



ANNUAL ALL-MEMBER MEETING AGENDA

October 15 - 16, 2025

Hosted by: Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee

Summit Theme:

GROW: Growing Impact, Growing Our Future, and Growing Innovation

Unless otherwise noted in the schedule, all meeting sessions will take place in the
[Carmichael Conference Center](#)

Tuesday, October 14th

- 2 PM **Pre-Meeting Tour Begins (optional programming, additional fee)**
*Meet-Up Location: Holiday Inn Nashville - Vanderbilt - 2613 West End Ave.
Bus will depart from the hotel after member check-in.*
- 2:45 PM **Sweeter Days Farm Tour**
Sweeter Days Farm is a one-acre, family-run market garden growing vegetables, fruit, culinary herbs, and sustainably-tended cut flowers for local chefs and families. Rooted in the founders' vision for community nourishment and environmental stewardship, they offer CSA shares, farmers market stalls, and flower club subscriptions to connect people with fresh, seasonal bounty.
- 4:30 PM **Henosis Mushroom Farm Tour**
Henosis is a gourmet mushroom farm located just north of Nashville, in Joelton, Tennessee. During the Mushroom Farm Tour, you'll learn all about fungi, their regenerative vision, how to grow mushrooms at home, and how they make their mushroom-based products, such as mushroom extracts and mushroom compost.
- 6 PM **Assembly Food Hall**
*This two-story food and entertainment destination features over 30 eateries and bars beneath its expansive rooftop skydeck with three live music stages. It showcases local and international flavors – from Nashville hot chicken to sushi – within a family-friendly, performance-rich environment that energizes downtown Nashville.
Attendees on their own for evening entertainment!*

Wednesday, October 15th

- 8 AM **Registration & Breakfast**
Carmichael Conference Center
- 8:50 AM **Welcome Remarks from Vanderbilt University**
- 9 AM **Keynote: Transforming Food Systems toward Equity and Resilience**
Chefs are central figures in their communities and cultures worldwide, uniquely recognized as trusted voices on important food-related issues. In the keynote address, visionary chefs Michel Nischan, and Sean Sherman will share how leveraging culinary platforms can help build equitable, resilient, and sustainable food systems by uplifting and amplifying diverse voices, restoring food sovereignty, and advancing community-led change. Their conversation will demonstrate how the culinary community is firmly positioned to lead a successful, generative, inclusive movement through advocacy, cultural leadership, and authentic connection. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding from chefs about actionable insights for using their influence to transform food systems, highlighting practical tactics to address inequities and build resilience in collaboration with producers, key stakeholders, and the communities they serve.
- Presenters:
Michel Nischan (Chairman and Co-Founder, Wholesome Wave)
Sean Sherman (CEO and Co-Founder, The Sioux Chef and NATIFS)
- 9:40 AM **MCURC: The Year in Review, Collaborative Updates, and Meeting Overview**
A celebration of new members, events, publications, and media featuring MCURC, and top takeaways from the EAT Stockholm Food Forum, highlighting MCURC's role on the global stage.
- Presenters:
Sophie Egan, MPH (Senior Advisor, R&DE Stanford Food Institute; Co-Director, MCURC)
Abby Fammartino, MBA, MSFS (Director of Health and Sustainability Programs and Research, Strategic Initiatives Group, The Culinary Institute of America; Co-Director, MCURC)
- 9:50 AM **Attendee Speed Intros and Sponsor Videos (1 of 2)**
An energizing tradition where all members introduce themselves in a rapid-fire session!
- 10:00 AM **Research & Education Working Group:**
A Glimpse into the Current MCURC Research Pipeline (Part 1)
A look into MCURC's innovative multi-site research approach through an exploration of current projects in the 2025 research pipeline, hosted by the Research and Education Working Group Co-Chairs.
- 10:15 AM **Networking Break**

