the tenure of a single cohort of students (Chang 2004). As predicted, at all four universities both academic and student network mobilizing structures were important for advancing the campaigns, but the extent to which they supported progress toward winning the Campus Commitment varied in association with other factors. In the campaigns that won the Commitment, academic mobilizing structures were most significant at UNC, whereas student extracurricular networks were more important at Pitt. At both UGA and OSU RF students expanded their groups' reach through progressive student coalitions; these networks supported solidarity and mobilization of greater numbers at rallies and other actions, helping win concessions at OSU but not at UGA.

5.2.1 Academic, student, and community networks

At the two universities where the RF Commitment was signed, students had access to networks that they felt significantly supported their campaigns. At OSU and

UGA, students also were able to create student groups and to work in coalition with other progressive groups, including a few community organizations as well as student groups. While students at all four universities considered these mobilizing structures important to their advocacy efforts, their influence alone was less important than contextual and strategic factors. Below I describe the role and influence of the networks utilized by RF leaders at each campus.

At Pitt, RF student leaders felt that the robust network of student sustainability leaders facilitated Real Food Pitt's progress both through mobilization—drawing students in from other, related groups—and by facilitating knowledge and skill sharing between veteran student leaders and Real Food regarding how to advance an initiative with Pitt administrators. As one student described:

> …students have run and have come up with every single sustainability initiative that exists at this campus, and we have very impressive students because of this. We have students who know how to navigate a bureaucracy; we have students who know how to look at stakeholders, know how to look at decision makers, know how to look at financial ties…We have very inspirational upper-class students who can teach the under-classmen how to do things.[110]

Supporting this network was a physical hub space, as described in chapter four—the Student Office of Sustainability, which resembles a small business start-up space with an open floor plan. Students used that space to connect formally and informally about the progress and strategic planning for a wide variety of environmental and sustainability initiatives including Engineers for a Sustainable World, Free the Planet, Real Food Pitt, Students for Sustainability, and Pitt Bicycle Collective (University of Pittsburgh 2017).

In addition to a network of sustainability-related student groups, several student interviewees described relationships with other progressive organizations on campus,

[110] Interviewee Pitt 6.

including the “Fight for Fifteen” campaign for a living wage for university workers and United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS). A number of progressive student organizations regularly supported each other’s efforts through petitions and endorsements, to help each other demonstrate strong student commitment when leaders took their case to administrators. Students participating in a variety of campaigns often shared experiences and brainstormed strategy together in this space. For Real Food Pitt, this community was more important for strategic capacity than the RFC network, which also offered opportunities to learn from other student organizers, because Real Food Pitt leaders did not feel that RFC’s strategic guidance was appropriate for their context.

At OSU, as described in chapter four, a community-based organization, Local Matters, was key to launching the original group that later became Real Food OSU. After the student group decided to affiliate with RFC, they sometimes collaborated with other progressive organizations to increase mobilization for events, as in the spring 2016 occupation of President Bricker’s office. In 2017, after RF OSU decided to break with the Food Sustainability Panel, it maintained loose ties to other progressive campus groups and strengthened ties to campus and community fair food groups. While these coalition partners enabled RF OSU to mobilize larger groups of people when they held rallies and marches, their numbers were still relatively modest. In contrast to Pitt, where students reported that the network of student organizations facilitated their ability to successfully navigate decision-making processes, at OSU the progressive network supported mobilization more than strategic capacity (discussed further in 5.3.3).

UNC was the only university of the four where an academic program served a key role as a mobilizing structure. The university’s Food for All theme, in place from 2015 to

2018, helped RF student leaders build key relationships with faculty and staff and make the case for the RFC Commitment. As one student recalled "[Food For All showed me that] change can happen *within* the system, but it is dependent on relationships."[111] Students leveraged these relationships in negotiations with administrators about the Commitment, and also benefitted from their strategic guidance when negotiations became tense.

At UGA, the Go Green Alliance, an umbrella organization for UGA student groups relating to environment and sustainability, connected the early leaders who formed Real Food UGA. This umbrella group helped interested students identify the new opportunity in food advocacy on campus when Real Food UGA was established in 2011. As leaders became more invested in social justice aspects of Real Food, RF leaders helped form UGA's Progressive Action Coalition. When student commitment to the social justice aspects of Real Food became more important, the UGA RF leaders also began connecting more regularly with community organizations including Athens for Everyone, a "left-progressive political organization" engaged in community organizing for societal transformation at the local and state levels (Athens for Everyone 2018). Like Real Food OSU, the UGA group's networks have supported mobilization for events and rallies, but have not supported the group's ability to win the RFC Commitment.

5.2.2 Opportunities for institutionalizing RFC Calculator labor

The Campus Commitment requires signatory colleges and universities to regularly track all food and beverage purchasing in order to calculate the percentage of those purchases that qualifies as Real and to identify opportunities to increase that

[111] Interviewee UNC 1.

percentage to 20 percent by 2020. This is a highly labor intensive task; Real Food Challenge staff estimated it takes, on average, two student interns working about 10 hours per week to successfully manage the Calculator workload. Many RFC campaigns prioritized this work and estimating the baseline Real Food percentage in their campaigns, because that information can help students make the case to dining staff and administrators that the Commitment target is feasible. Thus, as described in section 5.1.2.4 above, campaigns where students have support creating for-credit or paid student internships to support the calculator work may have an easier time managing that process.

At UNC, faculty whose work intersected with Real Food Challenge concerns created an RFC Calculator internship within Environmental Studies and they have put in a good deal of time and energy to build and maintain that opportunity. That internship, in one faculty member's view, also helped Real Food – UNC and its campaign by ensuring continuity—at least in the calculator aspect of the campaign. Pitt took an additional step of creating paid student positions associated with Real Food, one focused on communications and the other tasked with undertaking the annual Calculator work. At both UNC and Pitt, administrators, faculty, and students noted the importance of these positions for institutionalizing Real Food and ensuring continuity because of regular student turnover.

At OSU, one faculty member whose work closely intersected the mission of Real Food said there were plans to create for credit student internships in dining services there, and that the slow process for creating and gaining approval for new courses explained the delay in providing that institutional support. None of the RF OSU students referred to this plan so it is unclear whether they were involved in that process. At UGA, as described in

chapter four, Real Food students played a leading role in creating a paid internship in dining, but after one semester in which an RF UGA student held the position and completed the initial Calculator evaluation, the job description was broadened to encompass sustainability in dining more generally. In addition, the student hired was not closely connected to RF UGA and as of fall 2017 it was unclear whether dining would continue using the Calculator and continue working with Real Food UGA.

Thus, the function and impact of mobilizing structures was strongly influenced by the campus context and the openness of targets to the RFC Commitment. At Pitt and UNC, different forms of mobilizing structures provided the labor and knowledge and skills needed to win the campaigns, and supportive environments contributed to their ability to create infrastructure for the Calculator work. At OSU and UGA, students also created student networks that extended beyond Real Food members but had much greater difficulty leveraging them to advance their campaigns. In addition to less favorable environments for their campaigns, the discussion of strategic variables, below, suggests ways in which framing, tactics, and cultural factors help explain the campaign outcomes.

5.3 Strategic Factors

As discussed in chapter two, more or less favorable contextual factors matter, but their influence is mediated by a movement's culture, framing processes, and strategic choices--how well activists create and adapt effective approaches given their context and target responses (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; McCammon et al. 2008; Amenta et al. 2010; Jasper 2010). Most social movement research examining the impact of strategic adaptation on outcomes has focused on *framing processes* and the

extent to which groups develop culturally resonant frames that align with the movement context (Jasper 2010), or alignment between the general type of strategy adopted (insider/assimilative or outsider/contentious) and context (see, for example, Cress and Snow 1996, 2000; and Arthur 2011).

Framing decisions, as part of campaign strategy, clearly influenced outcomes in three of the four RFC campaigns examined: they supported a positive outcome at Pitt and contributed to negative outcomes at OSU and UGA. At UNC, frame alignment seemed to be less a function of campaign strategy than the *discursive opportunity structure* discussed above—the Food for All academic theme and related statewide initiatives. Also as predicted, the ability of students to "read" their context and opponent responses and make strategic shifts when their tactics did not seem to be working also influenced outcomes. A third factor that was not predicted in the model emerged as important because of its influence on both framing processes and tactics: campaign *culture*, particularly collective identity, that was influenced by RFC principles and goals related to, but distinct from, the RFC Commitment campaign objective.

Table 5.7: Variation Among Strategic Variables That Influenced RF Commitment Campaign Progress.

	PITT	**OSU**	**UNC**	**UGA**
Framing	Regional Economy Sustainability Good Food University Leader	Community Social Justice	Community Env. Justice Sustainability University Leader	Sustainability Social Justice University Leader
Tactics	Assimilative	Assertive	Mixed	Mixed
Movement Culture	Campaign-focused Sustainability identity	Movement-focused Social justice identity	Campaign & movement- focused Local food identity	Campaign & movement- focused Progressive identity
Strategic Adaptation	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low
RFC Influence	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate

5.3.1 Framing processes

As described in chapter two, many scholars identify frame alignment and resonance as key factors in the influence of social movement framing, or meaning construction and communication (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Framing processes often become more strategic as a movement progresses, aimed at garnering sympathy from important constituencies and persuading targets, or people who can influence targets, that it is in their interest to grant the movement what it seeks. Further, framing processes, by defining movement identity and goals, often influence selection of organizational structures and tactics (Polletta 2004; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). As with political opportunities, movement actors who recognize and respond strategically to *discursive* opportunities enhance their chances of winning their objectives (Gamson and Meyer 1996; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

The model presented in chapter two predicted that campaign outcomes would be influenced by how well activists adjust RFC framing to align with their university's organizational context. The four cases examined in this study largely supported this prediction, but with the important caveat that the ease or difficult of alignment was significantly influenced by contextual variables—*opportunity structure*. At Pitt and at UNC, student leaders framed the Commitment as a public relations opportunity for the university and emphasized Real Food standards consistent with their university's academic and sustainability commitments. At UGA and OSU, the campaigns also used positive messaging early on, framing the RF Commitment as an opportunity, but targets at these universities were not persuaded that Real Food offered a public relations benefit. Both campaigns shifted later toward increasingly critical messaging and frames that

aligned with RFC's growing emphasis on food justice. The justice frame at UGA and OSU resonated with a small core group of students and other progressive student groups but they were much less resonant with students outside these groups, with the campaign's targets and individuals who could influence them, and with some potential allies, making it more difficult for student leaders to advance progress toward the Commitment. Strong critiques of conventional food production in the Real Food frames adopted at OSU and UGA likely contributed to the perceived risk of the Commitment by administrators there.

At Pitt, RF students framed the Commitment as an opportunity to support Western Pennsylvania's regional food economy, an opportunity to improve dining options for students, and as a public relations opportunity for the university. Students at all four universities included this "benefits" messaging as part of their pitches, and it resonated most effectively at Pitt and in the second campaign at UNC. As one Pitt student leader described:

> We would run down with [Vice Chancellor for Community Initiatives and Chancellor's Chief of Staff Renny Clark] what RFC was, what it would mean for the school, why it was important for the school, and he was totally into it—he loved the sound of it....[112]

Another administrator who met with Pitt's RF student leaders remembered that they were successful in framing the proposal in a way that helped demonstrate to Chancellor Gallagher its alignment with "university values."

In addition to public relations benefits, Pitt students highlighted sustainability and health benefits of Real Food in ways that aligned with academic and student wellness priorities. Early in the campaign, during Real Food week events at Market Central, Pitt's main student dining center, students emphasized the health risks associated with the

[112] Interviewee Pitt 9.

overuse of antibiotics in conventional meat production and consumption of high fructose corn syrup, and the environmental and community benefits of regional food purchasing (Rosenblatt 2014; Lieberman 2015). The closest academic connections to food systems issues at Pitt were nutrition and dietetics in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and the Department of Geology and Environmental Science, which includes a course in sustainability. The areas that RF leaders emphasized were well aligned with these academic areas of focus, along with Pitt's desire to be viewed as a sustainability leader.[113] Students indicated they had considered carefully how to frame the RFC standards to align with the interests of the Pitt administration. The formal messaging they built seemed tailored for their targets. In contrast, tabling and educational sessions designed to mobilize students and garner petition signatures reflected a broader range of RFC values, including social justice.

At OSU, Real Food framing processes often included all four areas of emphasis: local & community-based, fair to producers and workers, ecologically sound, and humane. By the time the campaign chose to escalate its tactics in early 2016, food justice had become the primary focus. The "food justice is racial justice" frame served to deepened the commitment of a small group of student activists, and it helped them align with other progressive, social justice groups on campus and in the Columbus community. The following statement by an RFC organizer reflected the sentiments of a core group of students who were highly motivated by the social justice frames of Real Food:

> Whenever I build relationships with students, it's going to be relationships that are going to be had for the rest of our lives. Because they, too, hold that this is the

[113] For example, the resident district manager for Sodexo—an individual who would be highly sensitive to the preferences of Pitt's administration—publicly affirmed the value of signing onto the RFC Commitment and becoming the first Athletic Coast Conference school to do so (Rosenblatt 2014).

> issue--racial justice, food justice, and working with farmers of color, students of color specifically, something that is talked about but at the same time, never talked about. And that is food and agriculture and race.[114]

But while social justice frames seemed to deepen commitment on the part of some student leaders, it alienated others, sometimes making it hard to mobilize larger groups of students. As described in chapter 4, student leaders at OSU described a deliberate shift in messaging and tactics in 2015 in response to what they perceived to be stalling and stonewalling by the OSU administration. Some Real Food OSU leaders felt that shifting from a positive message emphasizing benefits for OSU and benefits for food system changes to one that was highly critical of OSU relationships with bad corporate actors would advance their campaign. This shift also appealed to a core group of students as a result of what they were learning about corporate agriculture, connections between corporate agriculture and OSU, racism in the history of land grant universities and access to agricultural lands in the U.S., and contemporary worker and contract farmer abuses in the food sector. Students began to shift the RF OSU frame (and began escalating tactics) not just because they believed it would be effective but also because the justice frame resonated "with the beliefs, ideas, and cultural frames of meaning [they used] to make sense of their situation and to legitimate collective action" (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004:276).

