*Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation by the deadline listed on the SSC website to* *Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu**.The Working Group Chairs will be in contact with you regarding any questions about the application. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the SSC at* *Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu**.*

# General Information

**Project Name:** Illinois Sustainable Food Project – Pumpkin & Puree Expansion

**Total Amount Requested from SSC:** ~$85,000

**Project Topic Area(s):** [ ] Energy [ ] Education [x] Food & Waste

 [ ] Land [ ] Water [ ] Transportation

# Contact Information

Applicant Name: Brian Jacobson

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**Project Team**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Department** | **Email** |
| Jedi Brown | FSHN/Dining Services | Email Address |
| Dawn Aubrey | UIUC Dining Services | Email Address |
| Name | Department/Organization | Email Address |
| Name | Department/Organization | Email Address |

# Project Information

Please provide a brief background of the project, the goals, and the desired outcomes:

This exciting expansion to the Illinois Sustainable Food Project (ISFP) proposes to add equipment to the fruit & vegetable processing capacity of the facility. This equipment will add to our ability to process several new raw products, including cucurbits (pumpkins and more) and some varieties of nuts, produce, and grain. We will then be able to process a variety of improved purees, pastes, slurries, and nut butters.

One of the major products we would like to produce using this equipment is pumpkin purees. Illinois is the largest producer of pumpkins in the world, with a large percentage grown in the Peoria, IL area. The SSF grows pumpkins now for decoration and consumption, and this would allow us to make a product that is very local, very Illinois, and very nutritious. Pumpkin puree is packed with beneficial nutrients, and can be substituted in many recipes for butter, oil, and other ingredients, ensuring our local products will be served year round at the Dining Halls, particularly those baked with our flour.

We also plan to experiment with other emulsion based products such as barbeque sauces made from local vegetables and spices from the SSF, nut butters from local nuts and legumes, and more. We already have much of the equipment necessary for many of these products, simply requiring a comitrol to be added to allow for these new product expansions.

Our overall goal is to provide locally-sourced, healthy, and nutritious product for UIUC Dining to serve to the campus population, while providing an educational experience to the student body. For those most interested, there will be opportunities to work with the project producing finished product; and for the rest of the campus (and off-campus) community, presentations, videos, articles, and tours will be made available. Possibly most importantly, this project will reach every student who eats in the Dining Halls.

Please provide a brief summary of how students will be involved in the project:

Student interns will be responsible for the actual operation of the project, from planting, through harvesting and processing. Student employees in Dining will even have the opportunity to create dishes for their peers using our product, while working side by side with trained chefs.

The completed product will be consumed by any student who eats in the campus Dining Halls. This extremely local source of food will be well-documented and advertised with the finished product. Additionally, any student who has a class in the FSHN Pilot Plant, or tours it through events like EOH/ExplorACES will have the opportunity to learn the hands-on process.

Please provide a brief summary of the project timeline:

With funding available in Spring 2018, we would immediately move to purchase the equipment to be ready for Fall 2018 harvest. Considering the equipment is all under the bid limit, this should be very likely.

Additional comments

The Illinois Sustainable Food Project (ISFP) is a partnership between several groups in the Department of Crop Sciences, the Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition, and University Housing Dining Services that began in 2013. The project processes items grown on campus into finished products for the University Dining Halls. Since inception, over 100,000 lbs of fruit, vegetables, grains, and other items have been processed into finished products for the University Dining Halls. Some of the projects include pizza sauce, several varieties of flour, diced vegetables, hot sauce, juices, pesto, and more.

The project continues to grow, and has received significant recognition for its work. A permanent FT staff person has now been put in place to manage the project, and dozens of students have been employed working on the project and learning the value of local foods. After the capital infusion necessary to buy the processing equipment, the projects are completely self-supporting, all staff and maintenance is paid through redirected dollars from traditional, non-local food vendors. The project has received many mentions in both social and traditional news coverage, along with winning an Innovation Credit to assist UIUC in becoming a “Gold-Ranked” institution from STARS.

In addition, the project has a growing impact external to campus as those affiliated with the project have begun to work with outside agencies in support of our mission. One such example is the Artisan Grain Collaborative, a group working tirelessly to restore local grains to the Chicago area and greater Midwest food economy. Through outside grants, the collaborative and UIUC grad students are now working to use the ISFP model and resources to improve the food economy across the region. It is a first step, but some huge possibilities are just around the corner, dependent on a funding decision from the USDA Local Foods Promotional Program. These projects are separate from the ISFP and any SSC funds, but show the huge impact of the start-up capital provided by the SSC. None of this would have been possible without our ISFP campus model, data that is being gathered, and learning provided to the students.