



GROUNDBREAKING COLLABORATION PRODUCES LARGEST STUDY EVER MEASURING FOOD CHOICES ACROSS MULTIPLE UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

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Stanford, CA – The journal *Psychological Science* has published the findings of a [groundbreaking study](#), which found that emphasizing the tasty and enjoyable attributes of vegetables, rather than their health attributes, increased the number of people choosing to eat them. The DISH Study—which stands for Delicious Impressions Support Healthy eating—is the first behavioral intervention of its kind to be replicated across multiple university dining halls across the country. The [first peer-reviewed publication](#) from the [Menus of Change University Research Collaborative \(MCURC\)](#), it measured diners’ vegetable intake for several months at each of five universities throughout the United States. Co-founded and jointly led by Stanford University and The Culinary Institute of America, the MCURC is a network of 57 colleges and universities, and several other organizations, which together serve more than 750,000 meals each day, representing 15 billion meals over the course of their students’ lifetimes.

The MCURC is a collaboration of forward-thinking scholars, foodservice leaders, executive chefs, and administrators for colleges and universities who are accelerating efforts to move people toward healthier, more sustainable, and delicious foods using evidence-based research, education, and innovation. These are high-impact decision-makers and researchers who have traditionally worked in professional silos. By working together for the first time, they have pioneered a powerful new research model that uses campus dining halls as living laboratories for behavior change.

“Through the partnerships we’ve created with other universities across the MCURC, we bridge research with operational excellence in order to accelerate innovation,” said Dr. Shirley Everett, senior associate vice provost, Stanford Residential & Dining Enterprises. “Our vision is cultivating the long-term wellbeing of people and the planet one student, one meal at a time.” This initiative leverages the unique position of universities to advance these types of life-long food choices among students—who will soon be parents and adult decision-makers—by connecting a diversity of insights from its members.

Led by Dr. Brad Turnwald, postdoctoral fellow in the [Mind & Body Lab at Stanford University](#), researchers first pilot-tested the question of flavor-focused menu language and its effect on

vegetable selection at a large Stanford University dining hall, in partnership with Stanford Residential & Dining Enterprises. Over the course of three months, they found that using taste-focused labeling (“twisted citrus-glazed carrots”) increased the proportion of diners choosing vegetables by 25 percent compared to basic labels (“carrots”) and by 41 percent compared to health-focused labels (“low -sodium carrots”). Dr. Turnwald and his co-authors then replicated the study across five universities and gained additional insights into how and why taste-focused labeling is effective. Overall, analyzing 138,000 diner decisions over several months, they saw that taste-focused labels resulted in a 29 percent increase in the number of students choosing vegetables compared to health-focused labels. It resulted in a 14 percent increase compared to basic labels.

Scaling the study’s result across the 750,000 meals served per day across the Collaborative would translate to 38,000 more vegetable servings per day among member campuses alone.

“Underlying all of our work are the 24 Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus—an evidence-based framework for ingredient sourcing, operational design, and menu strategy we developed at the CIA in partnership with leading scientists and our colleagues at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health,” said Greg Drescher, vice president of Industry Leadership and Strategic Initiatives at the CIA. “There is no sector of the \$860 billion U.S. foodservice industry that’s more ripe for innovation at the leading edge of a shift toward plant-forward menus than campus dining, and it has been tremendously exciting to watch the Menus of Change Principles take off like wildfire thanks to the creativity and inspiration of chefs from within and beyond the MCURC member campuses.”

More broadly, the Collaborative has developed a pipeline of research projects focused on plant-forward diets, food waste reduction, and the drivers of consumer food choices.

From large, public land-grant universities to small, private liberal arts colleges, the Collaborative’s membership is diverse in size, geography, and student population. This diversity is important not only for analyzing rich, multi-site data sets across various operational and attitudinal differences by campus, but for crowdsourcing innovative strategies and best practices to include in educational materials and toolkits. Members have published seven such publications, packed with actionable insights for advancing healthier, more sustainable food choices; these are available open-source on moccollaborative.org for leaders within and beyond colleges and universities.

Going forward, the Collaborative will be focused on three key strategic initiatives: collective impact, joint purchasing, and continuing to advance its high-impact research agenda for food systems change.