After the Food Sustainability Panel was formed, RF OSU students and the Executive Director of RFC, presenting to the Panel, continued to emphasize the social justice aspects of RFC standards, in part because they felt that aspect was the least well understood by many Panel members. Several faculty or staff members of the Panel agreed with students that aspects of the RF Standards that administrators would likely

[114] Interviewee RFC 4.

object to, including exclusions of GMO and CAFO products, should be discussed openly within the panel. However, they did not agree with RFC staff and OSU students that it was strategically wise to emphasize the "food justice equals racial justice" frame in what they viewed as an introductory, diverse forum intended to bring people on board, some of whom had very limited familiarity with social aspects of sustainability. A Panel member shared this recollection about the RFC presentations to the FSP in September 2016:

> I was really hoping that this series of events was going to turn everything around, and instead it ended up creating an opportunity for both sides to kind of dig in further. And we were further away from adopting the RFC [standards] than we were before these discussions, I believe.[115]

In addition to their shift toward a justice frame in discussions with targets, Real Food OSU leaders also used the food justice frame in their efforts to mobilize students. This choice reflected their strong commitment to the social aspects of sustainability and it facilitated connections with worker rights oriented groups, including the Student Farmworker Alliance on campus and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers chapter in Columbus. However, for OSU students interested in questions surrounding food sourcing on campus but with limited background knowledge of food system critiques, this frame was confusing and some believed it undermined student mobilization. A former student member of Real Food OSU who attended a rally that included RF and the OSU chapter of Black Lives Matter felt that, for most student observers, the association of the two groups did not make any sense because they did not have any familiarity with connections between racism and food production. A community ally agreed that the racial justice frame required more investment and education than the group may have been capable of pursuing:

[115] Interviewee OSU 12.

> It was very clear to me there was not the capacity to build the educational knowledge and infrastructure around that concept [food justice = racial justice]. There was too much possibility of it backfiring, which I think in some ways it did.[116]

Thus, at OSU early positive framing did not resonate as it had at Pitt as a result of contextual differences. The shift toward more critical, food justice frames narrowed mobilization opportunities but enhanced solidarity with coalition partners who participated in the Reclaim OSU sit-in. That identity and solidarity contributed significantly to the decision of RF OSU leaders to leave the Panel, letting go of their opportunity to potentially win the Commitment.

UNC student leaders enjoyed a significant advantage over the other universities with respect to opportunities for strong frame resonance as a result of their campus context and their close collaboration with faculty allies. As discussed above, the Food for All academic theme provided a *discursive opportunity structure* (DOS) in which Real Food messaging about the problems with conventional production and the benefits of supporting North Carolina producers using sustainable practices were highly resonant (Koopmans and Statham 1999; McCammon et al. 2007). Further, critical messaging about conventional agriculture was not perceived as threatening at UNC, in that way that it was at OSU and, especially, UGA. Effective movement framing is the "result of the combined effect of a discursive opportunity structure and movement actors who deploy frames in ways that align or fit with this discursive opportunity structure" (McCammon et al. 2007:732). At UNC, students effectively leveraged the favorable DOS by using Food for All to highlight alignment between their campaign and UNC's priorities.

[116] Interviewee OSU 14.

A second wave student leader at UNC, Claire Hannapel, was selected through a competitive process to serve on the Food for All Steering Committee. The selection of a Real Food student leader made clear to the Food for All team the congruence between RFC objectives and UNC's teaching and research agenda in food systems. As discussed above, her position on the steering committee also provided a mobilizing structure for advancing the Real Food commitment—especially, for collaboration with faculty. In contrast to Pitt and OSU, at UNC the presence of closely involved faculty allies and the openness of student leaders in the second wave to consider their input influenced the ways in which campaign leaders adjusted framing and tactics to better align with context. Both students and faculty members at UNC reported that faculty members provided, and students acted on, advice to soften "contentious language" modeled after RFC-produced documents. In contrast to OSU and UGA, the concern seemed to be not about RFC critiques of conventional agribusiness but rather language (and actions) interpreted as critical of UNC for not having yet signed the Commitment. In UNC's case, frame alignment with context was easy to accomplish, but language deemed *personally* critical created pushback.

As a result of the collaborative work of FLO and Carolina Dining Services, along with a generally favorable agricultural context for community-based sourcing, the UNC campaign enjoyed another great advantage compared to the other three universities in this study: UNC was already sourcing close to the 20 percent goal of Real Food while students were engaged in the second RFCC campaign. In February 2016, about three months before Chancellor Folt signed the Commitment, Scott Myers, UNC's director of food and vending, was quoted in the student newspaper as saying that UNC would

probably reach 20 percent Real Food in 2016 (Conti 2016). Students were able to use the progress already made to frame the RFC Commitment, and UNC's status as a leader in supporting North Carolina's agricultural producers, as a public relations opportunity for the university. The resonance of this frame reflected both the favorable administrative and academic orientation toward sustainable agriculture and its relatively high degree of autonomy from the state's conservative political context. That the university's leaders believed Real Food afforded a public relations opportunity and did not create a significant risk of sanctions from stakeholders was reflected by an article published on the university web site in August, 2017, announcing that UNC had already surpassed Real Food's 20 percent goal:

> Not only has UNC-Chapel Hill achieved the benchmark four years earlier than the challenge deadline, it surpassed this goal while maintaining meal plan price increases at or below the level of food and labor price inflation in the marketplace for the last decade. This means that students did not face surcharges or price increases in their meal plans in order to achieve the Real Food goals. (UNC Finance and Operations 2017:para. 2).

This statement suggests that UNC's dining services division was comfortable publicizing its Real Food Campus Commitment as long as it could also demonstrate cost containment. Similar to Pitt, and at odds with OSU and UGA, framing focused on university benefits *resonated* at UNC, following the change to a more supportive chancellor.

At UGA, student leaders in both waves of the campaign also reported that they had tailored their messaging at times in ways that were clearly designed to align with administrator interests or priorities. For example, when students prepared their talking points for a meeting with Provost Whitten, whose academic training is in health sciences, they emphasized public health problems such as obesity that could be addressed through

a commitment to Real Food. This frame had proven resonant at Pitt but did not help students advance their cause with administrators at UGA. They also tried the public relations frame that resonated at Pitt and UNC, where administrators used the Real Food Commitment to highlight their leadership role in an emerging area of campus sustainability. Neither of these frames resonated with targets at UGA, either. With Whitten, it was unclear to students why she was not persuaded by a health-based argument. With respect to the public relations frame, students reported that administrators asserted that UGA did not need to be a leader in every area (and, implicitly, that Real Food was not going to be an area it chose for a leadership role).

In addition to a university benefits frame, both waves of the UGA campaign felt a strong commitment to communicate the full set of Real Food principles in their meetings and messaging with targets as well as with the population they hoped to mobilize (mostly students). Like the OSU campaign, their framing reflected RFC's language and priorities, and their messaging became more strongly tied to social justice goals in the second wave. This shift occurred alongside more assertive tactics and social media messaging. For example, during the RFC summit and rally at UGA in September 2016, a number of tweets challenged President Morehead with "who are you accountable to?" in an effort to draw attention to perceived Board of Regents influence on his response to Real Food.[117]

As discussed in chapter four, many individuals sympathetic to Real Food's objectives at UGA felt that framing the campaign as a critique of conventional agriculture, and particularly conventional poultry production, undermined their ability to

[117] One example, from Real Food UGA's Twitter feed, read "Just finished with an AWESOME action through downtown and campus! PRESIDENT MOREHEAD WHERE ARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU ACCOUNTABLE TO? @BORUSG." Retrieved July 20, 2018 (https://twitter.com/realfoodUGA/status/779779201364795392).

win changes in Real Food purchasing at UGA. One UGA faculty member remembered advising a Real Food student by posing these questions:

> How do you recognize that the institution is going to feel like its hands are tied in particular ways? And how do you get them to be on your side and to help you. And to be able to see that they will get a lot of positive PR and positive attention for the small changes that they make, instead of saying, look, you guys are bad and you're serving Big Ag and we hate Big Ag…Because this institution is not going to do that. This is Georgia, and this is the University of Georgia; there is a lot of deep, deep, monetary and political investment in agriculture in this state. And they are not going to burn that bridge. They can't.[118]

Thus, positive frames that had resonated with targets in more favorable contexts did not move administrators at UGA, and critical messaging about conventional agriculture, many felt, negatively affected the Real Food campaign's opportunity to win the Commitment.

While *frame alignment* is a useful way to explain differences in resonance and relative progress toward achieving the Real Food Commitment at the four universities in this study, it is important to note that framing that hampered the Commitment campaigns at OSU and UGA may have served a different purpose that students valued as much, or even more, in OSU's case, than winning the Commitment. As discussed in chapter 2, framing serves a variety of purposes within movements that often include diagnosis, or interpretation of the problem and its sources; prognosis, or proposed solutions to the identified problem; and "call to action" framing intended to motivate concerned individuals to participate (Snow and Benford 1988; Zald 1996). With multiple framing functions, "framing dilemmas" sometimes occur in which a frame serving one purpose may undermine a different purpose--for example, when a diagnostic frame useful with some audiences is overwhelming to other constituencies, producing "numbing effects"

[118] Interviewee UGA 13.

that impede mobilization (Benford and Snow 1988:203). Similarly, at OSU and UGA, use of social justice frames and messaging confronting conventional agribusiness advanced some objectives while hindering others. The national SMO's influence on these "framing dilemmas" is discussed further in section 5.3.4.

Movements that are able to integrate diagnostic, prognostic, and action frames are likely to have greater success mobilizing people sympathetic to the issues they address (Snow and Benford 1988). At OSU, several students and observers reported that a lack of congruence between racial justice frames and other Real Food frames such as the benefits of sustainable food production methods hampered student mobilization. Further, the racial justice frame narrowed the diagnostic frame to one that required greater knowledge of food systems and historical inequalities in food production than many students shared with the Real Food leaders. Limiting frames to ones requiring expert knowledge can also hamper mobilization of greater numbers (Snow and Benford 1988).

Consistent with these predictions, at both OSU and UGA, food justice frames supported collaboration with progressive student and community organizations but also limited mobilization opportunities with UGA students drawn to other aspects of sustainable food. "Food justice is racial justice" was confusing to students unacquainted with connections between racial disparities in access to agricultural land or worker rights in food production that disproportionately affect people of color. Student leaders recognized the challenge of a broad justice frame for sustainable food but saw that challenge as part of the educational role of their campaign, in support of movement building. As one student leader stated:

> Justice and sustainability are inseparable for us. But it's very hard for people to understand, because a lot of what is pitched is sustainability stuff. And a lot of our

> buy-in and make-up are white women who are interested in environmental issues and see the environmental effects. I think RFC has been a transformative process. Like, yes, this is a thing [environment], and this is something you should care about, but it's also so much more than that. So that education process, enlightening, it needed to happen as part of our efforts on campus, too.[119]

This statement reflects the challenge to simultaneously advance an instrumental Real Food objective, which many in the campus community associated with "sustainability stuff," and the social justice and food system transformation goals that became more and more central to the group's frames. Like the OSU campaign, UGA student leaders were unwilling to adapt frames if doing so seemed at odds with the meaning and identity that were central to their commitment. Thus, at OSU and UGA, where frame alignment was critically important due to the likelihood that administrators would perceive RFC as risky and student bodies less inclined toward progressive causes, RF leaders were unwilling to adapt frames when they were viewed as central to their identity and the group's values and broader movement goals. This lack of flexibility contributed to their difficulty advancing the Commitment.

5.3.2 Tactics

As discussed in chapter two, social movement scholarship varies in its conclusions about the influence on assertive/contentious versus assimilative/collaborative tactics on outcomes. The complexity of movement dynamics makes it difficult to demonstrate that a particular strategic choice was the key factor that produced a particular outcome (Giugni 1998). Connecting particular kinds of tactics with outcomes is further complicated by the fact that many campaigns and movements employ a range of tactics--some contentious, some collaborative--at different points in time. Even for college

[119] Interviewee UGA 9.

campus campaigns extending just a few years, connecting specific tactics with specific outcomes was a significant challenge. Target administrators who were willing to comment on the reasons for their decision to sign the Commitment did not necessarily share the full set of actions and considerations that mattered. At the two institutions that did not sign, no key decision-makers were willing to discuss the Real Food campaigns at all. My analysis of the effects of various tactics on campaign outcomes reflects a synthesis of the impressions and informed evaluations of as many stakeholders as possible, corroborated, whenever feasible, through public statements and accounts.

To summarize the influence of tactics on outcomes, at Pitt, the university with the most favorable context, students used collaborative/assimilative tactics alone to great effect and its effectiveness may have benefitted from comparison to more contentious campaigns underway. At UNC, the second wave employed both collaborative and moderately assertive tactics, and they engaged in strategic adaptation in response to staff and faculty feedback. OSU students engaged in both assimilative and highly contentious tactics, including a sit-in, which may have secured their positions on the Food Sustainability Panel but did not win the original desired outcome (the RFC Commitment). OSU students eventually withdrew entirely from an assimilative strategy and gave up on winning the Commitment. At UGA students employed a similar set of tactics as UNC but with less adaptation and with very different outcomes. These results support arguments for greater attention to strategic adaptation and capacity, particularly for campaigns operating in unfavorable environments, discussed in section 5.3.4, below, and in this chapter's summary.

At Pitt, student leaders felt strongly that assimilative tactics would be the most effective choice for the Real Food Commitment campaign, and it appears their judgment was sound. They based this conclusion on evidence from personal experience working to advance other initiatives at Pitt and from direct statements from administrators, who spoke negatively about more contentious tactics and also who felt strongly that learning how to petition administrators in a "professional" way was an important part of Pitt's undergraduate endeavor.

While Pitt offered a generally supportive context for advancing Real Food, at times student leaders needed to reflect and adapt when they met with resistance. They also privileged their own local knowledge and strategic assessment over that of RFC staff. When they encountered problems with dining services early in the campaign and pushback from a trustee late in the process, they rejected suggestions to "escalate" the campaign and instead revised their assimilative tactics. Thus, while winning at Pitt was certainly supported by a highly favorable context, students and administrators felt it also resulted from an effective strategic approach. As one administrator shared, ""[The students were] willing to collaborate and listen to feedback…They were polite, professional, considerate, and had a positive attitude…taking a professional approach."[120] Of course, it is not surprising that administrators would state a preference for more assimilative tactics, nor that they might deny "giving in" to more contentious tactics.