- 10:45 AM **Student Fellows Showcase**
A chance to hear from MCURC Student Fellows pursuing research that aligns with our research priorities. This is a unique opportunity to hear students' perspectives on our collective effort to advance healthy, sustainable, delicious menu options.
- 11:15 AM **Vanderbilt Showcase #1: "Local Farmer Collaboration and Crop Planning"**
This panel of Vanderbilt local farm partners will delve into simple, practical, and powerful steps you can take to enhance your food supply and empower local farmers.
- Moderator: **Brian Cochrane** (Campus Dining Director, Vanderbilt University)
 Panelists:
David Wells (CEO, Henosis Mushroom Farm Henosis)
Hassan Sharaff (Founder, Hydrohouse Farms HydroHouse Farms)
Murray Nicholson (Vice President and Local Food Connections Manager, What Chefs Want)
Natalie Ashker Seevers (Executive Director, Tennessee Local Food)
- 12 PM **Walking Tour & Lunch**
Tour details to be announced. Tours will be organized by professional affiliation groups, to allow space for dialogue and enable deeper connection among peers of the same role type.
- 1:45 PM **Member Panel Session: Nutrition Focus**
A lively discussion of member innovations in serving up and successfully communicating nutritious offerings to students, featuring crowdsourced solutions and a call to action for continued exploration of what's working with the current population of students. To submit an idea for the panel, please contact [Valentina Córdoba](#).
- 2:15 PM **Sponsor Videos (2 of 2) and Sponsor-Member Collaboration Showcase (1 of 2)**
The Sponsor-Member Collaboration Showcase highlights stories of educational and culinary innovations that occurred over the year between university members and corporate members, amplifying the impact possible through collaboration.
- 2:30 PM **Member Research Presentation #1: SNEAK Study Findings**
A look at a surprisingly sneaky behavioral economic research study to reduce both the carbon footprint of menus and the intake of saturated fat of students eating in dining hall settings by reorganizing menu options. The study was conducted at the University of Bristol and is currently being piloted in K-12 and other cafeteria settings.
- Presenters:
Jeff Brunstrom, BSc, MSc, PhD (Professor of Psychology, University of Bristol)
Annika Flynn, BSc, PhD (Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Bristol)
- 3:00 PM **Research & Education Working Group:**
Framing New Projects for the MCURC Research Pipeline
MCURC Research and Education Working Group Co-Chairs share about opportunities to develop new research that meets a need in the industry and fills in gaps in our current

pipeline, leading into an opportunity for all members to contribute ideas and feedback for future MCURC research projects.

- 3:20 PM **Member Workshop / Engage in MCURC Research**
Join us in developing the next MCURC research projects for 2026 and beyond! We will host an array of workshop stations for attendees to select a topic of interest and participate in the development of new living laboratory research that will support the MCURC vision of cultivating the long-term well-being of all people and the planet – one student, one meal at a time. To submit a workshop idea, please [fill out this form](#) or contact [Valentina Córdoba](#).
- 3:55 PM **Short Break/Move to Reception & Idea Hubs**
- 4 PM **Idea Hubs: Sponsor-Member Speed Networking Reception**
During this lively session, members of each institution will participate together in rapid-fire conversations with MCURC sponsors. The purpose of these sessions is to encourage collaboration and open dialogue between sponsors and university members in order to build new connections, share opportunities, discuss any challenges, and find new avenues for serving more healthy, sustainable, delicious food and beverage options in dining halls.
- 5:30 PM **Opening Night Reception**
A not-to-be-missed reception showcasing the culinary talent of the Vanderbilt team, featuring regional, farm-direct produce for a sustainable, healthful, and delectable Nashville food and drink experience.

Thursday, October 16th

- 8:00 AM **Breakfast Prepared by MCURC Executive Chef Members**
A first-of-its-kind opportunity for MCURC executive chefs to creatively collaborate on a completely plant-based breakfast for meeting attendees to enjoy, hosted at the Power Plant, Vanderbilt's dedicated plant-forward and hyper-local dining hall with state-of-the-art equipment and innovative stations.
- 9:10 AM **Welcome & Overview of the Day**
Presenters:
Sophie Egan, MPH (Senior Advisor, R&DE Stanford Food Institute; Co-Director, MCURC)
Abby Fammartino, MBA, MSFS (Director of Health and Sustainability Programs and Research, Strategic Initiatives Group, The Culinary Institute of America; Co-Director, MCURC)
- 9:15 AM **Professional Affiliation Meetings**
Small groups will enjoy breakout sessions to connect with others in similar professional roles across institutions: Senior University Administrators, Dining Directors, Academics, Executive Chefs, Nutrition and Sustainability Managers, and Sponsors. All other attendee types--such as Research Collaborators, Student Fellows, and RIAs--will be grouped with support from CIA/Stanford staff according to their interests.