For ideas and information on how to apply the practical insights from the study in a wide variety of food contexts, please visit moccollaborative.org/resources to access the [DISH Study Executive Summary](#) and the [Edgy Veggies Toolkit](#).

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About the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative

The Menus of Change University Research Collaborative is a nationwide network of colleges and universities using campus dining halls as living laboratories for behavior change. It is a collaboration of forward-thinking scholars, foodservice leaders, executive chefs, and administrators for colleges and universities who are accelerating efforts to move people toward healthier, more sustainable, and delicious foods using evidence-based research, education, and innovation. The MCURC was co-founded and is jointly led by Stanford University, one of the world's leading research institutions—specifically Stanford Residential & Dining Enterprises and Stanford Prevention Research Center at Stanford Medical School—and The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), the world's premier culinary college. It is a diverse, extensive, and inclusive network of 236 members representing 57 colleges and universities, two ex officio organizations, and four Research Collaborator organizations. Our work is made possible by the generous support of 22 industry-leading sponsor organizations. The MCURC's vision is cultivating the long-term wellbeing of people and planet one student, one meal at a time. For more information, visit mocolaborative.org.

About The Culinary Institute of America

Founded in 1946, The Culinary Institute of America is the world's premier culinary college. Dedicated to developing leaders in foodservice and hospitality, the independent, not-for-profit CIA offers master's, bachelor's, and associate degrees with majors in culinary arts, baking & pastry arts, food business management, hospitality management, culinary science, and applied food studies. The college also offers executive education, certificate programs, and courses for professionals and enthusiasts. Its conferences, leadership initiatives, and consulting services have made the CIA the think tank of the food industry, and its worldwide network of more than 50,000 alumni includes innovators in every area of the food world. The CIA has locations in New York, California, Texas, and Singapore. For more information, visit ciaprochef.com.

About Stanford Residential and Dining Enterprises

Stanford Residential and Dining Enterprises (R&DE) is a non-profit University auxiliary that

includes R&DE student Housing, R&DE Stanford Dining, R&DE Hospitality and Auxiliaries, and R&DE Stanford Conferences. The R&DE staff vision is to be the best in the business by creating a culture of excellence. Throughout R&DE, we support respectful, open communications and encourage leadership development and staff recognition in a responsible manner that supports the academic mission of the University. R&DE has a wide variety of first-rate dining halls, on-campus restaurants, catering services, a guest house, Schwab executive services, and conference and meeting services that are designed to meet the needs of the Stanford community. R&DE houses 12,000 students and families in more than 350 residential buildings; serves more than 18,000 meals a day in 22 campus locations; and welcomes more than 20,000 conference guests a year. For more information, visit rde.stanford.edu.

About Stanford Prevention Research Center

Through the [Stanford Prevention Research Center \(SPRC\)](http://stanfordprevention.org), a division of the School of Medicine and a leader in pioneering health research, studies are being conducted around healthy and sustainable food systems with a focus on investigating the potential health benefits of various dietary components or food patterns. In 2010, Dr. Christopher Gardner, Professor of Medicine at SPRC and colleagues from across the Stanford campus created the Stanford Food Summit, an unprecedented annual gathering of Stanford experts on food-related issues from across all of the University's seven schools. The 2010–2014 Stanford Food Summits provided a catalyst for discussing solutions to some of the nation's most challenging and important crises that lie at the intersection of human health and the health of the planet, including: the national health crisis, the climate crisis, outdated national food policies, the hidden toll of industrial food production and much more. For more information, visit nutrition.stanford.edu.

About the Mind & Body Lab at Stanford University

The Mind & Body Lab, led by Dr. Alia Crum, focuses on how subjective mindsets (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, and expectations) can alter objective reality through behavioral, psychological, and physiological mechanisms. We are interested in understanding how mindsets affect important outcomes both within and beyond the realm of medicine, in domains such as exercise, diet, and stress. More specifically, we aim to understand how selective information through modalities such as media, marketing, and labeling can inform mindsets, and how mindsets can be consciously and deliberately changed through intervention to affect physiological and psychological health. For more information, visit mbl.stanford.edu.

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