Pitt administrators provided examples of other student campaigns they had supported and ones they had not, and why. In their view, they generally support student initiatives in cases where they are able to do so, as long as students have completed extensive research and done "due diligence," demonstrating their commitment to follow

[120] Interviewee Pitt 7.

through and ensure the project's success, and when they have adopted a "professional" approach. They felt that the Real Food Pitt students had met these criteria exceptionally well. It is important to note that, in the view of student leaders, students in *all of the four campaigns* adopted a "professional" manner with administrators, at least initially, and did a great deal of research and analysis to present a compelling case to administrators. Thus, the success of the Pitt campaign's assimilative approach must be viewed in relation to Pitt's favorable contextual characteristics.

OSU's Real Food campaign was the only one of the four that included highly contentious and riskier tactics. While it is very difficult to determine the effect of escalating tactics on the position of administrators regarding the Commitment, the RF OSU campaign's tactics may have accelerated the timetable for establishing a panel to develop metrics for OSU's food sustainability goal. In late spring, 2016, when the new InFact director arrived at OSU, he set up a meeting to talk with Real Food OSU leaders soon after arriving, signaling recognition that he had been informed that they were important stakeholders to engage.

Real Food students believed that their invitation to serve on the FSP was a direct result of their decision to escalate tactics and engage in the Reclaim OSU sit-in. Two indirect forms of evidence support the students' belief that the sit-in may have contributed to their place on the FSP. First, the April 2016 sit-in won significant media attention that included strong criticism of the way in which the administrator on site had handled discussions with students. The *Columbus Dispatch* headline read "Occupation ends at Ohio State University's Bricker Hall after arrests, expulsion threatened." OSU representatives initially claimed students never been at risk of arrest or expulsion, but

students posted videos on YouTube in which Jay Kasey, OSU's Senior Vice President for Administration and Planning, could be clearly heard referring to possible arrest and expulsion (Edwards 2016). More than 400 faculty members, students, and staff signed a letter supporting "Reclaim OSU" and condemning the administration's handling of the sit-in (Huson 2016). This coverage and, specifically, the administration's claim that it had sought to clear the building because university workers, due to report at 7:00am in Bricker Hall, were "scared" by the student protesters, also inspired an unflattering essay in *The Atlantic* (Friedersdorf 2016).

Media is a primary forum in which activists seek to advance their interpretation of events and movement frames. One of the reasons activists engage in disruptive tactics is to earn media coverage that promotes public sympathy for the protesters (Taylor and Van Dyke 2007; Amenta et al. 2009; Tilly and Wood 2009). Favorable coverage also demonstrates power, as "being visible and quoted defines for other journalists and a broader public who really matters" (Gamson 2007:251). Real Food and its partners in Reclaim OSU demonstrated they could generate embarrassing media and the support of 400 faculty, staff, and graduate students through disruptive protest. If administrators had not already planned to offer seats on the Food Sustainability Panel to RF OSU leaders, it is hard to imagine that the sit-in would not have changed their mind.

While contentious tactics may have accelerated OSU's process for implementing its 40 percent LSFB goal, they also may have had negative effects on the influence of RFC standards on OSU's food purchasing metrics in the long-term. A continuing member of the FSP who was supportive of RFC standards remarked:

> The more stringent [the criteria] are, the less likely the board [of trustees] is going to be able to sign it. *Especially because there's already contention between the*

> *Real Food Challenge and the board and the president of the university.* So I'd imagine there's going to be resistance to sign something that basically followed everything that RFC says (emphasis added).[121]

As discussed in chapter 4, most Panel members (or faculty with knowledge of Real Food and the panel) who shared the group's interest in rigorous LSFB criteria expressed concerns that the tactical decision to step down from the Panel was a mistake. They felt that the absence of Real Food leaders might mean that the final recommendations advanced by the panel to President Drake would be less rigorous than they would have been had the students remained engaged. Community allies shared the students' assessment that cooptation was a real risk associated with Panel participation, but they did not share the students' assessment that disengaging was the best course of action. Thus, in OSU's case, assertive tactics likely supported concessions but not a "win," and the decision to shift away entirely from assimilative tactics was viewed by multiple allies as a tactical misstep.

Both campaigns at UNC employed many of the standards tactics recommended by RFC, including signature petitions, photo petitions on social media, events featuring Real Food, and "unconventional gifts." The second campaign also featured a national RFC summit that included strategic planning sessions and a "Come to the Table" march; Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Matt Fajack attended the rally and march, signaling the Folt administration's openness to considering the Commitment. Immediately afterwards, he set up a meeting between Brad Ives, the administrator overseeing Carolina Dining and the Real Food student leaders, suggesting that the march had been an effective way to demonstrate the UNC community's support for Real Food.

[121] Interviewee OSU 7.

The tactics adopted by RF UGA were very similar to those employed at its Southeastern neighbor, UNC. Like the UNC's early FLO group, UGA students began with educational events that featured local foods and opportunities to learn about differences between conventional and alternative production methods. UNC held its "People, Power, and Pork" event challenging North Carolina conventional hog production in March 2008; UGA students held a similar event called "Foodstock" in 2012 that was intended to launch a "pastured poultry campaign," challenging conventional poultry production in Georgia.[122] The decision to openly challenge regional CAFOs and promote pastured farms met with very different responses at UGA than it did at UNC, although it was some time before the UGA campaign realized it had provoked a strong response. The difference in responses was clearly tied to differences in the university's relationships with agricultural and political stakeholders, as described at the beginning of this chapter. UNC's campaign did experience some difficulties securing a sustained commitment to sustainable meat producers and ensuring that Calculator interns understood and correctly interpreted the Calculator's CAFO exclusion.[123] However, the hog industry at UNC did not appear to undermine Real Food's appeal, whereas many sympathetic community members and faculty at UGA felt that targeting poultry in Georgia had had a significant, negative influence on RF UGA's ability to advance their objectives with administrators.

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[122] Real Food UGA Facebook post, September, 28, 2012.

[123] At the end of fall semester, 2015, several interviewees reported that the Calculator interns who reported out on that semester's LSFB purchasing results had incorrectly identified a conventional meat producer as Real. At the same time, a well established cooperative for marketing pastured meat was abruptly dropped by Carolina Dining. This incident underscored to students the importance of securing the RFCC, to ensure UNC's commitment would be institutionalized and perhaps provide producers of Real meat and produce greater security in their contracts with the university.

UGA Real Food students faced the most challenging context in which to mobilize students around food sustainability and food justice issues. RFC staff members and RF leaders in both the early and later waves of the campaign expressed a great deal of uncertainty about what strategic approach and specific tactics would be effective in this context. Some expressed some optimism that continuing to "escalate" contentious actions might force the administration to give them a fair hearing. Others wondered if the modest level of escalation they had employed (the 2016 Summit and "Come to the Table" march) had undermined their opportunities to advance Real Food with dining services; one student even felt that the group might have earned President Morehead's signature if they had not shifted toward more contentious messaging and actions.

Several RFC staff interviewees compared the more moderate tactics at UGA with OSU's sit-in and interpreted the difference as greater boldness among the OSU students. Most UGA students themselves described their decision not to escalate further differently, as a strategic assessment that further escalation would not be effective, and might even backfire. However, for one RF UGA student, the campus culture described in section 5.1 also was a factor: "…there was always kind of a worry to me about, I guess, being able to get a job when I graduated if we did something radical."[124]

The contrast between outcomes at UNC and UGA demonstrates the strong influence of contextual factors on outcomes. At the same time, the Pitt and UNC cases suggest that, even in favorable contexts, strategic adaptation also matters. At OSU and UGA, evaluating the organizing environment and determining what tactics would be most effective would have been challenging for any progressive student organization, and the campus commitment to conventional agribusiness increased that challenge. At the

[124] Interviewee UGA 3.

same time, cultural factors relating to RFC's principles and movement building goal further complicated strategic choices in these two challenging campaigns. I turn to these dynamics next, and then explore evidence relating to strategic capacity to explain why the campaigns differed with respect to adaptation.

5.3.3 Strategic adaptation and capacity

Social movement campaigns are more likely to win the outcomes they seek when they employ effective strategies that take advantage of opportunities afforded by the movement's particular context (Guigni 1998; Ganz 2000; Amenta et al. 2010). The cultural resonance of frames and tactical "fit" helps explain why the effectiveness of strategic approaches is contingent upon context (Morris 1984; Benford and Snow 2000; Cress and Snow 2000; Rojas 2006). But what explains why some social movement actors figure out the right strategic "fit" and others do not? In other words, as in the four cases of RFC campaigns examined here, why does *strategic adaptation* vary? *Strategic capacity* and the elements that influence it provide some clues.

Strategic capacity is the ability of a movement or campaign's leadership to develop effective strategy. Motivation, salient knowledge, and effective learning processes all support strategic capacity. Diversity of insider/outsider perspectives, experience, skills, and networks within movement leadership and membership tend to enhance these three elements of strategic capacity (Ganz 2009). In relation to campus campaigns, this perspective suggests campaigns that incorporate perspectives of faculty, staff, and community allies, are likely to have greater strategic capacity. Comparison of the OSU, UNC, and UGA Real Food campaigns provides support for this prediction, with

the exception that allies did not seem to matter to Pitt's campaign success (the most favorable environment).

Motivation among core student leaders was strong in each campaign so I focused my analysis of strategic capacity on *salient knowledge* and *learning processes* and their sources in the campaigns. In the discussion that follows, I compare evidence of strategic adaptation and capacity at each of the four universities and their effects on outcomes. Then, in the final section on strategic factors, "The Role of Real Food Challenge," I discuss ways in which characteristics and practices of the national SMO supporting the campaigns influenced strategic choices, adaptation, and capacity.

At Pitt, where the RF objectives were not viewed as threatening and administrators showed a strong commitment to mentoring student leaders, adaptation still mattered and it helps explain how quickly the campaign was able to win. In particular, the Pitt campaign demonstrated the ability to gather and evaluate salient knowledge about relevant decision-making processes, and to learn from their own experience and that of others advancing sustainability initiatives at Pitt. The campaign followed advice from RFC regarding early steps for gaining support—soliciting student and faculty signatures, for example. When they had developed a better understanding of whose opinions mattered most to the decision they sought, they became more targeted in their actions. As one student leader recalled:

> We eventually figured out that the person we really needed to get on board was the VC [vice chancellor] of business—you know, the director of housing and dining, because he is a higher up administrator who works directly with Sodexo. So we needed him to say it was ok and sort of after that everybody else would say it's ok.[125]

[125] Interviewee Pitt 1.

As discussed above, the Pitt campaign also demonstrated a good understanding of what kinds of tactics were more likely to win a favorable response from administrators. Like students leading RF campaigns at other universities, the RFC staff person serving as advisor to their campaign advised "escalation" when facing this kind of frustration, or a delay in securing a follow up meeting. However, their knowledge of the local environment led them to reject that advice, which increased the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Chapter 4 described a key problem solving moment for the campaign, when students felt they were losing ground because a meeting that included a board member did not go well. In their response to that challenge, the Pitt students demonstrated their ability to learn from experience and develop creative solutions to the impasse. The solution they devised also relied on their evaluation that they were close to winning the Commitment, and that a "professional" approach would be more likely to win over the troublesome board member than would disruptive tactics. In a highly favorable environment, with a mobilizing structure (the Student Office of Sustainability) that facilitated accumulated knowledge and skills among Pitt progressives, Real Food Pitt was able to cultivate strategic capacity sufficient to win without expanding their network beyond the student body. In part, this was due to the fact that administrators openly discussed with students what it would take for them to agree to the Commitment.

Like Real Food Pitt students, OSU RF leaders regularly deliberated about strategic options and they made some choices that reflected an understanding of the effectiveness of past tactical decisions at OSU. For example, a faculty member familiar with a number of progressive campaigns and their history noted that the "Reclaim OSU"

coalition and its sit-in reflected a deliberate shift in tactics over time as a result of "cooptation" of individual initiatives by the administration. By working in coalition and engaging in more disruptive tactics, the member groups, including Real Food OSU, felt they could force concessions more effectively through coordinated "actions" than through continued negotiation on their own. Further, they had some evidence that a sit-in might produce concessions at OSU. In 2015, a rally and sit-in protesting racism at the Ohio Union (the central student center at OSU) resulted in a compromise with the administration (Powell 2015).

While I was unable to gauge the effectiveness of OSU's strategic approach on winning the Real Food Commitment, because student leaders chose to refocus their energy in other ways, it was clear that the sit-in did not win the specific concessions it sought from the administration in the short-term. The Reclaim OSU sit-in participants asked administrators for two things: 1) a commitment to provide full access to the OSU budget to make transparent all corporate relationships; and 2) for President Drake to agree to the requests of at least *one* of three campaigns represented--Real Food, United Students Against Sweatshops, or OSU Divest (Huson 2016). Neither request was granted. It may be that administrators considered the three seats on the Food Sustainability Panel for Real Food OSU to be a compromise with the group.

Thus, at OSU there was considerable evidence of engagement in learning processes and search for salient knowledge resulting in strategic decisions perceived to be most likely to produce concessions. Real Food OSU had opportunities for expanding diversity in those deliberations through its long-standing relationship with Local Matters and through the community of faculty, staff, and graduate students who expressed their

support for the sit-in participants. At the same time, interview data suggests that while non-student allies sometimes provided advice, student leaders did not consider these allies to be part of Real Food and *their strategic choices did not reflect input from community, faculty, or staff members*. Possible reasons for this are discussed below, in relation to RFC principles. As described in chapter four, as the Real Food OSU group became more committed to social justice as the core of their work, for some this meant excluding students with different priorities relating to sustainable food. Students who wanted to remain engaged with dining services and OSU administrators following the "hard no" letter did not feel they had a place in the group, once RFC staff and RF OSU leaders had decided on escalation. An RF student who left the group shared "I think their rhetoric was making it an inflammatory issue, and people didn't wanted to get involved because they didn't want to be the super-activisty types of students in President Drake's office…"[126] The evolution of RF OSU framing and tactics toward a more contentious relationship with the administration and a social justice frame narrowed student participation to a core group that strongly embraced RFC principles. One of the students who chose to leave was a student senator in the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). That narrowing limited RF leaders' knowledge of and access to the student body at OSU, with negative effects on their capacity to build a larger base, and the loss of potential strategic options through USG.[127]

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[126] Interviewee OSU 9.

[127] At OSU, as at UGA, securing a formal student resolution in support of the RFC Commitment did not win the campaigns support from the president. My point here is not that working through USG to advance Real Food interests would necessarily have been effective, but rather that, by progressively excluding students with different views, the core RF OSU leadership significantly narrowed the group's understanding of OSU's student body and formal student governance.

