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The University of Texas at Austin

Entry details

Entry Name:	University Housing and Dining - UT Farm Stand
Institution Name:	The University of Texas at Austin
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Jack Spurlock, Associate Director for Marketing

UT Farm Stand is a student led outreach and education program that functions as a living model of a food system within University Housing and Dining. Rather than offering one-time programming, the initiative integrates markets, gardens, and zero waste operations into a continuous, hands-on learning experience. Students actively participate in growing, selling, and composting food, gaining practical skills while understanding how each stage of the system is interconnected. By embedding this work into daily campus life, UT Farm Stand transforms food literacy into an accessible and applied educational experience.

Essay:

UT Farm Stand operates as an ongoing, student-powered program that integrates education directly into operational practice. Organized into three interconnected teams—Garden, Market, and Zero Waste—the program demonstrates how food production, distribution, and waste management function as a unified system. Students grow produce in campus gardens, harvest and sell it at market, educate their peers, and ensure organic waste is composted back into the system.

This closed-loop model allows students to observe cause and effect in real time. Revenue generated through markets is reinvested into program operations, supporting materials and student wages while reinforcing the sustainability of the system itself.

Unlike traditional outreach efforts, UT Farm Stand is embedded within University Housing and Dining as an auxiliary unit, extending engagement beyond residential dining spaces. It reaches both on-campus and off-campus students through accessible, high-visibility programming.

By prioritizing experiential learning, leadership development, and peer education, the program equips students with practical skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of how food systems function beyond the university environment.

Introduction:

Marketing for UT Farm Stand is designed to do more than promote events. It reinforces the program's educational mission by creating clear, consistent, and student-centered communication across both physical and digital spaces. Through cohesive branding and multi-channel outreach, the program maintains strong visibility while inviting participation and learning. Marketing efforts are integrated into the program experience, ensuring that messaging, engagement, and education are aligned.

Essay:

UT Farm Stand maintains a cohesive visual identity anchored by its recognizable branding and Franny logo, applied consistently across tents, signage, merchandise, and printed materials. This consistency reinforces the program's presence as an established and trusted part of campus life. Branded merchandise, including apparel and tote bags, extends visibility while supporting program sustainability through reinvested revenue.

The program utilizes a multi-channel communication strategy to reach students where they already engage. Instagram, with more than 6,000 followers, serves as a primary platform for promoting market dates, volunteer opportunities, and educational content related to composting, plant care, and sourcing transparency. GroupMe channels facilitate direct communication with volunteers, while posters in dining halls and a growing LinkedIn presence expand reach across both student and professional audiences.

On-site engagement is central to the marketing approach. Students interact directly with local farmers, vendors, chefs, and dietitians, transforming promotion into education. Special events such as Pick Local programming and garden-based tea tastings further extend engagement, creating participatory experiences that reinforce learning through interaction.

Introduction:

UT Farm Stand enhances the campus experience by integrating applied learning, leadership development, and community engagement into daily student life. The program creates opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience, build transferable skills, and connect with peers through shared participation. By remaining open and accessible to the broader campus community, UT Farm Stand extends the reach of University Housing and Dining beyond traditional dining spaces.

Essay:

The impact of UT Farm Stand is reflected through student employment, volunteer engagement, and broad campus participation. The program supports more than 20 student employees annually across Garden, Market, and Zero Waste teams, offering opportunities to develop skills in financial oversight, inventory management, event execution, public speaking, and peer education. Leadership roles such as Market Manager and Volunteer Coordinator provide pathways for advanced responsibility and program ownership.

Beyond employment, the program engages hundreds of students through volunteer opportunities. In 2025, participants contributed 770 hours of hands-on work across gardens and markets. These experiences include planting, harvesting, composting, and supporting market operations, reinforcing learning through repetition and mentorship.

The program is accessible to all students, including those living off campus, allowing it to reach a broader audience than traditional residential dining initiatives. Survey data reflects strong outcomes, with 88 percent of participants

reporting high satisfaction, 99 percent indicating they would attend again, and 96 percent willing to recommend the program to others.

Additionally, the gardens serve as informal wellness spaces, offering students a place to pause, study, and connect within the campus environment.

Introduction:

UT Farm Stand is intentionally designed as a distributed learning environment embedded across campus. Rather than operating in a single location, the program utilizes markets, gardens, and zero waste systems in different spaces to teach distinct components of the food system. Each environment is structured to promote interaction, visibility, and hands-on learning, ensuring that education is integrated into everyday student experiences.

Essay:

The spatial design of UT Farm Stand reflects its educational purpose. Markets are hosted at Jester Plaza, a high-traffic intersection of academic and residential spaces, ensuring visibility and accessibility. The open layout encourages students to move freely, engage in conversation, and observe the full range of offerings, transforming a traditional market into an interactive learning environment.

Produce grown in campus gardens is displayed alongside locally sourced goods, visually demonstrating the relationship between production and procurement. Student staff are trained as educators, guiding conversations around sourcing, seasonality, pricing, and waste systems.

The program extends beyond the market through five urban gardens located across campus, including Jester and Kinsolving. These spaces function as living laboratories where students learn planting, irrigation, harvesting, and composting practices. Volunteer workdays are structured as guided, skill-based experiences, reinforcing learning through direct participation.

Zero waste practices are integrated throughout University Housing and Dining spaces, connecting consumption back to composting systems and completing the educational loop. Together, these environments create a cohesive, campus-wide learning model that supports applied education at every stage of the food system.

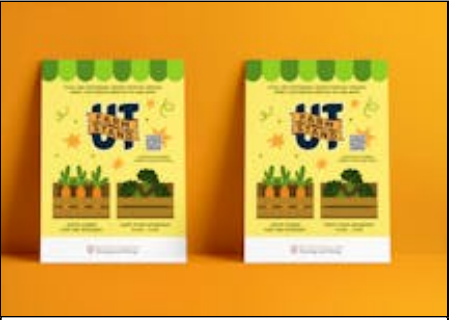
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