- 10:45 AM **Report Outs from Professional Affiliation Meetings**
- 11:00 AM **Vanderbilt Showcase #2: “GROW: The Power Plant and the Vanderbilt Culinary Academy**
VU Training Chef Doug Best will share about the groundbreaking job-embedded training program he has developed for Campus Dining staff. The program has significantly boosted culinary skill levels of entry-level employees and resulted in increased rates of retention and promotion of hourly staff. Culinary Academy awards 148 American Culinary Federation CEH, qualifying graduates to test for Certified Culinarian. VU Chef Julien Hicks highlights The Power Plant Dining Hall, Campus Dining’s Halal certified, Free From Top-9 Allergens plant-forward dining hall that has experienced explosive growth while reducing pre- and post-consumer waste, cutting food costs to 26% and the use of animal protein by 38%. Julien will share wins and challenges through menu strategies and local farm connections.
 Presenters:
Douglas Best (Training Chef of the Vanderbilt Culinary Academy, Vanderbilt University)
Julien Hicks (Chef de Cuisine, Vanderbilt University)
- 11:45 AM **Walk-Around Sponsor Exchange Lunch**
A delightful array of plant-forward and plant-based dishes curated with input from CIA chefs and the Vanderbilt culinary team, featuring sponsor products as a way to showcase culinary creations that align with the Menus of Change Principles.
- 12:45 PM **Sponsor-Member Collaboration Showcase (2 of 2)**
A second round of the Sponsor-Member Collaboration Showcase.
- 1:00 PM **Datassential and Consumer Insights Session: Plant-Forward Opportunities for a Gen Z Audience**
Hot off the press consumer insights from the 2025 Plant-Forward Opportunity Report paired with fresh perspectives from an MCURC-led student survey, with emphasis on Gen Z attitudes and preferences around protein as a particular topic of focus.
- 1:45 PM **Member Research Presentation and Discussion: Food for Climate League**
- 2:05 PM **Refreshment and Networking Break**
- 2:35 PM **Member-Led Presentation and Discussion: To be Announced**
Contact [Abby Fammartino](#) if you would like to suggest a session topic for discussion among members, or contact [Valentina Córdoba](#) if you have a research presentation!
- 3:05 PM **Member Panel Session: Sustainability Focus**
A dynamic panel featuring crowdsourced solutions and innovation in action, tackling top sustainability challenges and opportunities MCURC members are facing. Topics to include strategies for encouraging pro-environmental behavior among students and staff,

among other timely topics. To submit an idea for the panel, please contact [Valentina Córdoba](#).

3:30 PM

Collective Impact in Action: Trends & Insights from the 2024-25 Data

Fresh off the spreadsheets, this session unveils the latest MCURC Collective Impact metrics, spanning millions of student meals and every pound of protein participating campuses purchased this year. We'll dig into how the 2024-25 cohort is bending its greenhouse gas intensity curve ever closer to the Collaborative's 40-percent-reduction-by-2030 target. We'll close with priority areas and tools for the year ahead.

Presenter:

Ghislaine Challamel, MS (Senior Advisor, R&DE Stanford Food Institute)
Additional Presenters to be Announced

3:55 PM

MCURC: The Year Ahead

A look at what to expect in the coming year as a member of MCURC!

Presenters:

Sophie Egan, MPH (Senior Advisor, R&DE Stanford Food Institute; Co-Director, MCURC)

Abby Fammartino, MBA, MSFS (Director of Health and Sustainability Programs and Research, Strategic Initiatives Group, The Culinary Institute of America; Co-Director, MCURC)

4 PM

Closing Reception

A farewell reception with delightful bites and beverages honoring the region and the Menus of Change principles in action.

5 PM

Meeting Concludes

Travel safely!