By limiting strategic decision-making to students, RF OSU leaders further constrained the diversity of experience, networks and skills that could have supported greater adaptation in response to the administration's actions. A community ally agreed that Real Food had not built a base large and strong enough to win using the strategic approach it was employing:

> What [RF OSU] didn't have the sophistication to do was analyze—those protest actions were energizing for a handful of people…What they couldn't do was take that energy and that identity and make it grow at a conservative university like Ohio State. That's the part that they didn't figure out. I don't know if they knew how, or maybe did not want to spend the time, to build the base of support—they had a lot of work to do to get to that tipping point of people who are going to go to the streets with them or go to the university president. They needed more students educated about the issue and involved. That takes time and a lot of effort. That said there were many good actions.[128]

Both campaigns at UNC showed some evidence of flexibility and adaptation, but the second campaign most clearly evaluated the context and target responses on an ongoing basis, with the help of allies, in ways that contributed to success. Student leaders in the second Commitment campaign made ongoing adjustments in strategy in response to administrator feedback, faculty advice, and their own evaluation of what steps would be most effective. At least one student pushed to "escalate" tactics further and adopt more contentious language, but others felt that response would undermine their ability to win. When faculty allies advised them to back off from actions that had put administrators on the defensive, they did so. As one student leader recalled "I thought that more confrontational tactics would become aggressive and alienating…I think it is important to find middle ground and push in a constructive manner. I struggled with that tension a lot

[128] Interviewee OSU 14.

because one of the students was really against the administrators."[129] Second wave student leaders at UNC also recognized that while faculty allies might not have direct power with the chancellor, they did have personal relationships with some of the administrators who were influential. The first group of leaders, and RF students at the other universities, did not seem to recognize the value of these indirect links or use them to their advantage.[130]

These relationships increased the diversity of salient knowledge and experience available to UNC students, thereby enhancing strategic capacity. No other Real Food campaign appeared to integrate input from faculty members into their strategic decision-making. UNC's opportunity structure was generally favorable to the campaign, particularly after Chancellor Folt was hired, but there were many administrative objections to specific language and requirements in the Commitment document. In addition, because UNC already had reached almost 20 percent Real Food, administrative staff could have made a case to the Chancellor that the Commitment was unnecessary and that Carolina Dining should proceed independently. Student leaders recognized the value of a UNC "win" to other RFC campaigns in the Southeast, but to win Chancellor Folt's approval they had to convince multiple administrative staff members that it was in their and UNC's interest to take that step. By opening their strategic decision making to the input of faculty allies, they enhanced their ability to adapt their messaging in response to signals from key decision makers. RFC national staff also demonstrated flexibility in this case by negotiating modest changes in the Commitment directly with administrative and faculty representatives at UNC. Interestingly, the phone calls in which these negotiations

[129] Interviewee UNC 1.
[130] At OSU and UGA that strategic option was likely constrained by the less favorable context.

took place did not include any students. UNC leaders also appeared to have more flexible interpretations of the role of youth in Real Food leadership (elaborated below, in 5.3.4). Thus, at UNC strategic adaptation supported by strong relationships with allies supported the campaign's successful outcome in a context that was favorable.

At UGA many students reported a great deal of frustration with what they perceived as a lack of openness of the administration to their proposal, and also their struggle to identify an effective strategic approach in such an unfavorable environment. While unwilling to engage in the sit-in tactics used at OSU, the second wave of UGA students largely adopted framing and tactics developed by RFC and promoted through RFC meetings, including the use of "unconventional gifts" and a "Come to the Table" rally and march. None of the tactics they tried seemed to have much effect on their targets, and students felt uncertain about what would be effective in their challenging context. RFC national staff also expressed uncertainty about what tactics to explore next at UGA.

As described above, allies at UGA were limited by the strong commitment to conventional agribusiness that led some deans and faculty members to feel they could not openly support the RF Commitment. However, some faculty members highly sympathetic to the students indicated openness to participating in confidential strategic discussions. At least one reported having shared the perspective held by many potential faculty and community allies familiar with Real Food that the students should evaluate what was possible given UGA's particular context and tailor their messaging and strategy to align with that reality. Specifically, they questioned the strategic value of openly criticizing conventional poultry production practices, through campaign messaging and

educational events they sponsored on campus. A member of the sustainable agriculture community in Georgia described that perspective in this way:

> You don't tug on Superman's cape! The State of Georgia is one of the largest chicken producers in the world. You can't take them on…These [students] don't have the resources to take them on. They've got to be more subtle than that. You've got to ask for what you can get. You try to shut down Georgia's poultry industry? No way. That's not going to happen.[131]

Consistent with these faculty and community perspectives, some RF UGA students favored continuing with an assimilative strategy focused on advancing Real Food purchasing, with or without the Commitment in place. However, the core group in the second wave was uncomfortable adjusting the group's frame and the broader movement goals, as discussed above in the framing section.

In a context that is highly unfavorable in relation to the objective that activists are seeking, the ability to gather and evaluate salient knowledge about power structures and decision making processes and brainstorm creative solutions to ongoing roadblocks is critical to developing effective strategy. UGA students engaged in many one-to-one conversations with staff, faculty, and deans whom they trusted during both waves of the RF campaign, and were largely discouraged by what they heard regarding their likelihood of success given UGA's context. Regular deliberation about strategy was limited to students and RFC staff with similar backgrounds and experiences as the UGA leaders, limiting the knowledge base, experience, and network connections available to them. Further, at UGA many students expressed frustration that RFC national's models, resources, and strategic support was not tailored to "fit" their environment. They felt that they often received advice that was more appropriate for "blue states" or, at least, more progressive campuses. As one student shared:

[131] Interviewee UGA 2.

> A lot of the actions that the national movement supports…like sit-ins and these—just these really big escalation steps, that other campaigns in other parts of the country have used to get attention…I mean we had discussions about how a lot of those could just be really poorly received here in the South...[132]

Many Real Food UGA students recognized they did not have the range of knowledge and skills within their campus team or with the national RFC team to figure out how to win, given their context. They did not expand their knowledge base by drawing in a more diverse group at UGA, in part because it was difficult for allies to speak openly there. In addition, the second wave's embrace of RFC principles influenced the kinds of allies they embraced. Section 5.3.5, below, expands upon the ways in which RFC mission, goals, structure and strategic support influenced the campaigns and their outcomes.

5.3.4 Real Food Challenge's influence on campus campaigns

As described above, a group's strategic capacity, or ability to read signals, choose effective frames and tactics, and adapt as a campaign progresses, is influenced by the extent to which its leaders and organization foster access to salient knowledge, heuristic processes, and build motivation. College undergraduate student activists are likely to need a great deal of support with heuristic processes and salient knowledge, for while they know many things about their campus environments, they often have little experience with the power relationships involved in administrative decision making or with organizational change processes more generally.

To what extent did the national SMO Real Food Challenge support this capacity within the four campus campaigns? How did the SMO's structure, tools, and network influence the campaigns' strategic choices and their outcomes? Each campaign engaged in regular reflection, pursued some investigations of salient information, and showed

[132] Interviewee UGA 8.

some flexibility in problem solving, but in the more challenging environments—OSU and UGA—where innovation likely was most important, the campaigns were unwilling or unable to adapt in ways that might have supported greater progress toward winning the Commitment objective. Results of this case comparison suggest that RFC's movement building goal and network enhanced motivation and biographical outcomes but undermined progress toward winning the Commitment in the less favorable environments. A strong focus on youth and the partners RFC prioritized reduced access to salient knowledge and greater diversity of perspectives weighing in on strategic choices. In addition, the national team and national network themselves were limited in their ability to help students in the unfavorable environments build the skills and salient knowledge needed to support greater strategic capacity.

5.3.4.1 The Movement Principle: goals and collective identity

The decision of RFC founders to launch a college campus-based initiative as part of a broader movement for a more sustainable and just food system reflected two perceived opportunities: first, the buying power of food and beverage dollars represented by university dining; and second, the potential for mobilizing youth, specifically, around food sustainability and food justice issues. RFC's six principles reflect the ways in which the group sees its work as embedded in and contributing to a global movement for food justice (Real Food Challenge N.d.a). In 2011 RFC decided to develop the Campus Commitment and a framework for implementation at an end of year retreat. Staff members felt that the Commitment, a "concrete ask," would help students with their campaigns to convince dining services to let them audit their purchasing using the RFC Calculator. It also would institutionalize plans for annually increasing the amount of food

that was Real. RFC staff modeled the Commitment after the President's Climate Leadership Commitment to work toward carbon neutrality (Second Nature 2018).

Real Food Challenge leaders view the Real Food Commitment Campaign as an effective strategy aligned with its broader goal of building a strong youth component within the sustainable food movement. While each of the four campaigns examined in this study adopted securing the RF Commitment as its primary goal, the extent to which RF student leaders embraced Real Food principles and the related, broader goal of food system transformation varied. Further, that variation mattered to the Commitment campaigns. Collective identity refers to "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution" (Polletta and Jasper 2001:285). For Real Food student leaders who strongly connected with the RFC community and principles extending beyond campus food procurement, RFC principles and movement goals sometimes influenced framing and tactics more than an instrumental assessment of what it would take to win the Commitment on their campus.

Collective identity in movements sometimes can inspire strategic choices that are at odds with instrumental rationality (Polletta and Jasper 2001). At OSU and UGA, where the broad movement goal was most likely to be viewed as threatening, embracing and including food system transformation goals in campaign frames and communications was consistent with identity but likely was not effective strategically. A number of students discussed their commitment to the movement, beyond the Commitment campaign, in ways that suggested their identification with the movement strongly influenced framing and tactics. In other words, consciously or not, it was at least as important to them to

"speak truth" about the food system as it was to win the Commitment, which sometimes led them to strategic decisions poorly aligned with their context. As explained by an OSU student leader, building a progressive organizing culture on campus and beyond—working toward "the world that we can be living in and creating," became more important than LSFB product shifts at the university.[133]

As described in chapter four, directly following Anim Steel's presentations at OSU in November, 2016, Real Food students on the Food Sustainability Panel asked for a vote on recommending the Commitment to President Drake, which narrowly lost. They then decided to leave the Panel and focus their energy in other directions. Several students and Panel faculty/staff members described that decision in ways that suggest they prioritized movement partners, the social justice element of Real Food, and their long-term commitment to the food justice movement over the short-term objective of advancing Real Food purchasing at OSU. A Panel leader remembered the students' explanation of their decision in this way:

> [The students] understood what we [FSP leaders] were trying to do, but they were trying to be true to their commitments to this group, and it was even to other groups--it wasn't just to RFC, it was also to groups working on broader human rights issues. Which did not help them in terms of the administration or board of trustees here. But, nonetheless, they were part of a much larger coalition, that in part was driving things, and it was explained to us that they needed to remain true to that, but that, nonetheless, they appreciated the fact that we were trying to repair the relationship [between OSU administration and RF OSU].[134]

The student leaders of RF OSU, including the representatives on the Panel, were seniors, which may also have influenced their decision: how best do we want to use our remaining time at OSU? For the core group who saw themselves working on food justice and related issues far beyond graduation, commitment to the movement and to movement

[133] Interviewee OSU 1.
[134] Interviewee OSU 12.

coalition partners was a higher priority than incremental advances with OSU's dining services practices.

Like students at OSU, some of UGA's Real Food leaders strongly embraced Real Food principles and goals, with similar effects on framing and strategic choices. By the time students had received a "soft no" regarding the Commitment, several RF UGA students recognized and valued the emotional and movement-building opportunities offered by coalitional social justice work, even if it did not lead them toward winning the Real Food Commitment. This UGA's student statement bears close similarity to statements from some OSU leaders:

> We are in the process of creating our image to be more of a social justice type movement and not just a more kale in the dining hall sort of movement. And so we are working with social justice organizations –like undocumented rights and farmworker rights…Having people like that to back us is definitely helpful for actions, and it's also just work that we fully support. Obviously we are here to work on the food system but that also encompasses social justice work, economic justice work, and things like that so our values and our morals align with what PAC [Progressive Action Coalition] does so its also just like this grounding piece for all of us individually.[135]

At UGA, some student leaders felt they could advance the Commitment and broader movement frames simultaneously, but their framing choices, aligned with RFC core values, provoked a negative response from administrators that likely weakened their ability to influence food purchasing.

In strong contrast with UGA and OSU, students involved in the implementation of the Commitment at Pitt remarked that one of the key leaders responsible for persuading administrators to sign did not identify as an "activist" because the group did not engage in "activisty" tactics such as marches, rallies, and sit-ins. When asked if that was a tactical decision or more a personal preference, the campaign leaders responded

[135] Interviewee UGA 6.

that it had been both—personally, they had not felt comfortable with the disruptive "actions" OSU students were engaged in, and they also had felt that contentious actions would not be effective at Pitt.

At UNC, the student leaders who led the winning campaign for the Commitment fell somewhere in between those at Pitt and at OSU/UGA. While holding a strong personal commitment to movement building and food justice, they were flexible in terms of messaging and tactics, as well as being open to faculty guidance, as described above. They and their allies' ability to "read" their environment, along with the positive contextual variables described above, helped them win in a matter of a few months. At the same time, the commitment to movement building and systemic change led one leader to wonder whether, if they succeeded in getting the Commitment signed but the UNC administration did not really understand and fully embrace all four elements of Real Food, had they really won? The fact that a *winning* campaign leader expressed discomfort and gave voice to this tension between "speaking truth" – advancing the community's understanding that Real Food is food that "truly nourishes producers, consumers, communities, and the earth"[136] – and securing the RFC Commitment speaks to the significance of this potential tension for other campaigns that identify strongly with RFC movement principles.

5.3.4.2 The Participatory Principle and campaign support

RFC's "Participatory Principle" is described in this way: "Believing the ends reflect the means, we seek a means that maximizes participatory planning, decision-making, and leadership structures within an intentional space where all voices are heard

[136] From the Real Food Challenge web page "What is Real Food?" Retrieved July 24, 2018 (https://www.realfoodchallenge.org/what-real-food/).

and respected" (Real Food Challenge N.d.a:Para. 8). In keeping with those beliefs, RFC provided regular opportunities for campus leaders to gather, learn, and share, and its organizational structure was fluid, with student leaders often serving, for a time, as field organizers or as part of advisory teams. Students at three of the four universities agreed that meetings and retreats organized by RFC were "energizing" and "motivating." High motivation supports persistence, creativity, and energy—important to sustaining activist campaigns, particularly in challenging environments (Ganz 2009). Story telling was part of the experiences that students and organizers shared during RFC gatherings. One of the resources provided in RFC's online toolkit is "Storytelling for Organizing: A guide for reflecting on and developing your public narrative" (Real Food Challenge N.d.e). Developing and sharing narratives in social movements can facilitate transformation of consciousness and strengthen commitment to the movement (Freeman 1970; Polletta 1998; Ganz 2009).

Reflections of student and ally participants in RFC campus events suggested that these events were more successful in strengthening commitment to the movement and providing critical emotional support than they were in providing strategic support helpful to the Commitment campaigns. The organizational structure of RFC, decentralized and highly participatory, was consistent with some aspects of the structures Ganz (2000) has shown facilitated strategic capacity in the case of the United Farm Workers (UFW):

> …leaders who take part in regular, open, and authoritative deliberation gain access to salient information, participate in a heuristic process by means of which they learn to use this information, and are motivated by commitment to choices they participated in making… (P. 1017)

RF students at UGA, UNC, and OSU described the participatory structure and processes that RFC promoted in very positive terms—clearly, this principle supported motivation.

However, evidence from this study also suggests that participatory structures and processes within a campus-based movement did not necessarily support access to salient information and the generation of diverse and innovative options from which to choose—additional factors critically important to strategic capacity (Ganz 2000, 2007, 2009). While RFC staff, organizers, and student leaders clearly embraced participatory and democratic decision making, and encouraged everyone to share their ideas, campaign tactics often aligned with the tactical repertoire developed by RFC, even if they did not align well with a particular campus context. It was left to student campaign leaders to challenge recommended frames and tactics when they felt they did not align well. As discussed above, limited use of non-student allies limited problem-solving capacity that could have supported tactical innovation. The perceived disconnect between what seemed to work elsewhere and UGA's context sometimes generated a great deal of anxiety for RF UGA leaders trying to adapt RFC advice for their context. One student leader expressed that struggle in this way:

> It's a difficult calculation because I'm never sure if my instincts to have very de-escalated tactics at UGA is conservative or comes from not being brave enough, not feeling confident enough, or if it's an actual smart assessment of what the situation is. And I think this sort of national, chapter-based, unpaid, student-run structure lends itself to that kind of anxiety, because you have a support system above you who doesn't know very much about the kind of day-to-day politics or student newspaper politics involved in trying to plan a rally, get press coverage, and not that many people show up…I think it could be easy to be painted as hysterical. There were all kinds of ways to lose any sort of political capital you had, so I felt at the time we had to be really careful if we wanted to actually do something. And I don't care about being friendly to the administration, it was just being careful with the kind of way that our campaign would come to be known.[137]

[137] Interviewee UGA 11.

5.3.4.3 The Youth Principle

As described above, building a youth movement to transform the food system was a powerful part of Real Food engagement, particularly for the OSU and UGA campaigns, and commitment to that goal influenced the approach they took to the Commitment campaigns there. Related to its youth movement-building goal, the Real Food "Youth Principle" views young people as the "driving force in this movement because of our collective ability to demand and achieve widespread structural and social change" (Real Food Challenge N.d.a:Para. 5). RFC's language about the role of youth in activism reflected public perceptions, constructed through coverage of 1960s New Left movements, that youth tend to be more creative, innovative, and willing to engage in risky actions (Scott 2016). This principle was evident in the composition of RFC staff and board members and in the trainings and tools RFC provided that were designed to create life-long activists, an important outcome of youth participation in college activism (see, for example, McAdam 1999).

For two of the universities in this study, OSU and UGA, identification with Real Food's youth identity had a negative effect on strategic capacity by constraining full utilization of allies. I will use the example of RFC's power mapping resource as an illustration. Many students attended RFC events where time was devoted to reflect on the experiences of other campuses and to sketch out a plan of action for their own campus. They were introduced to techniques for evaluating their particular campus context, including power mapping.[138] However, the students interviewed reported they were not able to apply the power-mapping tool to advance their campaigns. Students'

[138] Power mapping is a community organizing technique in which actors identify the targets of their objective and then "map" individuals with the power to influence those targets (Bobo 2001).

understanding of university bureaucracy is often limited to the formal relationships that can be uncovered through an organizational chart. Faculty, staff, and other members of the university community who have been on campus for many years often have a great deal of relevant knowledge to add to that of the students. Limiting power mapping to student leaders limited the usefulness of the tool.

Potential allies also felt that, while the students' understanding of food system issues was very strong, their research sound, and their commitment impressive, they seemed to make assumptions about the power and impact of particular tactics without a strong understanding of how they might function in their particular context. One supportive observer noted the following:

> I went to a couple of [RFC] weekend conferences and events here. A lot of it was good—they were building camaraderie amongst the activists and building support for their work—[but] it was never clear to me on an ongoing basis how much they were doing to help students understand the importance of how you strategize and make a plan and …even though it's "sexy" to go for the demonstration or march, helping people develop a plan and stay on point as much as possible [is really important].[139]

Whether explicitly or implicitly, the youth focus of the RFC network constrained the diversity of ideas, perspectives, and expertise available to the campaigns by limiting participation of older allies. At the two campaigns with more favorable contexts for RFC organizing, student leaders either did not need allies to "read" their environment (Pitt), or worked closely with older allies to consider and evaluate tactical options (UNC). In the unfavorable contexts, UGA and OSU, students began by building many partnerships, on and off campus, which included older allies. However, when the campaigns got stuck, they relied most on RFC staff advice and

[139] Interviewee OSU 14.

student and youth allies in other progressive groups, on and off campus; they did not follow advice from older allies. At OSU, one ally noted that sympathetic community organizers often were unable to support the sit-in, rallies, and marches planned by the RF OSU group because there was limited communication and advance notice. These limitations in coordination with allies who might have strengthened the power of the campaign appear to have been associated, at least in part, with RFC's focus on youth leadership.

The Youth "Principle" states an interest in capitalizing on inherent strengths of youth generally and college students specifically, including their greater willingness and availability to engage in contentious protest. As discussed in chapter 2, student protest is not without risk if it violates campus rules or breaks laws, but most students do not have their livelihood and the wellbeing of dependents on the line when they protest, as would many staff and faculty members. Disruption can an important source of power for activists without direct access to institutional processes (Piven and Cloward 1977; Tarrow 1994). But, disruptive tactics also can backfire (see, for example, Rojas 2006). Students' ability to figure out decision-making structures and norms, and power relationships, in general, is significantly hampered by the short period of time they are on campus and the short timeframe of many campaigns, including the RFC campaigns. At UGA, where students faced the most challenging context in which to lead food sustainability and justice organizing, their access to allies already was constrained by faculty and administrator concerns about openly supporting the Real Food campaign. At the same time, they underutilized opportunities to seek and incorporate advice and engage faculty in strategic planning. This is *not* to say that faculty and staff members

could have helped them figure out a way to get the Commitment signed; indeed, few, if any, felt that was a possibility. What they could have done was helped students understand the university in a more sophisticated way that supported their capacity to evaluate their options. As one potential faculty ally at UGA shared: "[The students should ask:] How do we find the place for movement within an institution? In an institutional context that we know is going to be incredibly challenging?"[140]

As described above, faculty allies served an important role as "buffer" and "translator" between the second UNC campaign and the administration when relations became tense. Use of faculty allies to enhance strategic capacity marked one of the differences between the early, unsuccessful effort to convince Chancellor Thorp to sign the Commitment and the successful campaign with Chancellor Folt. A student leader in the early effort indicated that they had reduced their communication with faculty allies over time because faculty had many time constraints, and also because the power mapping exercise they carried out (part of the RFC toolkit) suggested that faculty members did not have much power to influence Chancellor Thorp. A student at UGA made the same comment about investing time in cultivating faculty allies there; because they did not directly influence the president, they were not a priority. The contrast between the early and later campaigns for the Commitment at UNC illustrates the value of considering potential allies for the relevant, strategic ideas and skills they may bring to the campaign, regardless of any persuasive power they may have held with respect to administrators. The second campaign at UNC involved faculty allies in meetings and negotiations, and student leaders took their advice seriously. Students, faculty members,

[140] Interviewee UGA 13.

and administrators all referred to this factor as a contributor to the positive campaign outcome.

5.3.4.4 The Partnership Principle

The RFC partnership principle includes a commitment to partners both on and off campus: "Collaboration with administration, dining services, food producers, community groups, and other allies is critical for reaching our goals" (Real Food Challenge N.d.a:Para. 6). At the four universities in this study, relationships with these partners varied significantly. In each case, the campaigns eventually developed what they felt were good working relationships with dining services. However, at UGA and OSU, those relationships were not reflected at higher administrative levels, in contrast to Pitt and UNC where auxiliary services staff members met regularly with students.

At UGA, Real Food's relationship with dining services appeared to be negatively impacted by the group's unfavorable reception by higher administrators. At OSU, when Real Food OSU decided to end their relationship with the Food Sustainability Panel, students cited their responsibility to and sense of solidarity with food producers and with other social justice oriented groups on campus and in the community. Thus, whether explicit or not, they had come to feel that they could no longer attempt to maintain partnerships with OSU representatives and also maintain partnerships with groups with whom they felt strong solidarity. In addition, two past RF OSU leaders were organizing around Fair Food in Columbus, so that personal connection facilitated engagement with the Student Farmworker Alliance on campus and Fair Food organizers more broadly who were working to convince the fast food chain Wendy's to commit to the Coalition of

Immokalee Workers' Fair Food program. As one student described the spring 2017 campaign to "Boot the Braids" off the OSU campus (described in chapter 4):

> It was also an opportune time because RF OSU's president from a couple of years ago… she was working with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Alliance for Fair Food doing organizing for them. So, the fact that we were very deeply in collaboration with her already and that she had been advising our group for years, leading our group for years, is still here and is now working with the Boycott Wendy's campaign, it just seemed like a beautiful and opportune moment…to combine our power and see what it means to stand in deeper solidarity with farmworkers and with everyone fighting for a fair food system…[141]

5.3.4.5 The Real Food Campus Commitment

The structure of the RFCC itself may have contributed to the difficult choice that OSU students felt they had come to with respect to the Food Sustainability Panel. RFC purposely decided to allow little flexibility in the Commitment itself and the structures it puts in place because it considered the RFC standards to be a minimum benchmark, and because its leaders believed the Commitment and its implementation structure to be crucial for accountability in a campus environment where student leaders turn over every four years. The "all or nothing" aspect of winning the president or chancellor's signature made it difficult for some student leaders to identify and celebrate "small wins," critical for developing a sense of efficacy in a campaign and sustaining momentum. As a former student organizer argued:

> You don't win if you can't actually celebrate incremental wins; it is very hard to maintain momentum if you don't actually get to win. And I think the Real Food Campus Commitment, because of its specificity, even hyper-specificity, you just have way fewer opportunities to win…I feel like the RFCC campaigns were set up to feel like the only win is when you get this exact thing signed by only the president and you have the entire food systems working group, and it's not that it's unattainable—I think it was the right goal for visionary young people, we

[141] Interviewee OSU 1.

> wanted that. But it limits the incremental wins that you can experience which is bad for a campaign.[142]

In summary, the RFC principles and the regular opportunities that RFC provided for community building, information sharing, and strategic planning served RFC's long-term goal of fostering a youth movement and motivating students very well. At the same time, RFC's structure, principles, and strategic support seemed to assume that its planning toolkit and tactical repertoire could be easily adapted for any campus environment, usually by students alone, to support winning campaigns. In the more favorable contexts, Pitt and UNC, students were able to adapt RFC resources effectively (at UNC, with faculty support); at OSU and UGA, where the context was less favorable, RFC resources did not support and in some cases constrained greater strategic capacity for evaluating options and innovating.

5.3.5 Summary: Strategic factors and campaign outcomes

In all four campaigns student leaders had access to RFC advice, networks, organizing tools, and Calculator support. However, the extent to which the campaigns utilized these resources, and the extent to which the students adapted tactical and framing options to align with their campus environment, varied. With respect to collective identity and framing, OSU and UGA showed evidence of stronger identification with and use of frames associated with social justice values than did the other campaigns. Figure 5.3 illustrates tendencies in frame alignment and tactical flexibility in the four campaigns.

[142] Interviewee RFC 3.

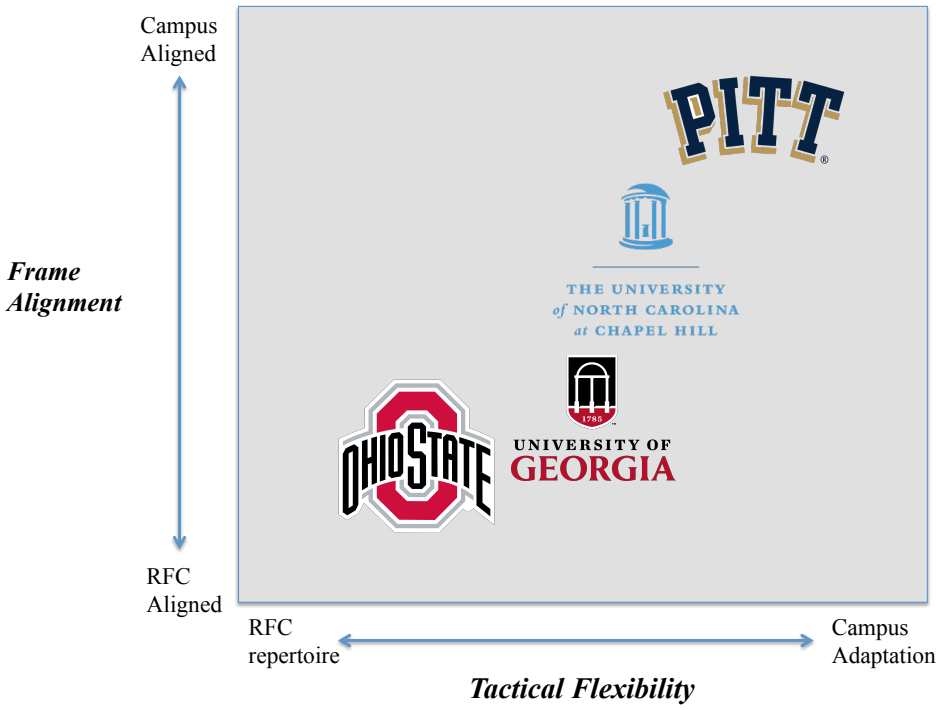

Figure 5.3: Comparison of Cases with Respect to Frame Alignment and Tactical Flexibility

At Pitt, Real Food students were able to build the strategic capacity needed to develop frames and tactics aligned with their context through student networks. Their strategic planning also was aided by the openness and availability of administrators who were more straightforward about what it would take to win the Commitment than at the other universities. At UNC the path to winning was less clear but students effectively integrated faculty allies into the campaign, which was facilitated by the Food for All theme. Faculty integration supported greater strategic capacity for the second Commitment campaign. Students also aligned campaign frames effectively with the supportive sustainable agriculture context, and demonstrated flexibility when adapting tactics in response to feedback.

At OSU and UGA, demands for strategic capacity were much greater because opposition to the RFC Commitment was significant. The challenging nature of the environments at OSU and UGA with respect to food system reform meant that developing and adapting effective strategies was much more difficult than it was in the other two cases. It was also true that framing and tactical choices sometimes contributed to that opposition, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unintentionally. At OSU disruptive tactics and earned media effectively demonstrated power, but not enough for a "win"—at least, not within the timeframe students were hoping for. A shift back to more assimilative tactics and framing through the FSP might have produced further gains, had students remained. Their choice to leave was strongly influenced by RFC movement goals and principles and the collective identity of a core group focused on social justice. RF OSU leaders sometimes consulted with allies but strongly privileged the preferences of students, consistent with RFC youth frame.

UGA shared some of the same dynamics as the OSU campaign but faced an even more challenging environment in which their experience with other groups suggested that disruptive sit-ins would not win concessions and would likely backfire.[143] In addition, they unintentionally strengthened the opposition to Real Food by focusing on poultry production early in the campaign. RF UGA's access to allies was constrained by an environment strongly hostile to conventional food system critiques, and they appeared to

[143] In January 2016 campus police arrested six UGA students when they refused to leave a campus building where they were sitting in to protest the Georgia Board of Regents policy on undocumented students. In contrast to OSU, where administrators denied they would have arrested students, UGA's public statement was unapologetic about the arrests: "UGA's freedom of expression policy permits campus protests on all publicly available areas of campus" (Golderman 2016). While the sit-in did earn local media, it did not seem to produce any concessions from the university.

underutilize advice shared in confidence. UGA students recognized they needed support developing strategic capacity and that the RFC's resources and skills did not include enough locally relevant knowledge. At the same time, like the OSU core, many UGA core leaders strongly embraced RFC goals and principles in ways that constrained their willingness to adapt frames and tactics, even when they had evidence that it had backfired.

5.4 Summary of Qualitative Analysis

Opportunity structures that included variables both inside and outside the universities significantly influenced the outcomes associated with Real Food Challenge campaigns at Pitt, OSU, UNC, and UGA. All four campaigns undertook robust efforts to research regional food system opportunities, educate and mobilize students, learn from winning campaigns at other universities, build relationships with decision-makers on campus, and, for some, help build a national, youth-led Real Food movement. The two campaigns with more favorable contexts build networks with strong salient knowledge that supported their ability to adapt as needed and align tactical approaches and frames with target priorities and culture. In the two less favorable contexts, OSU and UGA, leadership diversity and salient knowledge were constrained both by context (risk to allies) and by ideology (youth principle), which had negative effects on strategic capacity. In addition, at these two universities strong identification of core Real Food leaders with movement goals and principles sometimes contributed to tactical and framing choices at odds with instrumental objectives (winning the Commitment campaign).

The results of this comparative analysis suggest that contextual, organizational, and strategic factors all shaped RFC campaign outcomes and that interactions between contextual and strategic factors were most significant. This evidence supports the findings of other studies that when movement actors align strategy and tactics with environmental or organizational context, they are more likely to succeed. However, analysis of the RFC cases examined here also challenge the idea that certain types of tactics (assimilative versus assertive) and certain kinds of frames (oriented toward constituents or oriented toward targets) typically align with *particular* contexts. They therefore challenge the organizational mediation model, which predicts a consistent relationship between university context and the type of tactical approach and frames most likely to result in positive outcomes for campus campaigns (Arthur 2011:138). In the four Real Food Challenge campaigns examined here, frame and tactical alignment is more complex and contingent than the organizational mediation model suggests.

While mobilizing structures were utilized or developed in each of the four cases, variation in the kinds of networks that students used effectively, and the fact that these structures did not support campaign "wins" at UGA and OSU, suggests that organizational factors were less important than contextual and strategic variables. The opportunity structures, specifically commitment to conventional agribusiness, support for sustainable agriculture, and openness to student initiatives, clearly influenced target responses and the resonance of movement frames. Strategic flexibility and adaptation helped UNC and Pitt students win. At OSU and UGA, the complexity and challenge of their environments made strategic capacity particularly crucial, and it was constrained by the campaigns' strong identification with RFC principles and movement goals.

At UGA and OSU, to some extent a small core of student leaders came to recognize that pursuing the broader movement goals of RFC, to which they felt a deep connection, might lead them further away from the concrete objective of food product shifts in university dining. When the Commitment campaigns were launched nationally and at OSU and UGA, neither RFC staff nor student leaders foresaw that framing and tactics that aligned well with the Commitment objective, on conservative-leaning or agribusiness-connected campuses, might align less well with broadening understanding of the four aspects of sustainable food and building a movement. However, by the time OSU students chose to leave the Food Sustainability Panel several students understood they were giving up their influence in food purchasing and choosing solidarity with food justice stakeholders and movement-building objectives. At UGA this kind of choice was not as clearly stated, and some students expressed regret at past tactical choices that may have contributed to a loss of influence; others shared ideas about insider strategies that might have been effective, such as identifying high profile donors sympathetic to Real Food. But at least one or two second wave UGA leaders agreed with the OSU student leaders that education and mobilization around food justice had become the primary objective of the group. One former student leader and regional field organizer spoke to this tension between the Commitment campaign and RFC's growing food justice frame:

> I think [RFC was] really at the forefront of training people and framing the issue as an intersectional one; the Real Food Wheel has always been at the front of everything we've done. [The wheel] was created as a guide and vision and movement metaphor since the very beginning. But the rest of the…food space was so quickly orienting around consumer choices…It's way easier for people to latch onto a consumer thing because it's individual choice…But the flip side of that is that it's then hard to switch to a different frame [like food justice] when people feel like they're saving the world because they are purchasing organic kale tomorrow.[144]

[144] Interviewee RFC 3.

The results of this study support the importance of aligning tactics and frames with context, supported by strategic capacity, on outcomes, particularly for campaigns operating in highly unfavorable environments. By extension it also suggests that national SMOs supporting campaigns across a wide range of college campuses could enhance their support for effective strategy by diversifying the kinds of organizing expertise and tools they provide and by encouraging greater diversity among campaign members and allies (these ideas are elaborated in chapter six).

The results of this study also underscore the importance of differentiating between a movement's strategic capacity and the intelligence, motivation, and commitment of the activists. In each of the four campaigns examined in this study, student leaders included top performing students with a great deal of knowledge about conventional and alternative food systems, as well as environmental and social criticisms of conventional production. At UGA, where students were unable to advance the Commitment or Real Food purchasing much at all, their leaders including students who won prestigious national awards for environmental leadership. As one former student described:

> A lot of the people who have been involved and continue to be involved at UGA are –they're not the typical Georgia students; they're the people on incredible scholarships or are at the top of their departments where they are working as undergrads…That sounds a little self-aggrandizing, but seriously…these are really smart people.[145]

To function as full-time, top-performing students and engage in the day-to-day research, reflection, and problem solving required to advance a campaign that challenges a strongly held interest at the university was a very tall order. UGA students did seek to expand their problem-solving community by discussing UGA's political landscape with students

[145] Interviewee UGA 8.

involved in other progressive organizations on campus, and they reflected upon the ways in which sustainability groups adopting different kinds of tactics within the Go Green umbrella group had advanced—or failed to advance—their goals. However, they largely confided in and sought new ideas from young people very similar to themselves, significantly limiting the kinds of diversity in leadership and networks that enhances strategic capacity.

RFC supported the campaigns with a wide variety of organizing tools, a great deal of background information about the food system and its history in the U.S., and regular opportunities for building solidarity and replenishing their energy. At the same time, greater and more effective utilization of faculty, staff, and community allies for strategic planning, broader and more diverse networks that could creatively evaluate options in a highly unfavorable context, and greater understanding and discussion of the trade-offs and choices associated with winning the Commitment and advancing the food justice movement may have helped UGA's talented students advance Real Food in dining services and/or mobilization for food justice further.

Chapter six highlights ways in which these findings contribute to social movement scholarship. It also explores the implications of these findings for RFC and for other social movement organizations that also seek to support campus-based campaigns connected to a broader social movement.

CHAPTER 6

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

> What successful movements do is highly important in understanding their success, and what they do is adapt their tactics to signals from the broader environment about what will work. (McCammon et al. 2008:1140)

> It's hard to assess the effectiveness of any given tactic until you've witnessed it and looked back on it… I have always measured the dual bottom line of RFC, which is to say, yes, winning the Commitment but also building a base of leaders, or movement work for the food justice movement. So I would say everything we trained on and all of the tactics that students in RFC, especially at the big schools, have learned to employ, and particularly the power analysis that they have learned to employ, feels unbelievably valuable and has been an enormous contribution to those people's lives, and also because they are in the movement…[146]

How does the evidence from Real Food Challenge campaigns presented and analyzed in this dissertation support, and extend, McCammon et al.'s assertion? What do these findings mean in relation to the reflection of an RFC organizer, above, about a "dual bottom line"? As expected, the winning RFC campaigns effectively aligned their strategic choices with "signals from the broader environment." But, it is also true that the winning campaigns had *significantly more favorable environments* with which to align, given the nature of the Real Food Challenge objectives. There are limits to what skillful framing and tactical alignment can accomplish when the values and priorities of a campaign's organizational environment is quite different from—or, in this case, is even in direct opposition to--that of the campaign itself (Vasi 2006:439). It is hard to see how any strategic approach at UGA would have convinced President Morehead to sign the RFC Commitment, although incremental progress toward the spirit of the agreement was almost certainly feasible. Pitt, in contrast, was as favorable a context as one can imagine for a Real Food Challenge campaign--at least, for a large, public university. And yet, the

[146] Interviewee RFC 3.

campaign may very well not have succeeded had student leaders followed RFC advice and failed to interpret correctly the most effective strategy for their particular setting.

The result of this study of local and sustainable food and beverage purchasing and Real Food Challenge activism to promote it extends social movement outcome literature on the role of tactical and frame alignment, collective identity, framing dilemmas, and strategic capacity in shaping outcomes. Its conclusions also can inform the priorities and structure of federated SMOs like Real Food Challenge that seek to support student campaigns on a wide variety of campuses. The national quantitative analysis revealed a modest influence of regional advantage, with Pacific Coast and Northeastern states leading in Local and Sustainable Food and Beverage (LSFB) purchasing. The qualitative case study of Real Food activism and its outcomes provided evidence for a high degree of complexity, including both geo-political context and university characteristics, in the factors influencing adoption of one specific option for advancing LSFB—the Real Food Campus Commitment. The collective identity, movement values, and strategic choices of activists, in relation to these contextual variables, also significantly influenced their campaigns, the response of administrators to their demands, and their ability to advance Real Food.

This study contributes to social movement theory in several ways. First, it strongly supports the body of scholarship on outcomes that emphasizes alignment between contextual factors and strategic choices. It extends that scholarship by challenging conclusions and models that suggest specific kinds of frames and tactics necessarily align with specific contexts. The comparison of RFC campaigns suggests that, for this particular student movement, the "fit" between context and strategic factors

was not predictable or consistent. In other words, while it was true that "one size did not fit all" in terms of the campaigns' strategic approach, it was also true that *what size* worked best with *what context* could not be predicted reliably through a simple model. Instead, I argue that effective strategy was contingent on multiple environmental variables. Further, those variables sometimes shifted during the course of a campaign (e.g., a change in chancellor and an expanding discursive opportunity structure at UNC).

The second contribution of this study's findings follows from the first: that the complexity and contingency of "what works" supports recent social movement scholarship calling for increased attention to strategic adaptation and strategic capacity. The variation and contingency in the four cases examined here supports the need for greater attention to strategic aspects of social movements if we are to better understand *why* and *how* they "win" or "lose," not just *when* and *where*. Beyond that affirmation, what does this comparative study contribute to scholarship on strategy? First, it strongly supports the idea that diversity—of experience, skills, social location (especially "insider' versus "outsider"), and networks with salient knowledge—is an important facet of strategic capacity on college campuses. Second, this study uncovered a significant link between RFC's "Youth Principle," its implications for utilization of allies, and, as a result, diversity and strategic capacity. With recent growth in youth-led movements, the finding that a powerful emphasis on youth leadership can reduce strategic capacity is important.

Third, the analysis of differences in Real Food Challenge campaign outcomes provides new insights into framing dilemmas and the ways in which collective identity and ideology influence strategic adaptation (and, by extension, outcomes). My findings

suggest that self-awareness, particularly with respect to distinguishing between ideology, identity, and instrumentality in decision-making, should be examined as a component of strategic capacity.

More generally, these findings have implications and provide insights that may be helpful to Real Food Challenge and other SMOs that support campaigns on a wide variety of college campuses. Williams (2016) uncovered strategic variables that contributed to innovation in the SMO United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS). However, his analysis was at the SMO level—he examined strategic processes and innovation in USAS, not in the campus-based campaigns guided by USAS. He did not examine factors influencing campus-by-campus outcomes. All four RFC cases individually, as well as the comparative analysis presented in chapter five, suggest ways in which RFC and other federated, campus-based SMOs might support greater strategic capacity and effective strategizing. For example, SMOs might explore how to encourage local campaigns to more closely collaborate with allies and organizations that already have relevant local knowledge, skills, and networks. Finally, beyond social movement theory and campus activism, this dissertation has implications for an area of research in the field of higher education: the "corporatization" of academia and its effects.

6.1 Contributions

6.1.1 Social movement outcomes within organizations

As I have noted earlier in this manuscript, within the literature on social movement outcomes, scholarship on outcomes for activism within organizations, including universities, is very limited. The study that is most similar to this investigation

is that of Arthur (2011), which compared activism seeking new academic programs (Asian American Studies, Queer Studies, and Women's Studies) on six college campuses. Arthur developed and tested a two-by-two Organizational Mediation Model (OMM) that predicted "fit" between specific tactics and framing choices and two elements of context: administrative openness/flexibility and mission. Where mission fit well and openness was high, the model predicted assertive tactics and framing aligned with a core constituency would be most likely to result in a "win." When mission was not favorable but the administration open, the model predicted assimilative tactics and constituency-based frames work best. Where mission fit but the administration was less open, it predicted assertive tactics with mission-aligned framing as the best strategy, and where both variables were unfavorable it predicted that assimilative tactics and framing aligned with mission would work best. Neither of the "winning" RFC campaigns supported the predictions of this model, and activist and ally perspectives about what might have won the commitment at OSU and UGA also were not wholly consistent with the model's predictions.

Thus, the results of this study suggest that the organizational mediation model that was tested using campaigns for curricular change is not necessarily predictive for other kinds of campus activism. My analysis of the contextual variables influencing the favorability of campus context with respect to RFC campaigns also suggests that the OMM's variable "mission" is not broad enough to capture all the university characteristics that shape targets' responses to a particular campaign. In the case of RFC campaigns, conventional and sustainable agriculture research and teaching, campus culture with respect to progressivism and organizing, and political relationships that

influenced the autonomy of decision-makers were important variables not captured by even a broad interpretation of "mission."

Another limitation to Arthur's model, and to other studies that have drawn tentative conclusions about "fit" between particular tactics and frames and particular contextual variables (see also Cress and Snow 2000) is that they "flatten" frames and tactics to two options and assume that a single approach characterized the whole campaign. However, many in-depth case studies, including the four examined here, and literature that surveys movement framing and tactics (see, for example, Benford and Snow 2000; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004) have concluded that multiple frames and a variety of tactics are very common in social movements. Timing, capitalizing on opponent missteps, and ongoing adaptation, as well as contextual fit, often matter a great deal (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; McCammon et al. 2008; Guthman and Brown 2016). Simplified models for highly complex processes, while helpful for building and testing theory, run the risk of inadvertently omitting dynamic elements that may provide a fuller explanation of variation in outcomes. The evidence from RFC campaigns presented here support arguments for the importance of strategic adaptation in response to signals from multiple contextual variables. Further, it supports recent attention to the elements found (or not) within social movements and SMOs that support such adaptation: strategic capacity (Ganz 2000, 2004, 2009; Williams 2016).

6.1.2 Framing dilemmas, collective identity, and strategic capacity

As McCammon et al. (2007) and others have pointed out, most research on frame alignment investigates its effects on participant mobilization, not on outcomes. The results of this study extend scholarship on "framing dilemmas" by demonstrating its

importance for outcomes as well as mobilization (Snow and Benson 1988). As described in chapter five, many second wave RF students at OSU and UGA identified powerfully with RFC values and beliefs that influenced the frames they used in their messaging. RFC social justice and, especially, racial justice frames were highly resonant for a small group of progressives but were alienating for student drawn to RFC for other reasons. To some extent, the "dilemma" or disconnect between different elements of RFC framing was a result of differences between RFC's movement goals and its Commitment campaign. For students engaged in food system critique through their coursework and with opportunities to learn at RFC summits and strategy sessions, the link between LSFB purchasing goals and working for racial justice in the food system was clear and compelling. However, for students less familiar with food system critiques, and for some students who became engaged through the lens of environmental sustainability, "food justice is racial justice" left them feeling that Real Food was not for them.

Strategy and tactics reflect collective identity and values as well as rational, instrumental evaluation of what is most likely to be effective. In some cases, activists deliberately privilege identity and values in tactical and framing choices, even when they recognize that doing so will put a policy or institutional objective at risk (Downey 1986; Epstein 1991; Jasper 1997; Poletta and Jasper 2001). To what extent did students at OSU and UGA self-consciously make distinctions between "instrumental" and "ideological" frames and tactics? As I discussed in chapter five, there was some evidence that RF OSU leaders weighed tradeoffs and reflected upon the role of their values and identity in evaluating whether to leave the Food Sustainability Panel. At the same time, the sharply contrasting evaluations of the Real Food presentation to the Food Sustainability Panel at

OSU demonstrated limited understanding of how RF social justice frames were being received by FSP members, including those who considered themselves allies of Real Food. At UGA, and among RFC staff, I did not find evidence that campaign leaders and advisors had considered the implications of a "framing dilemma" or discussed ways in which they might modify the way they presented Real Food for different audiences.[147] Interviews with students at UGA suggested they had continued trying to advance the Commitment and deepen their participation in the food justice movement using the same set of frames and tactics, even though they were not well aligned with UGA's context.

Ganz (2009) has compared skillful social movement leadership teams to those of artisans, whose creativity is supported by mastery of their tools of the trade, honed through experience. Beyond a tactical repertoire appropriate to the movement's objectives and context, movement leadership teams benefit from diversity that supports adaptation and problem solving. Reflexive and open deliberation also is key to learning and adaptation (Ganz 2009). The RFC analysis presented here draws attention to a specific element of that reflexivity that deserves greater attention: self-awareness of ideology, identity, and its role in the strategic planning process. The cases of RF OSU and UGA, in particular, suggest that open discussion of instrumental and ideological objectives, collective identity, and the extent to which the group's strategic decisions are embedded in its ideology and identity are an important component of strategic capacity.

The RFC cases at OSU and UGA make clear some of the challenges of maintaining and building different forms of diversity with a single campaign or movement. Social movement actors and scholars have long understood there are tradeoffs

[147] As described in chapters four and five, early in the campaign at UGA students adjusted their portrayal of RFC to align with what they perceived to be the priorities of different administrators.

between breadth and depth in movement goals and framing. Most movements seek to maintain enough breadth and flexibility to facilitate large-scale mobilization while honing a coherent set of shared understandings, values, and goals important to collective identity and motivation. This dilemma continues to be a source of both public and scholarly attention and debate within contemporary movements such as the Women's March (Fisher, Dow, and Ray 2017; Chira 2018).

While challenging, case studies emerging from other universities suggest it is possible to create and sustain a diverse, insider/outsider approach that offers opportunities for students who are deeply committed to a broader movement's goals as well as students interested in more discrete objectives and roles. Bratman et al. (2016) has described many advantages of a "big tent," insider/outsider approach to the fossil fuel divestment campaign at American University (AU). While the campaign has not yet succeeded in divestment (a Board of Trustees decision), it has made many gains consistent with RFC goals, including transforming campus discourse about sustainability and climate change and building a large and diverse network of advocates on and off campus. The fossil free AU team recognized that diversity in student membership would support greater tactical diversity. "Engaging inside decision makers and conducting research attracts students who are usually interested in policy and only official avenues to create change. Building pressure and power through outside actions, on the other hand, involves more radical students who are comfortable with confrontation, though might not have the patience for lobby sessions and lessons in endowment finance" (Bratman et al. 2016:686).

In addition to RFC's strong social justice perspective, the youth principle was another aspect of RFC's ideology that sometimes constrained diversity. Other social

movements in which youth played leading roles can offer some ideas about how to incorporate the benefits of youth leadership with a more diverse leadership team in order to enhance strategic capacity. While the 1960s "youth frame" was a powerful aspect of identity in New Left activism, many young people already understood its limitations and felt that, in the long-term, it could limit the broad base needed for widespread social change (Scott 2016).

One of the best-known and most closely investigated examples of youth activism is the role of SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). Ella Baker, who was 47 in 1960, pushed for keeping SNCC independent and organized in a grassroots fashion. Baker and many youth felt that young people were more willing to engage in the riskiest direct action, so SNCC's youth membership and activities contributed to an association between more radical and risky tactics and youth that persists today. However, SNCC's community organizing networks in the Deep South, outside campuses, sought to recruit all ages to the movement (Scott 2016). While SNCC leaders often clashed with leaders in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian leadership Conference (SCLC) over tactics, they also understood the value of experience. "Some young activists prided themselves on being ahead of their elders, but there was still an emphasis on seeking out local adult leadership to drive the organizations" (Scott 2016:32). As Morris (1984) has argued, in part the efficacy of the Birmingham campaign's strategy resulted from the carefully coordinated integration of youth leadership, the salient local knowledge of Birmingham's Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, and the resources and connections of the NAACP and SCLC. Many

youth involved in SNCC and other CRM groups recognized the strategic benefits of diversity to effective strategizing (Scott 2016).

The "non-stop" picket protesting Apartheid outside the South African embassy in London's Trafalgar Square that lasted from 1986 to 1990 provides another example of radical youth activism embedded in more diverse leadership teams. "The Non-Stop Picket created an atmosphere where young people's political opinions and motivations were taken seriously" (Brown and Yaffe 2017:164). However, it did so in an inter-generational environment in which older and younger people and people with diverse life experiences could learn from one another. Thus, a movement can empower youth and capitalize on their strengths without limiting the movement's leadership to youth. "Although some activities effectively became differentiated between age cohorts, and there could often be misunderstandings and tensions between different generations of picketers, habitually, people of different ages worked together, got to know each other, and learned political lessons from each other" (Brown and Yaffe 2017:169).

6.1.3 Knowledge for what? Contribution to Social Movement Stakeholders

One of the criticisms that has been made of the structural emphasis in social movement theory's "dominant paradigm" is that it begs the question posed by Richard Flacks in a 2004 book chapter: "Knowledge for what?" The "cultural turn" in social movement theory to re-engage with social and cultural processes at work within movements reflected more than a recognition that these processes matter to mobilization and outcomes. Another element was an interest in making scholarship more relevant to social movement actors. Some—certainly not all--social movement scholars view their research in relation to the interests and needs of the actors engaged in the movements

they study. If structural factors matter most, what does that offer social movement actors? How can scholarship inform SMOs and activists interested in being more effective in achieving the outcomes they desire, given the context in which they find themselves? Understanding the interplay of contextual, organizational, and strategic factors often requires delving into the messy, dynamic experiences of movements as they unfold.

My ability to conduct the research for the qualitative portion of this dissertation was supported by the approval and cooperation of the Real Food Challenge national staff members. Quite reasonably, in early conversations with me they wanted to know why I was interested in studying RFC and what I hoped my research would accomplish. In those conversations, I shared my own background in environmental education and advocacy, which seemed to provide me some legitimacy that "social movement scholar" had not. I made clear that my hope was for this study to not only satisfy the requirements of my PhD program and contribute to social movement scholarship, but also that it might help RFC staff and student activists gain a better understanding of the organization, the campus campaigns, and how to win their objectives. In the section that follows, I summarize ways in which findings from chapter five might inform the work of RFC and other similarly structured SMOs.

This study's findings regarding framing dilemmas has particular importance for campus-based movements, like Real Food UGA, that are functioning in environments that seem to be highly unfavorable to their objectives. Having lost (at least in the short term) the campaign to secure the Real Food Commitment, as well as the internship with Dining Services that Real Food was instrumental in creating, UGA students continued working to educate and mobilize progressive students around food justice through events

and in collaboration with the Progressive Action Coalition. In essence, while no students described that strategic shift in this way, they redoubled their efforts to shift the campus culture that formed part of the unfavorable opportunity structure constraining their campaign. "Culture plays an important role in creating political opportunities, and not just in the subjective perceptions of insurgents" (Polletta 2004:100). If a conservative leaning student body with a low engagement in civic engagement allowed the administration to ignore them, could they increase their power by changing the campus culture? One of the faculty members who underscored the power of agricultural interests at UGA also noted the great potential power of students and parents at the university.

How might a small group of Real Food students build and leverage student power more effectively? And what, exactly, should they seek to accomplish, given aspects of the environment that will be very hard to shift? This is where greater diversity could support the difficult campaigns, by building stronger strategic capacity. RF UGA maintained a relatively diverse group of students in terms of majors, perspectives on framing and tactics, and collective identity. What the group lacked was a sustained effort to integrate the insider knowledge, networks, skills, and experience of faculty, staff, and community members and draw on those resources when engaged in strategic planning.

In the section above I summarized some of the ways that identity and ideology influenced strategy at OSU and UGA. Interview data also suggested that assumptions about certain kinds of tactics and their efficacy likely constrained flexibility. A number of RFC and campus leaders seemed to assume that public displays like rallies, marches, and especially sit-ins, are disruptive, and therefore demonstrate power, and that assimilative tactics often lead to cooptation. There is a great deal of evidence in social movement

literature supporting the potential power of disruption to win concessions. However, assuming that public displays are *necessarily disruptive*, and, if disruptive, are *necessarily more effective* than "insider" strategies is not well founded, particularly for activists targeting organizational change. For example, Katzenstein draws on examples of feminist change from within to challenge the idea that institutionalization necessarily results in a "routinization and deradicalization" of movement objectives (1998:211). She found, instead, that the institutional location and its particular characteristics influenced the extent to which institutionalization diluted or softened movement goals, and that activism from within was sometimes quite disruptive. Continuing participation of Real Food students on the Food Sustainability Panel at OSU offered opportunities to produce disruption—but disruption of a different nature than that produced by the sit-in. That was very difficult for the students to see. Again, the complexity and contingency of relationships between context and strategy point to the importance of tactical flexibility and greater attention to building strategic capacity for federated SMOs that support campaigns in a wide range of settings.

A related element for RFC and other like SMOs to consider in expanding the tactical repertoire they share with campuses is the question of overt versus covert action. A former Real Food leader at UGA noted that more covert tactics might align better with Georgia's context. In chapter two I briefly discussed the concept of "tempered radicals" as workplace *insiders* who also identify as *outsiders* because of values and beliefs at odds with their environment (Meyerson and Scully 1995; Meyerson 2001; Scully and Segal 2002). Tempered radicals often employ covert strategies for gradually changing organizational practices and policies in order to maintain their insider status. While

evidence for the efficacy of covert approaches is largely limited to case studies and ethnographies, this element of strategy also is worth considering for SMOs supporting campaigns in highly unfavorable environments. "By remaining veiled, such action can appear nonthreatening or may even be ignored by elites until its impacts become undeniably apparent" (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003:394). A former UGA Real Food leader reflecting back on their strategy wondered if greater subtlety would have been more effective in Georgia:

> I feel like you have to be more artful in your playing down here and it has to be – you have to have a smile on your face and you shake their hand…and be buddy-buddy… Like they say in the South you smile but then behind their back—that's where the work gets done. And I think that's how it has to be played down here.[148]

It is important to consider how an already overstretched, federated SMO might implement some of these recommendations. The level of resources and support that RFC offered campus organizers was extraordinary for a tiny SMO with four national staff members. As one staff member described:

> The folks [on campuses] who seem like they are really ready to go, or at least committed and want support, often we'll pair them with an organizer who becomes their support--in some cases more like part of a team, and in other cases more of an actual coach who can give organizational support or who will devise tactics with them, etc. And then, really often, so that more people on campus get the download, they'll invite us--organizers or volunteer organizers--to partner with them to do a series of workshops. So maybe that original team of four people at a regional training that got inspired and got a few skills can then share skills in a deeper way with people on campus or can deepen [their skills] themselves.[149]

This process and the networks that RFC already has in place can be used to expand strategic capacity by identifying opportunities for integrating more and diverse local partners into the process, particularly individuals and groups with knowledge of

[148] Interviewee UGA 8.
[149] Interviewee RFC 2.

university decision-making. Many students interpreted the value of faculty and staff potential allies only in terms of their ability to directly influence the Commitment decision. Campus and community partners also have essential knowledge and skills about university decision-making and the university's political context that can support campaign strategizing, whether or not these individuals have any direct power. The national SMOs can encourage the expansion of campus strategic planning teams without burdening their limited staff time and resources; doing so may even reduce the support needed by regional organizers once the campus networks have been strengthened.

Finally, the significance of contextual variables to the outcomes of Real Food Campus Commitment campaigns and the evidence that greater flexibility likely would have supported greater gains in less favorable campus environments suggests that federated SMOs like RFC should carefully consider the benefits and disadvantages of promoting a single instrumental objective across all campuses nationwide. RFC staff indicated they did not consider the Commitment campaign or various elements of the strategic toolkit shared with organizers to be prescriptive. However, the guidance of the national organization was highly influential, especially for students who strongly embraced the broad vision of the organization. Given the many demands on their time and limited experience with organizing, many student volunteer activists are likely to draw upon the advice and resources of the national organization as much as possible. It is clear that college campuses vary significantly with respect to the frames and tactics that will be most likely to win a particular campaign objective. Thus, federated SMOs like Real Food Challenge can support positive outcomes on a wider range of campuses by

carefully considering how to incorporate greater flexibility in their objectives and toolkits, as well as by supporting stronger strategic capacity.

6.1.4 Political and corporate influence on college campuses

An unexpected result of this study emerged regarding the influence of contextual variables on ally availability. Findings from OSU and, especially, UGA suggest that corporate and political influence on university culture can negatively influence the availability of faculty and staff allies for student activists engaged in campaigns unpopular with powerful stakeholders. These findings are relevant not only to research on campus activism but also to a growing body of work on the implications of corporate and other external influences on colleges and universities. While a full consideration of this study's fit within the body of literature on the corporatization of higher education is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will briefly explain what my findings suggest in terms of future research.

Many scholars have documented two ways in which university research has changed since the mid-1970s: 1) commercialization of academic research has intensified; and 2) policy, regulatory and legal frameworks shaping academic research and development (R&D) have changed in fundamental ways (Nelson 2004; Vallas and Kleinman 2007; Mowery 2011). Concerns about these changes are diverse and include: the potential for corporate bias in research questions and conclusions; a reduction in knowledge sharing that reduces innovation; erosion of public trust in university science and its recommendations; and subtle changes in the culture of academia (Nelson 2004; Vallas and Kleinman 2007; Gaskell 2008; Mowery 2011; Biddle 2007, 2012; Kukla 2012). At the same time, within higher education some have raised concerns about

academic freedom and free speech in an era of shrinking public budgets for public universities, greater dependence upon corporate, foundation, and government grants, and debates over how best to support academic freedom and facilitate shared governance (see, for example, deBoer 2016; Mynlieff, Chattopadhyay, and Boyden 2018). The example provided in chapter five of Virginia's Farm Bureau getting involved in Virgina Tech's plans to expand its cage-free egg purchasing and the results of this study regarding contextual influences on university response to Real Food Challenge activism at UGA suggest that scholarship in the area of "academic capitalism" (Slaughter 2004) might consider its influence on student organizing and civic engagement, as well as on teaching and research.

A growing number of college campus-based movements target university investment or purchasing, such as fossil fuel divestment, anti-sweatshop, Real Food, and cage-free egg campaigns. University structures generally provide little institutionalized opportunity for faculty or students to participate in deliberation about corporate contract or investment decisions (Slaughter 2004). Evidence of political and corporate influence in university decision-making and its influence on student movements targeting campus purchasing points to opportunities for research that synthesizes perspectives from academic corporatization literature, organizational theory, and social movement theory.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

Chapters two and three described limitations of this study with respect to access to interviewees and potential problems with the national dataset used to examine variation in LSFB purchasing. In this section I will briefly extend my discussion of limitations in the qualitative portion of the study. The qualitative research design was

purposefully broad and flexible, designed to capture as complete a picture as possible of the variables that mattered in the four RFC campaigns. This design supported a comprehensive evaluation of many different kinds of variables, and it uncovered several factors that were not anticipated in the theoretical model presented in chapter two. At the same time, this approach posed significant challenges for analysis and the presentation of results, due to the many ways in which variables intersected. In addition, a broad examination is better suited to revealing which variables had some influence than it is in explaining which variables *mattered most*.

As discussed above, while models can lead scholars to overlook complexity and contingency, they are important for building a knowledge base within the field and directing attention to variables that past research suggests are worth examining. While no single model can fully capture the multiple ways in which contextual, organizational, cultural, and strategic factors shape movement outcomes, they are helpful for pointing to further research and new research questions. With that intent in mind, Figure 6.1 presents a modified version of the theoretical framework that guided this research project. It reflects many elements in the hypothesized model along with unanticipated ways in which collective identity and movement goals influenced strategic capacity and tactical and frame alignment, thereby influencing opposition and outcomes.

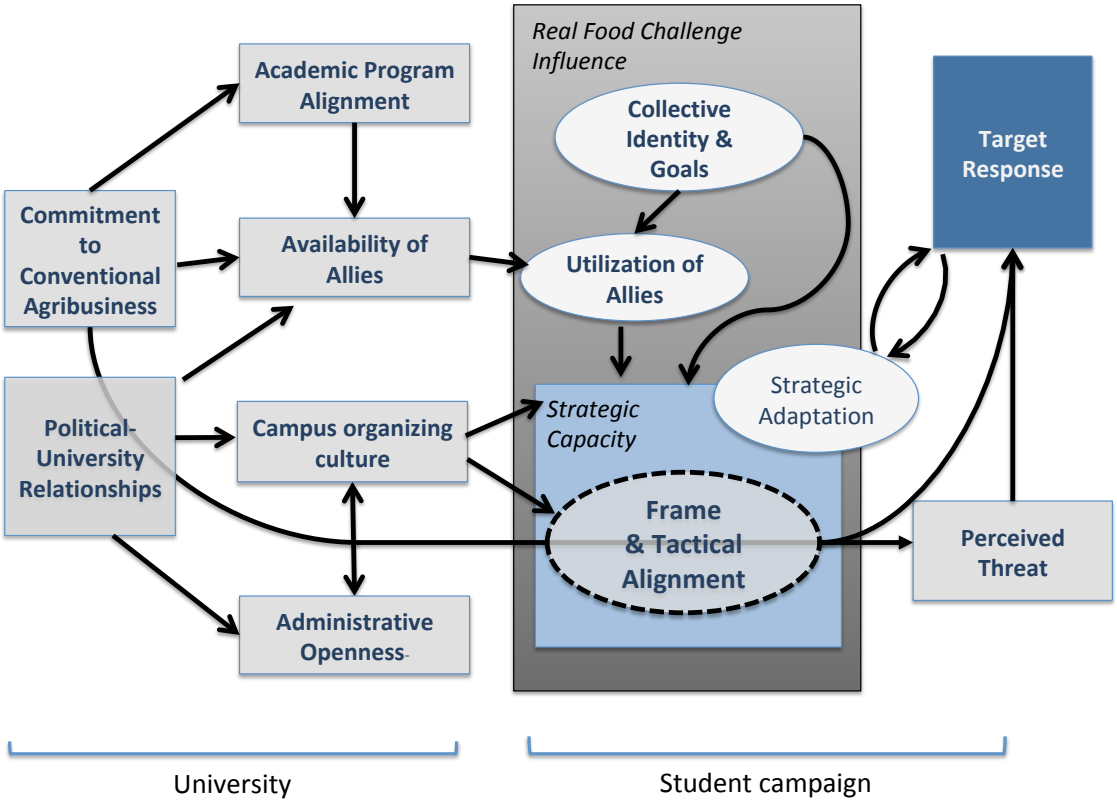

Figure 6.1: Real Food Challenge Campaign Dynamics

The breadth of this study was advantageous for uncovering multiple mechanisms influencing RFC campaign outcomes. Its breadth also means that some of my conclusions are more suggestive than definitive, offering direction for future work that is more focused on specific variables. In particular, the results of this study suggest many possibilities for further research in collective identity, strategic capacity, framing, and allies in campus movements. How does collective identity influence tactical and framing decisions? How do student-led campaigns recognize and respond to framing dilemmas, and how does it matter? How do campus-based campaigns build and maintain staff, faculty, and community collaboration, and how can they simultaneously pursue 'insider'

and 'outsider' strategies? More broadly, how can federated SMOs *capitalize on* variation in opportunities and constraints across campus contexts?

6.3 Conclusion

> Protest movements have important benefits for modern societies in the way they develop and disseminate new perspectives, especially but not exclusively moral visions. (Jasper 1997:16)
>
> It was important to understand the balance of emotion and analysis, or strategy, involved in pushing for the Real Food Commitment.[150]

My hope is that this study is helpful to other scholars interested in expanding "movement-relevant theory" within social movement scholarship (Bevington and Dixon 2005). Theoretical frameworks are critically important for synthesizing and advancing understanding of patterns and trends in social movements. At the same time, the models scholars develop and refine are shaped by the kinds of questions they pose, and those questions do not always overlap with the questions most relevant to movement actors: how and why do we succeed? How can we build greater strategic capacity? How do we foster the knowledge, skills, and networks that can help us adapt and innovate? For, as one Real Food activist at OSU described their continuing activism, "…why else are we doing this work?"[151]

Finally, I would like to return to my discussion of the literature on social movement outcomes from chapter two, where I noted that part of the reason that this scholarship lags in comparison to studies of emergence and mobilization may be that causal relationships are difficult to determine, outcomes are often many and varied, and

[150] Interviewee UNC 1.
[151] Interviewee OSU 1.

some may occur years and even decades following peak activity. The primary focus of my research questions was the objective of securing Real Food Campus Commitments, which RFC had made the primary focus of the campus campaigns. At the same time, to differing degrees student Real Food leaders and RFC staff held that objective alongside other, less tangible ones, and each campaign resulted in a variety of changes, including the biographical impacts of college activism well documented for other movements. All four Real Food campaigns included in this study produced outcomes that were of significance to a number of students, whether or not they secured the Real Food Campus Commitment. And for many students I spoke with, participation enriched their learning and growth in ways that their coursework and other kinds of social networks had not. Jasper (1997) writes:

> Virtually all the pleasures that humans derive from social life are found in protest movements: a sense of community and identity; ongoing companionship and bonds with others; the variety and challenge of conversation, cooperation, and competition. Some of the pleasures are not available in the routines of daily life: the euphoria of crowds, a sense of pushing history forward with one's projects, or simply of making the evening news, of working together with others, of sharing a sense of purpose. And, perhaps most of all, the declaration of moral principles. (P. 220)

For some students, participation in Real Food campaigns was centered around the instrumental goal of getting the Commitment signed; for others, that was an important objective but it became almost secondary to other goals: standing in solidarity with communities adversely affected by conventional agricultural systems; finding one's place in the sustainable food movement; and building community with others who planned to be in the fight "for their whole lives." Research in the future that follows the career paths and civic engagement of Real Food students may identify indirect and perhaps unintentional outcomes associated with their participation in campaigns.

Acknowledging that some aspects of social movement outcomes are difficult to measure, it still is the case that most campaigns identify and try hard to win specific outcomes. In addition to aligning tactics and frames to make the most of the context in which student activists find themselves operating, SMO staff and student leaders can strive to make more explicit the full range of goals, objectives, and values shaping their decision-making as they engage in strategic planning. The results of this study suggest that this aspect of reflexive practice may be an important component of strategic capacity that has not been emphasized in social movement literature. Multiple identities, goals, and objectives are not inherently problematic for a movement or campaign, but they may become so when they are not recognized, carefully considered, and evaluated as part of ongoing strategic planning processes.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW DATA CODES AND FREQUENCIES

Table A.1: Interviewee references relating to codes, sorted by interviewee type.

Code or Theme	Occurrences by Interviewee Type[i]				
	Students	Faculty	Admin & Staff	RFC	Community
Tactics	163 (1)	40 (2)	25 (2)	24 (2)	17 (1)
Internal context	126 (2)	55 (1)	41 (1)	4 (10)	10 (5)
Target Response	92 (3)	13 (7)	22 (3)	8 (8)	6 (7)
Mobilizing Structures	67 (4)	18 (5)	5 (9)	19 (5)	6 (7)
RFC influence	62 (5)	13 (6)	13 (6)	32 (1)	4 (8)
Identity & Solidarity	51 (6)	4 (11)	4 (10)	20 (4)	6 (7)
Strategic Capacity	49 (7)	4 (10)	13 (5)	15 (6)	15 (2)
Framing	48 (8)	30 (4)	11 (8)	20 (3)	6 (7)
Allies	47 (9)	12 (8)	16 (4)	7 (9)	13 (3)
Vision & Goals	42 (10)	9 (9)	2 (11)	11 (7)	7 (6)
External Context	36 (11)	32 (3)	11 (7)	2 (11)	11 (4)

Table A.2: Interviewee references relating to codes, sorted by university.

Code or Theme	Occurrences by University[i]			
	Pitt	OSU	UNC	UGA
Internal Context	51 (1)	45 (3)	30 (2)	106 (1)
Tactics	47 (2)	68 (1)	35 (1)	95 (2)
Target Response	28 (3)	58 (2)	0 (10)	47 (5)
Strategic Capacity	24 (4)	32 (5)	0 (10)	25 (9)
Mobilizing Structures	19 (5)	32 (6)	13 (8)	32 (7)
RFC influence	13 (6)	26 (7)	5 (9)	48 (4)
External Context	11 (7)	15 (11)	19 (3)	45 (6)
Framing	10 (8)	20 (9)	16 (5)	49 (3)
Allies	9 (9)	37 (4)	15 (7)	27 (8)
Identity & Solidarity	2 (10)	22 (8)	17 (4)	24 (11)
Vision & Goals	1 (11)	19 (10)	15 (6)	25 (10)

[i] The first number indicates the number of times an interviewee made a comment relating to that theme; the number in parentheses is the frequency rank of each theme within that group.

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